Recognition, Work, Politics

New Directions in French Critical Theory

Edited by

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Chapter One

Themes and Dialogues in Contemporary French Critical Theory

Jean-Philippe Deranty, Danielle Petherbridge and John Rundell

I. Philosophy, Ethics and the Universal

The essays gathered in this volume, despite variations in the authors' premises and intentions, all share the goal of developing critical, normative arguments in relation to social theory, whether they pertain to the political structure of society, or address questions of social theory more properly. Most, if not all of the writers here take the complexity of contemporary societies as their point of reference and analyse this complexity in terms that throw into relief and challenge the predominant currents in French social and critical philosophy, especially if post-structuralism and postmodernism are taken as the only points of reference.[1] In many ways the essays in this book represent both a continuity and reconfiguration in the tradition of French social and critical philosophy. A sense of continuity can be perceived in the persistence of themes concerning the specific nature of French republicanism and the French experience of modernity as well as the particular

development of class conflicts and new social movements, including a generation who participated in the social and political changes of May '68. This continuity also concerns the specific Franco-German dialogues that have haunted the development of French philosophy in its post-war years, especially the dialogue with Heidegger's work.

It is here that a reconfiguration has also occurred in terms internal to French intellectual culture and the cross-border dialogues through which its cultural heritage has often been articulated. In terms of the internal history of French intellectual culture, for some of the writers present here, structuralism has been the dominant paradigm through which interpretations of the world were made possible. Lévi-Strauss, Lacan and Althusser each in their own way mapped the contours of social relationality, of inner life, and of social power in terms that were viewed as being complete, if not completed, of determining, if not determinate. In this way, structuralism developed a universe in which all that was socially conflictual became rigid, all that was visceral became fixed and all that was relational became interpolated. All of a sudden, though, what was formerly considered to be external to the structure became of interest. The rupture that became synonymous with May '68 was not only a political rupture but also a paradigmatic one born not out of a putative defeat but a series of intellectual challenges.

Likewise, and in terms of cross-border dialogues, for many of the writers present here Heidegger—the almost omnipresent figure for France's immediate post-Second World War generation of intellectuals—is not a presence at all. Rather another body of German thought has made its own presence felt, that of the Frankfurt School, in particular the works of Jürgen Habermas and Axel Honneth. Moreover, this reception is not only confined to attaining distance from Heidegger's omnipresence, but also to re-examining the legacy of the great German Enlightenment figures, especially Kant, Hegel and Marx after the demise of Marxism, in parallel to Heidegger's own interpretation of them. This distance also opens onto a further series of reflections on the particular understandings of universality that have haunted not only the Enlightenment but also French political culture.

However, the constellation of French philosophy and critical theory is, and has always been, more diverse—from positions that could be described as

post-Althusserian, but not postmodern, and include the works of Etienne Balibar, Jacques Rancière, Chantal Mouffe, and Pierre Bourdieu; feminist engagements with Lacanian psychoanalytic theory from writers such as Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva; a constellation of neo-Marxism that is articulated in the reception of German Critical Theory in the French context which includes the works of Gérard Raulet, Yves Sintomer, Emmanuel Renault, and Stéphane Haber; re-workings of Mauss' paradigm of the gift as a basis for the critiques of neo-liberalism orientated around the works of Alain Caillé; post-Marxism in the wake of Castoriadis' work and the journal that he co-founded with Claude Lefort, *Socialisme ou Barbarie* and includes the work of Marcel Gauchet; and the theorisation of social movements and new forms of social conflict in the works of Alain Touraine, Michel Wieviorka, and François Dubet.

In this volume, and against the background of their critical and very different relation to Althusserian Marxism, both Jacques Rancière and Etienne Balibar turn our attention to the problematic ways the new post-structural and post-modern constellation has contributed to understanding our current predicament.[2] The work of both Rancière and Balibar is now widely known in English but what emerges from their work presented here, are unexpected commonalities and positions that cannot be defined by their relation to either structuralism or post-structuralism, but to a longer and deeper series of interrogations of both French and German intellectual culture that also incorporates the complexities of 'pan-European' perspectives and political practices.

In his "The Ethical Turn of Aesthetics and Politics," Jacques Rancière points to the levelling effects of the 'post-structural' or 'post-modern' intellectual projects that take as their starting point the way in which the world is constructed in terms of the structure or system and its Other. Rancière argues that this dichotomy has taken two paths that are not unconnected—there has been either a collapse of the distinction between structure or system and the Other, or the position of the Other has been viewed as exceptional in the context of its relation to the system, and hence the other (any other) has been exponentially privileged and affirmed, almost without critical appraisal. In terms of the former, social and political arrangements are cast in systemic terms in which regulatory forms predetermine and dominate social life—in terms reminiscent of Horkheimer and Adorno's critique of modernity, the

current situation is viewed as one interminable concentration camp. In aesthetic terms this is rendered as anonymous, subjectless and joyless art—the disappearance of specificity, suffering and joy, as well as despair. In terms of the latter, the Other is viewed as the exception to this world of one-dimensionalised rule-bound greyness that can only be formed and legitimated juridically and not politically. There are two implications here: either the exception of the Other is escalated and specificity only now comes into play, for only it belongs outside of the system, or we await an exceptional redeeming messianic event that ruptures the grey slumber of the quiet and quietly accepted liberal democratic juridified existence.

For Rancière each of these versions incorrectly portray a fundamental depoliticisation of this rendition of our current situation and current events, whether or not they are rendered in political or artistic terms. Rancière perceptively argues that these accounts only work if there is a collapse of a series of distinctions that are internal to the way in which modernity itself has been understood. These distinctions involve differences between fact and norm, consensus and conflict, innocence and guilt, representation and non-representation, and the temporal modalities of past, present and future. For him, the symptom of this collapse of distinctions is the current turn towards the immanence of ethics as a form of life which is incarnated in the law, and which has undermined the distinction between ethos and ethics. In other words, ethics today encompasses only juridical interpretation and not the *conflict* of interpretations over norms and values. The fight for justice is only a justice that is legally codified. In this context, according to Rancière, ethics becomes a 'code' word for the self-referentiality of the system of law and the forms of life that the law incarnates. The post-modern problem of the loss of the transcendental point of reference is that there is no outside, only the juridified self-justification of what the system can do—because it is the law. In this current context of the marriage between ethos, ethics, law and justice contemporary forms of terrorism also operate from the side of the collapse of distinctions. From the side of the system the war against terror is ongoing, has no limits and no temporal boundaries; from the side of the perpetrators of terror, terroristic actions are ones where all distinctions collapse between guilt and innocence once the Truth internal to itself, and to which the action refers, has been announced. Like the in-distinction of law, terror becomes an act of pure self-reference.

Rancière's main point, though, is not simply to portray a phenomenology of in-distinctions in ethics, law and aesthetics. Rather his point is that these in-distinctions collapse the conceptual and social spaces for critical reflexivity, social conflict, and political and artistic practices. For him, neither law nor terror are about politics, philosophy, or art. For him, politics, art and philosophy concern the social spaces for the articulation of social conflict and critical reflexivity, either in the form of arguments or conflicts of interpretation. They go hand in hand. In other words, there is an internal relation between philosophy as critical theory and political theory—a position that also places him, knowingly or otherwise, and as we shall see below, in the very mixed company of Durkheim, Merleau-Ponty, Castoriadis and the Frankfurt School of Habermas and Honneth. The escalation of law and the language of rights entails the disappearance of the *philosophy* of right, that is, the disappearance of a distinction between fact, and normative or value horizons, and the disappearance of politics. Law and justice appeal to something beyond justice and are not purely self-referential.

Etienne Balibar's "Construction and Deconstruction of the Universal" investigates the nature and complexity of this modern appeal, and hence the relation between philosophy and politics. Balibar points to the ways in which interpretations of universality have been constructed within the modern period, interpretations that open onto the relation between philosophy and politics. If philosophy and the political go hand-in-hand, then one of the misnomers concerning the formulation of the modern concept of universality has been to view it as a concept that unproblematically and unreflexively incorporates particularity and singularity, otherness or difference. In other words, according to versions that emphasise incorporation, paradox and conflict are not part and parcel of the modern articulation of universality. Balibar argues that Rousseau's construction of the general will, which he views as paradigmatic here, indicates a series of oppositions that belong to the nature of modern political arrangements which this construction screens out. These oppositions are ones that are pressing in any national polity, but in the French case, perhaps, especially so. They are between republicanism and multiculturalism, nationalism and regionalism, nationalism and cosmopolitanism, and in the contemporary language, nationalism and globalisation (or national economies and global capitalism). In other words, incorporation conflates the

relation between the concepts of sovereignty and national citizenship, a conflation that is repeated in French national republican consciousness, between universality, sovereignty, the republican state and citizenship.[3]

Balibar points to three modern thinkers—Hegel, Marx and Freud—who have addressed the issue of universality from the vantage points of paradox and conflict, against the background of attempts to dissolve or incorporate them. Taking up Judith Butler's notion of 'conflicting universalities', Balibar argues that Hegel, for example, demonstrates that universality—at the very point of its enunciation—is driven to the very point of a particularity that it cannot avoid. In this sense, for Balibar, Hegel's dialectical movement, for example, so dramatically depicted in both the master-slave dialectic, or in Antigone's drama of being caught between two ethical systems, is nothing other than the drama of an enunciation that appeals to a universality, one that is realised as a conflict between two systems of thought and two political ideals. In Balibar's view, there can be no recognition or reconciliation of opposing points of view—just their enunciation, the result of which is the permanency of conflict.

It is here that Balibar motions towards Marx and Freud. For Marx, especially if the Marx of the *German Ideology* is taken as a preliminary point of reference, universality remains a *force* that is both articulated and not articulated, that is it remains only partially transparent but no less real. On the one hand, it is articulated, at least in Balibar's version of Marx, as an ideology that captures this double-sided nature of universality as a social reality that is linked to a normative horizon or goal, and on the other, as a regime of domination that is constituted as a force that mobilises and institutes normality, and against which other forces must reign, whether these forces be ones of class, ethnicity, or identity. Here, universality is not simply a conflict of competing ideals; it is a structural violence, which nonetheless, is limited by its own inability to completely encompass a social totality and the capacity of other forces to oppose it. In this sense, universality is combatitive.

For Freud, too universality denotes combat—this time not a combat constituted through a social system of domination, but one constituted as an internalised struggle between the demands of a libidinal economy and a social culture. For Balibar, Freud's conservative resolution of this permanent anthropological battle is the repression of the libidinal economy in the name of

another version of universality—an ideal of the community that provides the principle of reality to which all other demands and forces must be subordinated. For both Marx and Freud there is an internal and constitutive relation between the languages of domination, universality and power, which makes universality an already tainted concept. In this sense, languages of rupture, force and violence move outside universality.

And yet, as Balibar's essay suggests, although does not state, it is the Hegel of *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, rather than Marx or Freud, who proves to be the more promising figure here—the permanency of conflict, of the acknowledged clash between ethical systems, each of which claims its own legitimacy, and each of which must recognise the other's claims, is the hidden secret of the modern construction of the universal. As Balibar's argument implies, the languages of rupture and violence deny recognition, deny conflict and politics. In contrast, the relation between philosophy, politics and universality is articulated in what might in other terms be called, 'recognitive conflicts' or conflicts constituted through the nature of recognition. In this context, recognition denotes neither force nor domination, but struggles between parties who minimally acknowledge a co-presence and a shared stake in a social field, irrespective of vehement disagreements. It is to this conceptual configuration of the relation between recognition and conflict that the papers discussed in Part Two of this essay concern themselves, and in ways that also open onto another series of dialogues that traverse the French and German traditions.

II. Recognition and the Reincarnation of Intersubjectivity: Work, Nature and Subjectivity

The second group of papers in the volume deal more specifically, in one way or another, with Critical Theory understood in the narrower sense of German Critical Theory, associated with the tradition of the 'Frankfurt School' and its reception and interpretation in the current French context. As indicated earlier, Critical Theory in France has not enjoyed the same level of appropriation that other external traditions have, like German Idealism and especially Hegel, Heideggerian ontology, or, more recently Anglo-American political philosophy. If the number of French scholars and students focusing their

interests on the German Critical Theorists has remained small, those who have engaged with that tradition have often produced highly original projects that contain important modifications and developments to Critical Theory. In particular, the critical theories of society developed in France at the moment expand the theoretical insights in two specific areas: they allow a more concrete and substantive approach to the question of work within Critical Theory, and they provide key proposals for the further continuation and development of the theory of recognition, most notably through an engagement with the work of Habermas and Honneth. Indeed, for a number of the authors gathered here, the two issues are intimately related. What emerges as a common theme is that the methodological primacy granted to the pragmatics of language or an interpersonalist take on intersubjectivity have led Critical Theory to lose sight of the material dimensions of interaction, dimensions which these projects attempt to retrieve: for example, the embodied aspect of normative experience, or the validity of the recognition of organic life.

No research has done more to reinvigorate the interest in a substantial critical engagement with the world of work than that of Christophe Dejours. After several books on psychoanalysis in which he developed a neo-Freudian model inspired by Laplanche's theory of seduction,[4] he has brought his 'theory of the subject' to the diagnosis and analysis of the pathologies induced by current work practices.[5] The synthesis of these two strands, general psychopathology and the pathology of work, has led to the creation of a new discipline baptised 'psychodynamics of work', which serves as one of the major methodologies framing the applied and theoretical research on work conducted at the *Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers*.

Even though Dejours' main interest lies in the practical engagement with concrete cases of pathologies in actual work places, the philosophical implications of the theoretical models he has proposed in order to sustain his practice are tremendous. Indeed, as the essay published here shows very well, his theoretical praxis, nourished from and oriented towards praxis, though it may be, is also consistently buttressed by philosophical references. In particular, Dejours' most striking claims in relation to the meaning of work in the life of contemporary subjects, have been made with the help of Habermas' communicative theory of action. In the piece published here, this important appropriation of Habermas' notion of communicative action appears in the

emphasis on the deontic aspect of work: the fact that no work is possible if some minimal cooperation is not achieved, a cooperation that requires normative agreement between workers.

Conversely, however, as already suggested, Dejours' original analyses provide highly fruitful and innovative perspectives on contemporary Critical Theory, not just on Habermas, but also on the theory of recognition. Like many other papers in this volume, the expansion or correction that critical theory undergoes here relates to the emphasis being put much more forcefully than in Habermas and Honneth on the material dimensions implied in recognition. In the case of Dejours, the main correction consists in showing that one crucial form of recognition in the work situation is recognition of one's doing, rather than of one's being. This point refocuses the attention to the material dimensions of recognition in two related ways. First it reminds us that the normative impact of recognition in the area of work is not just a question of social status but also a question of skills and embodied capacities, an aspect of the person's identity that is indeed socially mediated, but one that is also more deeply attached to the person's bodily image and personality structure; one that can only be properly described by reference to something like an objective, non-human and non-subjective order of reality.

Secondly, therefore, this focus on the embodiment of the identity that expresses demands for recognition also shifts the focus to the importance of the 'real' in human experience, if by 'real' we understand, in a quasi-Sartrian way, the dimension of reality that opposes human intentions (where the 'real' therefore can also be a social rule). According to Dejours, workers demand the recognition of their doing, not only because they are intersubjectively vulnerable, but also because work consists precisely in overcoming the obstacle of the real, the resistance to the tasks, which is a structural affront to human subjectivity. This might sound like a trivial point, but in view of the high level of abstraction of contemporary interactionist theories of action, it can in fact be an essential reminder. Finally, in the extension of his model of the subject to a definition of work, Dejours manages to allow the problem of the social organisation of labour to resurface as a central political question, without returning to an abandoned metaphysics of labour. With this, he is able to recapture an important, but lost, strand of critical social theory and to make

it fully operational for a powerful critique of neo-liberal society. Dejours, like other authors in this volume, shows by example how a circumspect return to old materialist references can bring new life to critical social theory.

Theories of recognition have had a broad current in French thought, especially through the reception of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the interpretations by Alexandre Kojève and Jean Hyppolite. In Kojève's interpretation recognition is subsumed to the anthropologically structured conflict between the master-and-slave, whilst for Hyppolite recognition is a constitutive dimension of the negative phenomenology of concrete experience. These interpretations are also part of an intellectual culture that includes Sartre's own formulations in *Being and Nothingness* and *The Critique of Dialectical Reason*. To be sure, recognition has also been an enduring anthropological motif, most famously articulated in Mauss' *The Gift* as reciprocity, a motif elaborated here by Christian Lazzeri and Alain Caillé.

The essay by Lazzeri and Caillé exemplifies the expansion of contemporary Critical Theory through their own original stance on the theory of recognition. Their paper offers a systematic presentation of their joint research project on recognition, which is currently being carried out at the Université Paris X-Nanterre. Many of the conceptual premises underlying this project are similar to those of the second and third generation of Critical Theory; indeed Lazzeri and Caillé use the three-fold model of recognition developed by Axel Honneth as a heuristic tool to further analyse the logic of recognition in contemporary ethics and politics. The originality of their project on recognition compared with Honneth is at least twofold. Firstly, the paper does not attempt to argue in favour of a particular theory of recognition, for example on the question of the ontological primacy between ethical values over the dynamic of recognition. Rather, it canvasses the logical and normative possibilities facing an ethics and a politics orientated around this central notion. The project therefore has a systematic intent at its core, which is the exploration of the conceptual and normative landscape of recognition. This systematic intent explains the attempt at an exhaustive integration of all the relevant literature on recognition, from the classics to the contemporary literature in social theory and political philosophy.

Secondly, the other implication of the project, which remains more implicit, is that the project is also fundamentally interdisciplinary, with the normative

sub-branches in the disciplines in economics, politics, sociology, anthropology being called upon. One can expect extremely fruitful encounters as a result of this broad, open and interdisciplinary stance.

One such fruitful encounter is already presented in the second part of the paper, with the establishment of a dialogue between the recognition and the gift paradigms. By following such encounters, Lazzeri and Caillé's essay allows us to gain an insight into this aspect of contemporary social theory in France, which is largely unknown beyond its borders, except for Marcel Hénaff's *Prix de la Vérité*.[6] This dialogue between recognition theory and the neo-Maussian retrieval of the gift as the crucial 'operator' of social life also allows us to see that, with the interdisciplinary project designed and conducted by Lazzeri and Caillé, the theme of recognition receives a decisive shift in focus. Its ultimate goal is no longer just the resolution of normative questions, but also, and in fact primarily, the resolution of social-theoretical ones, regarding for example the nature of the social bond, the nature of the economic bond, and the logic of social movements.

As the two essays discussed above already indicate, and as attested to by other prominent engagements such as the recent work of Paul Ricoeur, one of the most powerful theoretical impacts of contemporary work in philosophy and social theory in France today relates to the theory of recognition.[7] Indeed, many essays in this volume engage substantively with the most famous contemporary German defender of a model centred on that notion, Axel Honneth. It is therefore highly appropriate that a piece by Axel Honneth should appear in this volume, one, furthermore, which overlaps in major ways with the other texts.

Honneth's main contention in the paper published here is a defence of his well-known and often criticised reliance on object-relations theory to found anew the critical theory of society. Honneth defends his continued practice of connecting psychoanalytical subject-theory with critical social theory, whilst secondly, rebutting the accusations, proffered by the founders of Critical Theory and redirected more recently by Joel Whitebook.[8] In their recent polemic, Whitebook argues that Honneth's reliance on object-relations theory robs Critical Theory of its critical edge by deleting the negative core of subject-formation in its rejection of Freud's theory of the drives, and more specifically, in abandoning the death-drive hypothesis. In the essay published

here, Honneth clearly and succinctly demonstrates why object-relations theory offers a more robust model for contemporary critical theory. Furthermore, it helps to clarify the internecine debates within Critical Theory: between Honneth and Habermas and the Habermasians on the one hand (to keep or not to keep the reference to psychoanalysis); and between Honneth and the Adornians and Marcusians on the other (does object-relations theory blunt Critical Theory's critical edge?).

Outside of this tradition, however, the paper also provides important clarifications. The correct understanding and full appreciation of the articulation between a psychoanalytical theory of the subject and normative social theory is crucial for an accurate approach to Honneth's theory. Too often, the air of obviousness of the common term 'recognition' leads to serious misreadings of Honneth's work, mainly because it is not realised that recognition is not the *ante festum* acknowledgement of an already constituted identity, but on the contrary designates the necessary, social or intersubjective, conditions for any process of identity formation that would be functioning in minimally adequate fashion. In other words, the extent to which his recognition theory is in fact first and foremost a normative theory of socialisation, or to put it differently, the extent to which his social theory is dependent upon a social psychology that is radically intersubjectivistic is often ignored, leading to all sorts of misdirected accusations.

However, other features of his essay are also worth briefly emphasising as they highlight other, less obvious, aspects of the extensive dialogue between Honneth's work and French social theory and philosophy. Let us mention only two here. Firstly, the substantial links between critical social theory and psychoanalytical subject theory take on a different colour when compared with the interdisciplinarity called for and practiced by Caillé and Lazzeri. The latter's example poses a difficult question to Honneth: is an interdisciplinarity that seems to be limited to the taking into account of subject theory sufficiently broad? Conversely, Honneth's strong model also points to a possible weakness in Caillé and Lazzeri's project: can the reference to economics, sociology and anthropology alone suffice to provide the normative resources for a critique of individual pathologies induced by social trends?

Secondly, the reference to Castoriadis at the end of Honneth's article points to a possible source for theoretical innovations in this field, innovations that

are also explored in different ways below. Since his early article on Castoriadis, it has been clear that although critical, Honneth was deeply impressed by the former's social theory.[9] There are, then, both disagreements as well as overlaps between the two, notably concerning the nexus between social and subject theory, and the idea that the origin of normativity lies in the complex formation of subjectivity in social contexts. Castoriadis is an author who is not mentioned in the sweeping panorama provided by Caillé and Lazzeri, and the themes and perspectives associated with him are also absent. This, then, suggests that the paradigm of recognition could be enriched by yet another set of issues and core texts.

With his paper "Repressed Materiality," Deranty pursues the immanent critique of Honneth's theory of recognition from a genetic perspective, a project already undertaken in a series of previous studies.[10] In this piece, Deranty highlights the complex hermeneutic methodology devised by Honneth in his early work, which lead him towards the thematic of recognition. In a way, Deranty argues, Honneth attempted to simultaneously correct Marx with Habermas, and Habermas with Marx. From Habermas, the normative, communicative aspect of social integration could be held up against the productivist paradigm. But on the other hand, Deranty argues, the variegated criticisms raised by Honneth against his teacher can be seen to be inspired by a Marxist spirit, most specifically by the need to keep a link to class struggle as an irreducible theoretical and practical component of social philosophy.

Moreover, the central reference around which these two strategies can be made compatible is that of Feuerbach and the project of a materialist philosophical anthropology. Deranty's main concern in his essay is that the strong materialist components of the early Honneth were abandoned in later years, and he suggests that they should be reintegrated within the theory of recognition for a more attuned and richer critical theory of contemporary society. This call for a 'rematerialisation' of critical theory can find support in the theoretical gesture that seems to be at the foundation of Dejours' own intervention: to reintegrate the dimension of the material in the theory of social interaction (in the shape, for example, of the resistance of the 'real' to human action, the irreducible biology of the socialised body, the importance of objective mediations in subjective and intersubjective life, and so on). It also echoes the reminder by Caillé that the paradigm of the gift allows one to see that

one does not have to choose between pure interpersonal interactionism and utilitarian exchange of commodities; that the two logics of symbolic and material interaction are imbricated and need one another.

Stéphane Haber's previous studies of Habermas' work and of social theory culminated in the 2006 publication of *Critique de l'Antinaturalisme*, a major contribution to contemporary critical social theory.[11] In it, Haber defends the thesis that, despite legitimate worries concerning the difficulty of defining the concept in ways compatible with contemporary philosophical standards, a strong reference to Nature and life as normative instances remains a necessary feature of social and political philosophy. He does this by showing how some of the major constructivist, or anti-naturalist attempts at eradicating all reference to a natural dimension have always ended up later returning to a reference to this natural dimension, in some form or another, whether it was Foucault in his late conversion to the uses of the body, Butler and her politics of bodily vulnerability, or Habermas, who faced the challenge of accounting for the normativity of the non-human within a theory entirely focused, at least on first appearances, on linguistic exchange.

Haber's essay points specifically to Habermas' hesitations towards the suffering of animals and the desecration of natural environments, caught between the necessity of acknowledging the normative value of these non-human entities, but unable to articulate it in a way fully compatible with the principles of discourse ethics. This conundrum, Haber argues, forced Habermas to reveal the intuition that inspired his thinking from the beginning: the concept of interaction understood in a broad sense, in a sense broader than its linguistic form, as communication. The essay ends on the tantalising thought that there is no reason, when one defines autonomy as being analytically linked with the recognition of the other's autonomy, to limit the recognition of the other's autonomy to the beings of one's own species, that an autonomy acquired at the expense of another being is only a hidden form of heteronomy.[12] With this thought, the capacity of Critical Theory to integrate ecological concerns in a plausible manner becomes a lot more believable.

Emmanuel Renault is one of the most important contemporary French theorists to have embraced Honneth's theory of recognition and to have further developed it for his own purposes. Renault's major work, *L'Expérience de l'Injustice*[13] published in 2004, provided a defence of Honneth's theory of

recognition, whilst at the same time extending important critical elements of it. The book defended the 'ethics of recognition' not only by providing conceptual and normative arguments in favour of its main premises and the resulting three-fold analytical grid. Even more compelling was the claim, supported by the book's own original theses, that Honneth's theory of recognition could provide a robust springboard for, and be further extended or complemented by, substantive developments in social theory and political philosophy. Among other things, the book demonstrated by example, that substantially more could be done with the ethics of recognition in terms of a critical theory of social struggles enriched by the contemporary sociology of social movements. This overlaps significantly with the remark made by Lazzeri that the theory of recognition needs to be sharpened in contact with contemporary framework analysis.[14]

Renault's book also offered a means for a renewed and decisive critique of political liberalism, thus pointing to yet another non-coincidental overlap with Lazzeri, this time, however, in opposition to him, on the precise conceptual and normative relationship between recognition theory and Rawlsian and Habermasian versions of political liberalism.[15] At issue here is the crucial question of the place of social-psychological considerations in the general political-philosophical model. To what extent is the third part of the *Theory of Justice*, where Rawls articulates a moral and social psychology with the principles of justice, compatible with the theory of recognition? Can a moral and social psychology sustain the encounter with the philosophical and sociological literature on socialisation, to inspire a sophisticated philosophical approach to social psychology? Renault's book has reintroduced into the contemporary vocabulary of French academic discourse the term and the question of injustice. This is comparable to what Dejours' studies on the social impact of the transformation of work have achieved in broader public discourse, with the issue and the very term of suffering, and notably suffering at work or suffering caused by work, now a widely discussed issue.[16] Dejours' own hypothesis on the terrifying level of unacknowledged suffering induced by neo-liberal policies and post-Fordist work practices is currently critically taken up in most interventions in social theory and on social issues in France.

In the paper published here, Renault critically assesses Foucault's biopolitical hypothesis by showing how its concrete application to social history led

to a sociologically truncated and historically inaccurate interpretation of the social medicine movement of the nineteenth century. Renault documents Foucault's lack of interest in the immense quantities of suffering provoked by industrialisation and the capitalistic organisation of production, forms of suffering that can be aptly termed 'social pathologies' and on which the social medicine of the nineteenth century, despite its social and political ambiguities, had lifted the veil in a decisive way, thus contributing strongly to the formulation of the 'social question'. The critical exercise that Renault engages in here, belongs intimately to the more general project developed by him in *L'Expérience de l'Injustice*. The historical reminder, trivial only in appearance, about the extent of suffering that capitalistic industrialisation had occasioned in the nineteenth century, and the reminder about the urgency of the social question at that time, both consolidate Renault's critique of political liberalism. They give empirical weight to his claim that the true origin of normativity, despite the wide Kantian consensus reigning today, lies primarily with the conditions of subjective identity, and not with the exercise of practical reason or with the ability to engage in domination-free communication.

This point, however, links directly with Renault's most fundamental thesis: that justice can be defined only negatively, as that which subjects strive towards when they struggle against injustice. The 'industrial pathologies' (Marx) of the nineteenth century, and the political and medical attempts at eradicating them are great examples of the possibility of major pathologies developing within well-functioning and well-meant liberal frameworks, as well as of the importance of social movements for making such social pathologies visible. This gives a strong historical illustration and justification to Renault's critique of political liberalism and to his redefinition of justice as the struggle against injustice. Once again, therefore, the theory of recognition is extended through the reintegration of a material moment: this time, as in the work of Dejours, through the suffering bodies of working subjects.

III. Representations, Imaginaries, Politics

As many of the papers discussed above in Section II indicate, perhaps most strongly by Dejours and Caillé and Lazzeri, there is a spectre haunting French

thought, the spectre of classical French social theory. In the contemporary context it is not only the work of Mauss that is being re-evaluated, as indicated by the work of the MAUSS group and the earlier studies by Lévi-Strauss and Derrida, but also Durkheim's. Durkheim's work has continued to cast its own long shadow over French intellectual life, not only in sociology and anthropology, but also philosophy. This is especially the case with his central notion of the *conscience collective* and its later formulation as collective representations. The Durkheimian notion of collective representation embodies several theoretical and political strategies—the theorisation of forms of social power, social divisions, and of societies in general; a way to formulate the creation and emergence of new and different forms of social thinking; and forms of reflexivity and the social spaces in which these forms might occur. In this sense, representation matters, both in terms of the self-understandings to which the participants in conflict may be orientated, that is, the mutual comprehension and recognition of key social imaginaries, and the forms of political representation through which social groupings—class, ethnic and racial groups—can articulate their demands and be part of the polity and its processes and procedures.

The papers discussed in this final section address Durkheim's theoretical and political understandings of representation in ways that recognise the innovation, radicality and legacy of Durkheim's work, and also bring it in contact with neo- and post-Marxist currents. By so doing, these papers also open onto issues regarding democracy that stand outside models of incorporation and include direct democracy, representative democracy, regional representation, national representation, and supra-national representation, all of which may stand under the umbrella of a cosmopolitan ethos or social imaginary.

This is especially the case with the work of Cornelius Castoriadis, notwithstanding his own critiques of the politics and metaphysics of representation. It is specifically Castoriadis' work, as well as the legacy of Durkheim, that provide the implicit or explicit point of reference for the essays in this volume by John Rundell and Natalie Doyle.[17] As both authors indicate, Castoriadis' own notion of the social imaginary shares some affinities with Durkheim's notion of collective representations and provides the basis for points of contact and comparison between the two bodies of work.

In his "Durkheim and the Reflexive Condition of Modernity," John Rundell emphasises Durkheim's own pre-occupation with the possible reflexive condition of collective representations. To be sure, Rundell approaches Durkheim's work from the position of Castoriadis' ontological recasting of the social in order to implicitly draw some affinities between the notion of collective representation and imaginary signification. If this is the implicit point of reference, the explicit one is the specificity that both thinkers give to the reflexive condition of modernity. For Castoriadis, 'the germ', or the model for the reflexive condition of modernity resides in the Axial breakthrough that occurred in fifth century Athens with the creation of philosophy and its internal and often tragic relation to democracy.[18] For Rundell, Durkheim's work, especially his little known *The Evolution of Educational Thought*, presents a model of reflexivity that focuses on the historical development of the modern period that is concentrated in the formation of the European universities from the eleventh and twelfth centuries onward. In Durkheim's view the European university developed a pedagogical model that began to decentre closed forms of thinking and open it through the development of increasingly reflexive forms of thought such as science, history and the arts and languages.

Moreover, according to Rundell, Durkheim's model of reflexivity also opens onto an understanding of political modernity, which is viewed as a particular constellation of the circulation of power, especially in nation-states, open forms of reflexivity, and democracy. It is here that Durkheim's notion of representation comes into play as a complex category that refers to the modern problem of representative politics and the problem of anomie; to the reflexive capacity of modern societies and subjects; and to the creation of forms of thinking beyond the specificity of the everyday, forms of thinking that give shape, form and definition to both the political and ontological identity of a given society.[19]

Durkheim's complex formulation of collective representation is also explored by Natalie Doyle in her essay "The Social, Creativity, and the State" where she makes explicit the affinities that Durkheim's program has with Castoriadis' own notion of imaginary significations. Castoriadis' work also recasts the way in which social power has been formulated from one that concerns its conventional conceptualisation in terms of physical coercion or institutionalised violence to one in which power is viewed as the outcome of social cre-

ativity. For Doyle, like Rundell, a reflection on the creative and cultural nature of political power and its role in society draws our attention to the pioneering work of Durkheim's sociology, and especially for her, with regard to the homology that exists between religion, politics and the state. Durkheim's exploration of the social role performed by the state also prefigures Gauchet's theory of the state, which builds further on Lefort's work. According to Doyle, it can be argued that Gauchet's theory synthesises Durkheim's sociology of religion and his sociology of the modern state in a way that raises questions about the role played by the European state in the development of individualism, in both its political and economic manifestations.

The political nature of Durkheim's work also opens onto his own Kantianism, especially his critique of economic individualism (so central to Mauss' work), together with his counter-formulation of another version of individualism grounded in reciprocal rights. Durkheim's Kantianism provides a space for the positive reception in France not only of Kant, but also Germany's latter-day Kant—Jürgen Habermas, a reception that has been discussed in Part Two, above. Moreover, both Durkheim's and Habermas' works provide a reference point for conceptualising the complex condition of modern politics, which, as we have seen in our discussion in Part One, cannot be reduced to a series of simplified formulas and lines of new totalising thinking. This complexity is highlighted in Gérard Raulet's "Cosmopolitanism as a Matter of Domestic Policy," and Yves Sintomer's "Gender and Political Representation: The Question of *Parité* in France." Both writers have been influential in bringing Habermas' work into the orbit of French intellectual culture.[20] Moreover, politically, and not only intellectually, both essays are symptomatic of the complexity of French politics today in a post-national or federated European context.

If Durkheim never took cosmopolitanism seriously, nonetheless, his proposition concerning the centrality of national identity to the well-being of modern collective representations contained an insight that Gérard Raulet combines with his own concern with cosmopolitanism in the age of pan-Europeanism. To be sure, Raulet was not only one of the first writers who introduced Habermas' work in France, but in that context, was also central to facilitating the reception of German Critical Theory more broadly. He is primarily responsible for establishing a dialogue between Foucault's own work and

Critical Theory, at least in terms of their respective critiques of the instru-
mentalist colonisation of everyday life and politics.[21]

Against Kant's utopian cosmopolitan argument in *Perpetual Peace*, and
Habermas' own modified version of it in his "Kant's Idea of Perpetual Peace
with the Benefit of Two Hundred Years Hindsight," Raulet argues that the
claim and the desire for cosmopolitanism cannot be disconnected from nation-
states. This is especially the case in a putative globalised environment, which
posits the relativisation of nation-states and their subordination simply as
regions to the demands and mobility of new forms of capital and labour.
Notwithstanding their nationalisms, nation-states still provide frameworks
or collective representations for the realities of social life, for imagined com-
munities (B. Anderson) and legal structures against which globalisation may
be contested.

For Raulet, the recognition of the nation-state as a functioning social and
political unit, which provides the continuing context for most forms of social-
isation, is neither a republican-integrationist nor a communitarian argument—
quite the opposite. According to Raulet and in a restatement and expansion
of his argument in *Critical Cosmology*, the nation-state should not be viewed
as a community of integrated citizens subordinated to a republican ideal, in
the style of the older versions of universalisms discussed by Balibar, but as
a 'civilised state of war', that is as a social space where power and politics
combine, where conflict and democracy share an internal relation. For Raulet,
the nation-state is, thus, still the most significant site where minimally, recog-
nition means conflict without, as he says, 'the camouflage of tolerance'. For
Raulet, this conflict without 'the camouflage of tolerance' denotes the living
and acceptable disjunction and discrepancy between racial and national iden-
tities, republican ideals and claims for integration, and cosmopolitan utopias
and practices. In this context, there is an indeterminate and open *relation*,
rather than a necessary and closing *connection* between recognition and
reciprocity.

According to Raulet, the recognition of disjunction and discrepancy has ben-
efits at the transnational level, where nation-states and cosmopolitanism pro-
vides a double point of mediation for the political life of citizens in an
increasingly mobile world. This double-sided mediation continues to occur

in relations between civil societies and nation-states, and in formal and informal international forums. Both generate robust public spheres that require political actors who, themselves, recognise and can address complexity and disaggregation, without being disaggregated themselves.

However, as writers as diverse as Balibar and Wieviorka have stressed, the French nation-state also advances its own republican model, which emphasises a conflation between universalism, sovereignty and citizenship, and national identity when faced with social conflicts. This has been the case, whether these conflicts have stemmed from transformations in work practices, or from so-called post-industrial configurations such as demands from ethnic groups, regionalists, environmentalists, or sexual and gay rights activists. As Sintomer notes in his "Gender and Political Representation: The Question of *Parité* in France," this is no less the case for the presence, status and role of women in the French republic, and especially with reference to political life. This issue of the relation between the republic and the political came to paradigmatic life in a debate concerning the equal political representation of women that occurred in 1999. As Sintomer implies, the question of women's political representation is paradigmatic because it opens onto the problem of political representation and the way in which it crosses over between the variety of arguments concerning 'conflicting universalities', universality versus particularity, culture versus nature. In the face of a republican model in which the state is viewed as embodying both universality and particularity the position of women is especially paradoxical. Either the universalistic grammar of the republic—rights, disembodied participation, impartiality—is embraced as the basis of inclusion, or specificity, difference, particularity is emphasised, which runs the risk of reinforcing an essentialism. Sintomer points to this paradox as the key to mapping the contours of this recent equality debate—a debate, which, he argues both reproduced the paradox and threw it into relief.

Notwithstanding the complexities present in the debate, these two stark paradoxical positions were articulated by various participants in the recent debates about 'parity' in France. For their part, 'classical republicans', argued that politics transcends any natural or social differences, and that representation is based on political affiliation alone. In comparison, 'differentialist feminists' posited arguments of difference, whether they be naturalistically or ontologically

grounded, in which they maintained representation should be a right on the basis of women's specific difference. As Sintomer also points out, a form of 'parity republicanism' also emerged that attempted to generate a third position, which moved between the first two—a modified conflictual universality, so to speak. In this position a naturalism was posited that was also accompanied by a socio-historical construction, which together was doubled with a humanism, and it was on the basis of this doubling that equality of representation should be accorded. In other words, 'Universality' here meant the universalities of 'nature' and 'history', which are represented in the Republic. This position 'won the day' and became imbedded in the Amendment to the National Assembly on the 3rd May, 2000, which also brought French republicanism in line with principles laid down by the European Union.

Nonetheless, despite the victory of 'parity republicanism' the debate threw into relief not only a paradox, but also a politics geared to integration rather than conflict and the permanent mobilisation of ambivalences of meaning. It is precisely here that the question of representation is also thrown into relief as both a limit to conflict and as a facilitator. As Sintomer notes, power differentials cannot simply be dissolved once representation becomes available and fixed in forms grounded, for example, in delegated individualism, corporatism, or proportional representation. No amount of deliberation or procedure overcomes inequality, injustice or a lack of freedom. Hence, it is not a matter of restating paradoxes embodied in divisions between universality and particularity, republicanism or multiculturalism, or of managing state sponsored difference. Rather, these issues of equality, freedom, and justice concern the dynamics of power and conflict, that is, *politics*, which should remain dynamic and open-ended in all instances.

As many of the writers in this volume and beyond it emphasise—politics is not simply representation, but concerns the ongoing articulation of conflicts, both old and new, whether or not they will ever be resolved, integrated or managed. A common thread running throughout the essays present in this volume, despite the often deep disagreements between the writers here, is a recognition of the centrality of conflict for the theory and practice of democracy. In this sense, and as is intimated by many of the writers in this volume, a distinction can be made between power, politics and conflict on the one hand, and violence and the images of rupture, on the other. The latter closes

social spaces in which the enunciation of complex demands, claims, points of view and stakes are either denied or disappear in the winner-takes-all stance of combat, which when fought evokes the language of finality. By contrast and understood as social action and not as a set of institutional arrangements, politics denotes an ongoing activity of disputation, whether or not this disputation takes the form of non-verbal acts such as strikes and protests, or verbal ones such as arguments.[22] As some of the essays also indicate recognitive conflict also opens onto fields of work and nature in which relations between subjects and their objects are anything but one-sided and violently imposed, or passive and taken-for-granted. In all of these instances a basic anthropological claim is being made, that of the recognition of the ongoing, indeterminate and contestatory nature of social life, and especially of politics. In other words, recognitive conflict denotes an internal relation between conflict and politics, and a constitutive co-presence of the participants or protaganists within the field of the political itself.

Notes

[1] Cf. Vincent Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1979; A. Hirsh, *The French New Left: An Intellectual History from Sartre to Gorz*, Boston, South End Press, 1981.

[2] See Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. with an Introduction by Gabriel Rockhill, New York, Continuum, 2004.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 49-72.

[4] See especially Christophe Dejours, *Le Corps d'Abord*, Paris, Payot, 2003.

[5] See the amazing small book *Le Facteur Humain*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1995. The book is first of all a methodical study in the psychology of work intended for ergonomists and engineers of work. But the analyses conducted in it have tremendous philosophical implications, not just on the specific question of work, but also for political philosophy and the philosophy of subjectivity. The book in which Dejours' general psychological model and his vision of the place of work in subjective life are brought together most explicitly is *Travail, Usure Mentale. Essai de Psychologie du Travail*, Paris, Bayard, 2000 (3rd edition). It is also in this book that the 'psychodynamics of work' is directly reinterpreted in terms of recognition.

[6] Marcel Hénaff, *Le Prix de la Vérité: Le Don, l'Argent, la Philosophie*, Paris, Seuil, 2002.

[7] Paul Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition*, trans. David Pellauer, Cambridge, Mass. & London, Harvard University Press, 2005.

8   See Joel Whitebook, "Wechselseitige Anerkennung und die Arbeit des Negativen" in *Psyche*, vol. 55, no. 8, 2001, pp. 755-789; Joel Whitebook, "Mutual Recognition and the Work of the Negative," in *Pluralism and the Pragmatic Turn: The Transformation of Critical Theory, Essays in Honor of Thomas McCarthy*, eds. William Rehg and James Bohman, Cambridge, Mass., & London, The MIT Press, 2001; Axel Honneth, "Facetten des vorsozialen Selbst. Eine Erwiderung auf Joel Whitebook," in *Psyche*, vol. 55, no. 8, 2001, pp. 790-802; Joel Whitebook, "Die Grenzen des 'intersubjektive turn'. Eine Erwiderung auf Axel Honneth," *Psyche*, vol. 57, no. 3, 2003, pp. 250-261.

9   See Axel Honneth, "Rescuing the Revolution with an Ontology: On Cornelius Castoriadis' Theory of Society," in *The Fragmented World of the Social. Essays in Social and Political Philosophy*, ed. Charles Wright, State University of New York Press, 1995, pp. 168-183.

10   See Jean-Philippe Deranty, "The Loss of Nature in Axel Honneth's Theory of Recognition. Rereading Mead with Merleau-Ponty," *Critical Horizons*, vol. 6, 2005, pp. 239-266; and "Les Horizons Marxistes de l'Éthique de la Reconnaissance," *Actuel Marx*, no. 38, 2005, pp. 159-178.

11   Stéphane Haber, *Critique de l'Antinaturalisme. Etudes sur Foucault, Butler, Habermas*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 2006.

12   See below, Christian Lazzeri and Alain Caillé, "Recognition Today. The Theoretical, Ethical and Political Stakes of the Concept," pp. 108–118.

13   Emmanuel Renault, *L'Expérience de l'Injustice. Reconnaissance et Clinique de l'Injustice*, Paris, La Découverte, 2004.

14   See below, Stéphane Haber, "Discourse Ethics and the Problem of Nature," p. 178.

15   See also E. Renault, "Radical Democracy and an Abolitionist Concept of Justice: A Critique of Habermas' Theory of Justice," in *Critique Today*, eds. Robert Sinnerbrink, Jean-Philippe Deranty, Nicholas H. Smith & Peter Schmiedgen, Leiden, Brill, 2006, pp. 137-152.

16   See especially C. Dejours, *Souffrance en France. La Banalisation de l'Injustice Sociale*, Paris, Seuil, 1998.

17   See Cornelius Castoriadis, *Social and Political Writings*, Vol. 1, 1988; see also the essay by Christophe Premat, "Castoriadis and the Modern Political Imaginary," in *Critical Horizons*, vol. 7, 2006, where he discusses Castoriadis' dispute with Lefort.

18   See Cornelius Castoriadis, "The Greek *polis* and the Creation of Democracy," in *Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy*, ed. David Ames Curtis, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1991, pp. 81-123; "Aeschylean Anthropogony and Sophoclean Self-Creation of Anthropos," in *Agon, Logos, Politics*, eds. Johann P. Arnason & Peter Murphy,

Stuttgart, Franz Steiner Verlag, 2001, pp. 138-154; see also the essay by Johann P. Arnason, "Autonomy and Axiality" in the same volume. See also Nathalie Karagiannis, "The Tragic and the Political: A Parallel Reading of Kostas Papaioannou and Cornelius Castoriadis" in *Critical Horizons*, Volume 7, 2006.

[19] Moreover, Rancière's own defence of the 'aesthetic' regime (that is, the post-representative, or post-classical one), also occurs precisely in the name of the new creativity and reflexivity of representation.

[20] See Yves Sintomer, *La Démocratie Impossible. Politique et Modernité chez Weber et Habermas*, Paris, La Découverte, 1999; Gérard Reulet and Paul-Laurent Assoun, *Marxisme et Théorie Critique*, Paris, Payot, 1978.

[21] See the conceptual and narrative recount by Emmanuel Renault in "Foucault et l'Ecole de Francfort," in Yves Cusset & Stéphane Haber, *Habermas, Foucault: Parcours Croisés, Confrontations Critiques*, Paris, CNRS Editions, 2006, pp. 55-68.

[22] It could be argued that through their own internal history the French are led towards the idea of a reconfiguration of politics as struggle for recognition. In this context, it is striking how close, for example, Honneth and Ranciere turn out to be in their visions of politics. See J-P. Deranty, "Rancière and Contemporary Political Ontology," *Theory and Event*, vol. 6, no. 4, Summer, 2003; "Jacques Rancière's Contribution to the Ethics of Recognition," *Political Theory*, vol. 31, no. 1, February, 2003, pp. 136-156.

Chapter Two

The Ethical Turn of Aesthetics and Politics[1]

Jacques Rancière

I

In order to truly understand what is at stake in the ethical turn that affects aesthetics and politics today, we must first precisely define the meaning of the word 'ethics'. Ethics is indeed a fashionable word. But it is often taken as a simple, more euphonious translation of the old word 'morals'. Ethics is viewed as a general instance of normativity that enables one to judge the validity of practices and discourses operating in the particular spheres of judgement and action. Understood in this way, the ethical turn would mean that politics or art are increasingly subjected today to moral judgements about the validity of their principles and the consequences of their practices. There are those who loudly rejoice about such a return to ethical values.

I do not believe that there is so much to rejoice about, because I do not believe that this is actually what is happening today. The reign of ethics is not the reign of moral judgements over the operations of art or of political action.

On the contrary, it signifies the constitution of an indistinct sphere where not only is the specificity of political and artistic practices dissolved, but also what was actually the core of the old term morals: the distinction between fact and law, what is and what ought to be. Ethics amounts to the dissolution of the norm into the fact—the identification of all forms of discourse and practice under the same indistinct point of view. Before signifying a norm or morality, the word *ethos* signifies two things: ethos is the dwelling and the way of being, the way of life corresponding to this dwelling. Ethics, then, is the kind of thinking which establishes the identity between an environment, a way of being and a principle of action. The contemporary ethical turn is the specific conjunction of these two phenomena. On the one hand, the instance of evaluating and choosing judgement finds itself humbled before the power of the law that imposes itself. On the other hand, the radicality of this law that leaves no other choice is nothing but the simple constraint stemming from the order of things. The growing indistinction between fact and law brings about an unprecedented dramaturgy of infinite evil, justice and redemption.

Two recent films depicting the avatars of justice in a local community can help us understand this paradox. The first is *Dogville* by Lars von Trier (2002). The film tells the story of Grace, the alien girl who, in order to be accepted by the citizens of the small town, places herself in their service, submitting herself first to exploitation, and then to persecution when she tries to escape them. This story transposes the Brechtian fable of Saint Joan of the Stockyards who wanted to impose Christian morality in the capitalist jungle. But the transposition is a very good illustration of the gap between the two epochs. The Brechtian fable was set in a universe in which all notions were divided in two. Christian morality proved ineffective in combatting the violence of the economic order. It had to be transformed into a militant morality, which took as its criterion the necessities of the struggle against oppression. The right of the oppressed was therefore opposed to the right that was the accomplice of oppression, defended by the strike-busting policemen. The opposition of two types of violence was therefore also that of two morals and two rights.

This division of violence, morality, and right has a name. It is called politics. Politics is not, as is often said, the opposite of morals. It is its division. *Saint Joan of the Stockyards* was a fable about politics that demonstrated the impos-

sibility of a mediation between these two rights and these two types of violence. By contrast, the evil encountered by Grace in *Dogville* refers to no other cause but itself. Grace no longer represents the good soul mystified by her ignorance of the causes of evil. She is just the stranger, the excluded one who wants to be admitted into the community and who is subjected by the community before being rejected by it. Her disillusionment and her narrative of suffering no longer depend on any system of domination that could be understood and destroyed. They depend upon a form of evil that is the cause and the effect of its own reproduction. This is why the only fitting retribution is the radical cleansing exercised upon the community by a Lord and Father who is no one else but the king of thugs. "Only violence helps where violence reigns" was the Brechtian lesson. Only evil repays evil, is the transformed formula, the one that is appropriate for consensual and humanitarian times. Let us translate this into the language of George W. Bush: only infinite justice is appropriate in the fight against the axis of evil.

The expression 'infinite justice' has unsettled a number of people and it has been deemed preferable to quickly withdraw it. It has been said that it was not well chosen. Maybe it was chosen only too well. It is probably for the same reason that the morality of *Dogville* has caused a scandal. The jury at the Cannes film festival accused the film of lacking humanism. This lack of humanism lies without a doubt in the idea of a justice done to injustice. A humanist fiction, in this sense, must be a fiction that suppresses this justice by effacing the very opposition of the just and the unjust. This is precisely the proposition of another film, *Mystic River*, by Clint Eastwood (2002). In this film, Jimmy's crime, the summary execution of his former mate Dave, whom he thinks is guilty of the murder of his daughter, remains unpunished. It remains the secret kept in common by the guilty and his associate, the policeman Sean. This is because the joint guilt of Jimmy and Sean exceeds what a tribunal can judge. They are the ones who, while they were children, took Dave along in their risky street games. It is because of them that Dave was taken away by men posing as police, locked up and raped. Because of this trauma, Dave became an adult with problems, one whose aberrant behaviour denotes him as the ideal culprit for the murder of the young girl.

Dogville transposed a theatrical and political fable. *Mystic River* transforms a cinematographic and moral fable: the scenario of the falsely accused, illustrated

notably by Hitchcock and Lang. In this scenario, truth confronted the falli-
ble justice of tribunals and public opinion, and always ended up winning, at
the cost sometimes of confronting another form of fatality.[2] However, evil
today with its innocents and guilty has become the trauma that knows
neither innocence nor guilt. It is a state of indistinction between guilt and
innocence, between spiritual disease and social unrest. It is within such trau-
matic violence that Jimmy kills Dave, who is himself the victim of a trauma
following a rape whose perpetrators themselves were without doubt victims
of another trauma. However, it is not only the scenario of disease that has
replaced the scenario of justice. Disease itself has changed its meaning. The
new psychoanalytical fiction is strictly opposed to the one that Lang or
Hitchcock had drawn on fifty years earlier where the violent or the sick were
saved by the reactivation of a buried childhood memory.[3] The trauma of child-
hood has become the trauma of birth, the simple misfortune belonging to
every human being for being an animal born too early. This misfortune from
which nobody can escape revokes the idea of a justice done to injustice. It
does not abolish punishment. But it abolishes its justice. It brings it back to
the imperatives of the protection of the social body, which, as we know, always
has its few mishaps. Infinite justice then takes the 'humanist' shape of the
violence that is necessary for maintaining the order of the community by
exorcising trauma.

Many like to denounce the simplistic nature of the psychoanalytical intrigues
that are made in Hollywood. These intrigues, though, adapt their structure
and tonality quite faithfully to the lessons of professional psychoanalysis.
Between the successful cures in Lang and Hitchcock to the buried secret and
irreconcilable trauma that Clint Eastwood presents to us, we recognise without
difficulty the movement that goes from the Oedipal knowledge intrigue to
the irreducible division of knowledge and law which another great tragic
heroine symbolises, namely Antigone. Under Oedipus' sign the trauma was
the forgotten event whose reactivation could cure the wound. When Antigone
replaces Oedipus in the Lacanian theorisation, a new form of secret is estab-
lished, one that is irreducible to any saving knowledge. The trauma that is
summarised in *Antigone* is without beginning or end. It is the discontents of
a civilisation where the laws of social order are undermined by the very thing
that supports them: the powers of filiation, of earth and night.

Antigone, said Lacan, is not the heroine of human rights that was created by the modern democratic piety. She is rather the terrorist, the witness of the secret terror at the basis of the social order. As a matter of fact, in political matters trauma takes the name of terror. Terror is one of the master words of our time. It surely designates a reality of crime and horror that nobody can ignore. But it is also a term of indistinction. Terror designates the attacks on New York on 11 September 2001 or Madrid on 11 March 2004, as well as the strategy in which these attacks have their place. However, by gradual extension, this word also comes to designate the shock caused in people's minds by the event, the fear that similar events might recur, the fear that violent acts that are still unthinkable might occur, the situation charac- terised by such fears, the management of this situation through State appa- ratuses, and so on. To talk of a war against terror is to connect the form of these attacks with the intimate angst that can inhabit each one of us in the same chain. War against terror and infinite justice then fall within the indis- tinction of a preventative justice which attacks all that triggers or could trig- ger terror, everything that threatens the social bond holding the community together. This is a form of justice whose logic is to stop only when terror will have ceased, which, by definition, never stops for us beings who are sub- jected to the trauma of birth. At the same time, therefore, this is a justice for whom no other justice can serve as a norm, a justice that puts itself above any rule of law.

Grace's misfortunes and Dave's execution illustrate quite well this transfor- mation of the interpretive schemes of our experience that I call the ethical turn. The essential aspect in this process is certainly not the virtuous return to the norms of morality. It is, on the contrary, the abolition of the division that the very word 'morals' used to imply. Morality implied the separation of law and fact. It implied concurrently the division of different forms of morality and of rights, the division between the ways in which right was opposed to fact. The abolition of this division has one privileged name: it is called consensus. Consensus is also one of the master terms of our time. How- ever, its sense tends to be minimised. Some interpret it as the global agree- ment of governing and opposition parties over the great national interests. Others see it more broadly as a new style of government that gives prece- dence to discussion and negotiation to resolve conflicts. Consensus, however,

means a lot more—properly understood it signifies a mode of symbolic structuration of the community that empties out the political core that constitutes it, namely dissension. A *political* community is indeed a community that is structurally divided, not divided between diverging interest groups and opinions, but divided in relation to itself. A political 'people' is never the same thing as the sum of a population.[4] It is always a form of supplementary symbolisation in relation to any counting of the population and of its parts.[5] And this form of symbolisation is always a litigious one. The classical form of political conflict opposes several 'peoples' in one: there is the 'people' that is inscribed in the existing forms of the law and the constitution, 'the people' that is embodied in the State, the one that is ignored by this law or whose right the State does not recognise, the one that makes its claims in the name of another right that is still to be inscribed in facts. Consensus is the reduction of these different ways of being the 'people' into a single one, one that is identical with the counting of the population and of its parts, and with the counting of the interests of the global community and of its parts.

Since it strives to reduce the people to the population, consensus strives in fact to reduce right to fact. Its incessant work is to fill in all these intervals between right and fact through which the right and the people divide themselves. The political community thus tends to be transformed into an *ethical* community, the community of only one single people in which everyone is supposed to be counted. Only this counting stumbles over the problematic remainder that it terms 'the excluded'. However, one has to realise that this term itself is not univocal. The excluded can mean two very different things. In the political community, the excluded is a conflictual actor who includes him or herself as a supplementary political subject, carrying a right not yet recognised or witnessing the injustice of the existing right. In the ethical community, this supplement is no longer supposed to take place since everyone is included. The excluded, therefore, has no status in the structuration of the community. On the one hand, he or she is simply the one who accidentally falls outside the great equality of all: the sick, the retarded or the forsaken to whom the community must stretch its hand in order to re-establish the 'social bond'. On the other, he or she becomes the radical other, the one who is separated from the community for the simple fact that he or she is alien to it, that he or she doesn't share the identity that binds each to all, and that he or she threatens the community in each of us. The depoliti-

cised national community then constitutes itself like the small society in *Dogville*, in the duplicity of the social services of proximity and the absolute rejection of the other.

A new international landscape corresponds to this new figure of the national community. Ethics has established its reign here, too, initially in the form of the humanitarian, and then in the form of infinite justice against the axis of evil. It has done this through a similar process of increasing indistinction between fact and right. On national stages this process signifies the disappearance of the intervals between right and fact through which dissension and political subjects were constituted. On the international stage, this process has translated into the disappearance of right itself, with the right to intervene and targeted assassinations its most visible expressions. This disappearance, though, occurred through a detour. It implied the constitution of a right beyond all rights, the absolute right of the victim. This constitution, itself, implies a significant overturning of what is, in a way, the right of right or its meta-juridical foundation—human rights. The latter have been subjected to a strange transformation in the last twenty years. For a while, they had been the victim of the Marxist suspicion towards 'formal' rights, but had been rejuvenated in the 1980s through the dissident movements in Eastern Europe. The collapse of the Soviet system at the turn of the 1990s seemed to open the way for a world where a different national consensus would be turned and extended into an international order based on these rights. As we know, this optimistic vision was immediately belied by the new ethnic conflicts and the new wars of religion. Human rights had been the weapon of dissidents who were opposing another people to the one their governments pretended to incarnate. They then became the rights of populations who were the victims of the new ethnic wars, the rights of individuals driven away from their destroyed homes, of women raped and men massacred. They became the specific rights of those who were unable to exercise those rights. As a result, the following alternative presented itself: either these human rights no longer meant anything, or they became the absolute rights of those without rights, that is to say rights demanding a response which was itself absolute, beyond all formal, juridical norms.

However, this absolute right of those without rights could be exercised only by an other. It is this transfer that was first called humanitarian right and

humanitarian war. In a second step, the humanitarian war against the oppressor of human rights became the infinite justice exercised against that invisible and omnipresent enemy who came to threaten the defender of the absolute right of victims on its own territory. The absolute right then identified with the simple demand for the security of a factual community. The humanitarian war becomes an endless war against terror: a war that is not one, but a mechanism of infinite protection, a way of dealing with a trauma elevated to the status of a civilisational phenomenon.

We are no longer then in the classical frame of a discussion on ends and means. The latter distinction collapses with the same indistinctions between fact and right, or cause and effect. What is opposed to the evil of terror then is either a lesser evil, the simple conservation of what is, or of waiting for a salvation that would come from the very radicalisation of catastrophe.

This reversal in political thinking has lodged itself in the heart of philosophical thinking under two guises: either the affirmation of a right of the Other which philosophically founds the right of peace-keeping forces or the affirmation of a state of exception which makes politics and right inoperative and only leaves the hope of a messianic salvation rising from the bottom of hopelessness. The first position was well summarised by Jean-François Lyotard in a text which, significantly, is entitled "The Other's Rights."[6] This text responded, in 1993, to a question posed by Amnesty International: what do human rights become in the context of humanitarian intervention? In his response, Lyotard gave the 'other's rights' a meaning which sheds light on what ethics and the ethical turn mean. Human rights, he explained, cannot be the rights of the human as human, the rights of the naked human being. The argument, at its core, is not new. It had been used successively in critiques by Burke, Marx and Arendt. The naked human, the apolitical human, they had shown, is without rights. He/she must be something other than a 'human' in order to have rights. This 'other than human' has historically been called 'citizen'. The duality of the human and the citizen has historically informed two things: the critique of the duplicity of these rights that are always somewhere other than where they should be, and political action that installs different forms of dissension in the gap between the human and the citizen.

However, at the time of consensus and humanitarian action, this 'other than human' undergoes a radical mutation. He is no longer the citizen who

complements the human. He is the inhuman who separates him from himself. In the violations of human rights that are described as inhuman, Lyotard sees the consequences of the lack of acknowledgement of another 'inhuman', a positive inhuman, one is tempted to say. This 'inhuman' is that part of ourselves that we do not control, a part that takes on several figures and several names: the dependence of the child, the law of the unconscious, the relationship of obedience towards an absolute Other. The 'inhuman' is that radical dependence of the human towards an absolutely other whom he cannot master. The 'right of the other' then is the right to witness this subjection to the law of the other. The violation of this right, according to Lyotard, starts with the will to master that which cannot be mastered. That will is supposed to have been the will of the Enlightenment and of the Revolution, and the Nazi genocide is supposed to have accomplished it by exterminating the very people whose vocation it is to bear witness to the necessary dependence on the law of the Other. And that will is supposed to continue today in the soft version of the society of generalised consumption and transparency.

Two features thus characterise the ethical turn. First of all, it is a reversal of the flow of time: time turned towards the end to be realised—progress, emancipation, or the other—is replaced by time turned towards the catastrophe that is behind us. And it is also a levelling of the very forms of that catastrophe. The extermination of the European Jews then appears as the explicit form of a global situation, which also characterises the everyday of our democratic and liberal existence. This is what Giorgio Agamben's formula summarises: the camp is the *nomos* of modernity, that is to say, its place and its rule, a rule which is itself identical to radical exception. Undoubtedly, Agamben's and Lyotard's perspectives are different. The former founds no right of the other. On the contrary, he denounces the generalisation of a state of exception and calls for the messianic waiting of a salvation rising from the very depths of catastrophe. His analysis, however, summarises well what I call the 'ethical turn'. The state of exception is a state that erases the difference between henchmen and victims, as well as between the extremity of the crime of the Nazi State and the everyday life of our democracies. The true horror of the camps, writes Agamben, more so than the gas chamber, is the football match, which in the empty hours, opposed the SS and the Jews of the *Sonderkommando*.[7] That game is replayed every time we turn on our televisions to watch a football match. All differences are erased in the law of a global situation. The

latter appears as the accomplishment of an ontological destiny that leaves no room for political dissension and expects salvation only from an improbable ontological revolution.

II. The 'Ethical Turn' and Aesthetics

This gradual disappearance of the differences of politics and right in an ethical indistinction also defines the present state of the arts and aesthetic reflection. In the same way that politics fades away in the couplet constituted by consensus and infinite justice, arts and aesthetic reflection tend to redistribute themselves between a vision of art dedicated to the service of the social bond and another that de-dedicates it to the interminable witnessing of the catastrophe.

The creative arrangements with which art intended to bear witness to the contradiction of a world marked by oppression a few decades ago, today point to a common ethical belonging. Let us compare for example two works exploiting the same idea, thirty years apart. At the time of the Vietnam war, Chris Burden created his *Other Memorial*, dedicated to the dead on the other side, the thousands of Vietnamese victims without names and without monument. On the bronze plaques of his monument, he had given names to these anonymous people: the Vietnamese-sounding names of other anonymous people, which he had copied randomly from the phonebook. Thirty years later, Christian Boltanski presented an installation entitled *Les Abonnés du Téléphone* (*People in the Phonebook*): an installation consisting of two large sets of shelves with phonebooks from around the world and two long tables where visitors could sit down and consult them at their leisure. The installations of today thus rely formally on the same idea as the counter-monuments of yesterday. They are still about anonymity. However, the mode of material realisation and the political signification are completely different. This is no longer one monument against another. It is a space that counts as *mimesis* of the common space. And whilst the purpose yesterday was to simultaneously give back names and lives to those who had been deprived of them by State power, today's anonymous people are simply, as the artist says, 'specimens of humanity' with whom we are caught in a large community. Boltanski's installation is, therefore, a good summary of the spirit of an exhibition that intended to be the encyclopaedia of a century of common history—a uniting memory landscape, opposite to yesterday's installations, which intended to

divide. Like many contemporary installations, Boltanski's was still making use of the procedure which, thirty years earlier, had been the method of a critical art: the systematic introduction of the objects and images of the world in the temple of art. But the meaning of this mixing has changed radically. Previously, the encounters between heterogeneous elements were meant to underline the contradictions of a world marked by exploitation and question the place of art and its institutions in this conflictual world. Today, the same gathering is stated as the positive operation of an art that has been put in charge of the functions of archiving and of bearing witness to a common world. This gathering then is in keeping with a state of art marked by the categories of consensus: to return the lost meaning of a common world or to repair the cracks in the social bond.

Such an aim can be explicitly expressed, for example, in the program of a relational art intending above all to create situations of proximity, allowing for the elaboration of new forms of social bonds. However, it can be felt far more strongly in the change of meaning affecting the very same artistic procedures put to work by the same artists: for example the technique of collage used by the same *cinéaste*. Throughout his career, Jean-Luc Godard repeatedly resorted to the collage of heterogeneous elements. However, in the 1960s, he did so in the form of the clash of opposites. This was notably the clash between the world of 'high culture' and the world of the commodity: *The Odyssey* filmed by Fritz Lang and the brutal cynicism of the producer in *Contempt*; Elie Faure's *History of Art* and the advertisement for *Scandale* corsets in *Pierrot le Fou*; the small calculations of Nana the prostitute and the tears of Dreyer's *Joan of Arc* in *Vivre sa Vie* (*Living One's Life*). His cinema of the 1980s remains apparently faithful to this principle of the collage of heterogeneous elements. The form of collage, though, has changed: the clash of images has become their fusion. And that fusion testifies simultaneously to the reality of an autonomous world of images and to its community-building power. From *Passion* to *Eloge De l'Amour* (In *Praise of Love*), or from *Allemagne 90 Neuf* (*Germany 90 Nine*) to his *Histoires Du Cinéma* (*Histories of Cinema*), the unforeseeable encounter of cinema shots with paintings of the imaginary Museum, the images of the death camps and the literary texts taken against their explicit meaning, constitute one and the same kingdom of images devoted to only one task: to give back to humanity a 'place in the world'.

Therefore, polemical artistic apparatuses tend to move towards a function of social mediation. They become the testimonies or the symbols of participation in an indistinct community, presented in the perspective of a restoration of the social bond or the common world. Moreover, the polemical violence of yesterday tends to take on a new face. It is radicalised into the witnessing of the non-representable, and of infinite evil and catastrophe.

The non-representable is the central category of the ethical turn in aesthetic reflection, to the same extent that terror is on the political plane, since it is also a category of indistinction between right and fact. In the idea of the non-representable, two notions come together—an impossibility and an interdiction. To declare that a topic is non-representable through the means of art is in fact to say several things at once. It might mean that the specific means of art, or of one particular art, are not appropriate for its singularity. This is the sense in which Burke once declared the description of Lucifer by Milton in *Paradise Lost* as non-representable in painting. This is because its sublime aspect depended upon the duplicitous play of words that do not really let us see what they pretend to show us. However, when the pictorial equivalent of the words is exposed to sight, as in the *Temptations of Saint Antoine* of the painters, it becomes a picturesque or grotesque figure. This was also the argument in Lessing's *Laocoon*: the suffering of Virgil's *Laocoon* was non-representable in sculpture because its visual realism divested art of its ideality by divesting the character of his dignity. Extreme suffering belonged to a reality that was, in principle, excluded from the art of the visible.

Clearly this is not what is at stake when one attacks the American television series *Holocaust* in the name of the non-representable. This series caused much controversy twenty years ago by presenting the genocide through the story of two families. Nobody claims that the vision of a 'shower room' brings laughter, but what is claimed is that one cannot make a film about the extermination of the Jews by presenting fictional bodies imitating the henchmen and the victims of the camps. This declared impossibility, in fact, hides an interdiction. But that interdiction itself mixes two things: a proscription that bears on the event and a proscription bearing on art. On the one hand, one says that what has been practised and suffered in the extermination camps forbids one to offer an imitation of it for aesthetic pleasure. On the other hand, it is said that the unheard-of event of the extermination calls for a new

art, an art of the non-representable. One then associates the task of that art with the idea of an anti-representative demand giving its norm to modern art as such.[8] One thus establishes a direct line from Malevitch's *Black Square*, signing the death of pictorial figuration, to the film *Shoah* by Claude Lanzmann, which deals with the non-representability of the extermination.

However, one has to ask in what sense this latter film belongs to an art of the non-representable. Indeed, like all other films, it shows us characters and situations. Like many others, it puts us straight into the setting of a poetic landscape, in this case a river meandering in the fields on which a boat rocks to the rhythm of a nostalgic song. And the director himself introduces this idyllic episode through a provocative sentence asserting the fictional nature of the film: "This story starts in our time, on the banks of the river Ner in Poland." The alleged non-representable cannot therefore signify the impossibility of using fiction to account for an atrocious reality. This is very different from the argument of *Laocoon*, which relied upon the distance between real presentation and artistic representation. On the contrary, it is because everything is representable, and nothing separates fictional representation from the presentation of reality, that the problem of the presentation of the genocide is posed. This problem is not to know whether one can or cannot represent, but to know what one wants to represent and what mode of representation one must choose for this aim. The essential feature of the genocide for Lanzmann, though, is the gap between the perfect rationality of its organisation and the inadequacy of any explanatory reason for that programming. The genocide is perfectly rational in its execution. It has foreseen even the disappearance of its traces. But this rationality itself does not depend on any sufficient rational linkage of cause and effect. It is this gap between two rationalities which makes fictions like *Holocaust* inadequate. It shows us the transformation of ordinary persons into monsters, and of respected citizens into human rubbish. It thus obeys the classical representative logic whereby characters are in conflict with each other on the basis of their personalities, the aims they pursue, and the ways in which they are transformed according to the situations in which they find themselves. However, such logic is destined to miss both the singularity of this rationality and the singularity of its absence of reason. By contrast, another type of fiction proves to be perfectly appropriate for the 'story' that Lanzmann wants to tell: the fictional inquiry of which *Citizen Kane* is the prototype—the form of narration

which turns around an unfathomable event or character and attempts to grasp its secret at the risk of encountering only the nothingness of the cause or the secret's lack of meaning. In the case of Kane, the snow of a glass ball, and a name on a child's slay. In the case of the Shoah, it is an event beyond any cause that could be rationally reconstructed.

Shoah is therefore not opposed to *Holocaust* as an art of the non-representable opposed to an art of representation. The rupture with the classical order of representation is not the advent of an art of the non-representable. On the contrary, it is a liberation in regards to these norms which forbade the representation of Laocoon's suffering, or the sublime aspect of Lucifer. It was these norms of representation that defined the non-representable. They forbade the representation of certain spectacles and demanded to choose a particular type and form for every type of subject. The classical order of representation forced the deduction of actions from the psychology of the characters and from the circumstances of the situation, according to the plausible logic of psychological motivations and the linkage of causes and effects. None of these prescriptions applies to the kind of art to which *Shoah* belongs. What opposes the old logic of representation is not the non-representable. It is, on the contrary, the suppression of any boundary limiting the choice of representable subjects and the ways of representing them. An anti-representative art is not an art that no longer represents. It is an art which is no longer limited in the choice of representable subjects or in the means of representation. This is why it is possible to represent the extermination of the Jews without having to deduce it from any motivation that could be attributed to characters or from any logic of situations, without having to show gas chambers, or scenes of extermination, henchmen or victims. And this is also why an art representing the exceptional character of the genocide without extermination scenes is contemporary to a type of painting made up only of lines and squares of colour as well as to an art of installations, simply re-exhibiting some objects or images borrowed from the world of the commodity and ordinary life.

In order to argue in favour of an art of the non-representable, one therefore has to make that non-representable come from somewhere other than from art itself. One has to let the forbidden and the impossible coincide, which supposes two violent theoretical gestures. One has to introduce the religious

interdiction into art by transforming the interdiction against representing the Jewish God into the impossibility of representing the extermination of the Jewish people. And one has to transform the surplus of representation stemming from the collapse of the representative order into its opposite: a lack or an impossibility of representation. This supposes a construction of the concept of artistic modernity, which lodges the forbidden within the impossible, by making modern art as a whole an art constitutively dedicated to the witnessing of the non-representable.

One concept in particular has been used extensively for that operation: the 'sublime'. Lyotard re-elaborated it for that purpose.[9] In order to do that, Lyotard had to invert not only the meaning of the anti-representative rupture, but also the very meaning of the Kantian sublime. To put modern art under the concept of the sublime is to transform the illimitation of the representable and of the means of representation into its opposite: the experience of a fundamental disagreement between sensible materiality and thought. It is to identify at the outset the game of art's operations with a dramaturgy of the impossible demand. However, the meaning of that dramaturgy is also inverted. For Kant, the sensible faculty of the imagination experienced the limits of its agreement with thinking. Its failure marked its own limitation and opened up the 'illimitation' of reason. Simultaneously, it signalled the passage from the aesthetic to the moral sphere. Lyotard makes this passage beyond the realm of art the very law of art. But he does this at the cost of inverting the roles. It is no longer the sensible faculty, which fails to obey the demands of reason. On the contrary, it is spirit that is faulted, summoned to pursue the impossible task of approaching matter, of seizing sensible singularity. But this sensible singularity itself is in fact reduced to the indefinitely reiterated experience of the one and only debt. The task of the artistic avant-gardes consists, then, in repeating the gesture, inscribing the shock of an alterity which at first seems to be that of sensible quality, and ends up being identified with the intractable power of the Freudian 'Thing' or of the Mosaic law. This is what the 'ethical' transformation of the sublime means: the joint transformation of aesthetic autonomy and of Kantian moral autonomy into the one and the same law of heteronomy, into the one and the same law in which the imperious command is identical to radical factuality. The gesture of art thus consists in bearing witness indefinitely to the infinite debt of spirit

towards a law that is just, as well as to the order of Moses' God as the factual law of the unconscious. The fact of matter's resistance becomes the submission to the law of the Other. But this law of the Other is, in its turn, only the subjection to the condition of being born too early.

This overturning of aesthetics into ethics is certainly not to be understood in the terms of a postmodern becoming of art. The simplistic opposition of the modern and the postmodern prevents us from understanding the transformations of the present situation and what is at stake in them. It makes one forget that modernism itself has only ever been a long contradiction between two opposed aesthetic politics. However, these two opposed politics originate from a common core, in which the autonomy of art is linked to the anticipation of a community to come, therefore linking this autonomy to the promise of its own suppression. The very word *avant-garde* designated the two opposing forms tying together the autonomy of art and the promise of emancipation that was included in it, sometimes in a more or less confused way, at other times in a way that more clearly showed their antagonism. On the one hand, the avant-garde had been the movement aiming to transform the forms of art, making them identical to the forms of the construction of a new world where art no longer exists as a separate reality. On the other hand, it had also been the movement preserving the autonomy of the artistic sphere from any form of compromise with the practices of power and of political struggle, or from any compromise with forms of the aestheticisation of life in the capitalistic world. On the one hand, the futurist or constructivist dream of an auto-suppression of art in the formation of a new sensible world; on the other hand, the struggle to preserve the autonomy of art from all the forms of aestheticisation of the commodity and power. Such a struggle aims to preserve this autonomy not as the pure enjoyment of art for art's sake, but on the contrary, as the inscription of the unresolved contradiction between the aesthetic promise and the reality of a world of oppression.

One of these politics got lost in the Soviet dream, even though it continues to survive in the more modest contemporary utopias of the architects of new cities, of designers reinventing a community on the basis of new urban design, or the 'relational' artists introducing an object, an image or an unusual inscription in the landscapes of difficult suburbs. This is what one might call the *soft* version of the ethical turn of aesthetics. The second was not abolished

by some kind of postmodern revolution. The postmodern carnival has really only ever been the smokescreen hiding the transformation of the second modernism into an 'ethics' that is no longer a softer and socialised version of the aesthetic promise of emancipation, but its pure and simple inversion. This inversion no longer links what is proper to art to a future emancipation, but to an immemorial and never-ending catastrophe.

This is what is truly indicated by the current discourse devoting art to the non-representable and the witnessing of yesterday's genocide, the never-ending catastrophe of the present or the immemorial trauma of civilisation. Lyotard's aesthetic of the sublime summarises this overturning in the most succinct way. Following in Adorno's footsteps, he calls on the avant-garde to indefinitely retrace the separation between proper art works and the impure mixtures of culture and communication. But this is no longer in order to pre-serve the promise of emancipation. On the contrary, it is in order to indefinitely attest to the immemorial alienation that transforms every promise of eman-cipation into a lie, which can only be realised in the form of the infinite crime, to which art responds through a 'resistance' that is nothing but the infinite work of grieving.

The historical tension between the two figures of the avant-garde therefore tends to vanish in the ethical couple of an art of proximity dedicated to the restoration of the social bond and an art witnessing the irremediable catastro-phe at the very origin of that bond. This transformation reproduces exactly the other transformation according to which the political tension of right and fact vanishes in the couple made up by the consensus and infinite justice done to the infinite evil. One is tempted to say that contemporary ethical discourse is only the point of honour given to the new forms of domination. This, however, misses an essential point: if the *soft* ethics of consensus and the art of proximity are the accommodation of the aesthetic and political rad-icality of yesterday to contemporary conditions, then the hard ethics of infinite evil and of an art devoted to the never-ending grieving of the irremediable catastrophe, appears to be, by contrast, the exact overturning of that radical-ity. What enables that overturning is the conception of time which ethical radicality has inherited from modernist radicality, the idea of a time cut in two by a decisive event. That decisive event has for a long time been that of the revolution to come. In the ethical turn, this orientation is strictly inverted:

history is now ordered by a cut in time according to a radical event that is no longer in front of us, but behind us. If the Nazi genocide has lodged itself at the heart of philosophical, aesthetic and political thinking, forty or fifty years after the discovery of the camps, then the reason for this lies not just in the silence of the first generation of survivors. Around 1989 it took the place of the revolutionary heritage, at the time of the collapse of its last vestiges, which up until then, had linked political and aesthetic radicality to a cut in historical time. It has taken the place of the cut in time that was necessary for that radicality, at the cost of inverting its sense, of transforming it into the already occurred catastrophe from which only a god could save us.

I do not mean to say that politics and art are today totally subjected to that vision. One could easily object to this by citing forms of political action and artistic intervention that are independent from or hostile to that dominant current. And that is exactly how I understand it: the ethical turn is not an historical necessity. For the simple reason that there is no historical necessity whatsoever. But this movement takes its strength from its capacity to recode and invert the forms of thought and the attitudes which yesterday aimed for a radical political or aesthetic change. The ethical turn is not the simple appeasement of the dissension between politics and art in the consensual order. It appears rather to be the ultimate form taken by the will to make this dissension absolute. Adorno's modernist rigour that wanted to purify the emancipatory potential of art from any compromise with cultural commerce and aesthetised life becomes the reduction of art to the ethical witnessing of the non-representable catastrophe. Arendt's political purism, which pretended to separate political freedom from social necessity, becomes the legitimation of the necessities of the consensual order. The Kantian autonomy of the moral law becomes the ethical subjection to the law of the Other. Human rights become the privilege of the avenger. The epos of a world cut in two becomes the war against terror. But the central element in this overturning is without a doubt a certain theology of time, the idea of modernity as a time devoted to the fulfilment of an internal necessity, yesterday glorious, today disastrous. This is the conception of a time cut in two by a founding event or by an event to come. Stepping out of today's ethical configuration, returning the inventions of politics and art to their differences entails rejecting the phantasm of their purity, giving back to these inventions their status as always being

ambiguous, precarious, litigious cuts. This necessarily entails divorcing them from any theology of time, from any thought of a primordial trauma or a salvation to come.[10]

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Translated by Jean-Philippe Deranty

Notes

1   From *Malaise dans l'Esthétique*, Paris, Galilée, 2004, pp. 143-173.
2   See Alfred Hitchcock, *The Wrong Man* (1957); Fritz Lang, *Fury* (1936) and *You Only Live Once* (1937).
3   Alfred Hitchcock, *The House of Dr Edwards* (1945), Fritz Lang, *The Secret behind the Door* (1948).
4   Translator's note: 'People' translates the French word 'le peuple', the community that is, ideally, the political subject in the democratic regime. Taken in this specific, political-philosophical sense, it is acceptable to count different types or meanings of the 'people', and to refer to those different kinds in the plural, as in John Rawls' *The Law of Peoples*.
5   Translator's note: The notion of a 'counting of the population', '*le compte de la population*', is a key concept in Rancière's political philosophy: it designates an exhaustive, objective description of the community which the fractured practice of politics puts in question.
6   J.-F. Lyotard, "The Other's Rights" in *On Human Rights. The Oxford Amnesty Lectures*, eds. S. Shute and S. Hurley, New York, Basic Books, 1993, pp. 136-147.
7   G. Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, trans. D. Heller-Roazen, New York, Zone Books, 1999.
8   See Gérard Wacjman, *L'Objet du Siècle*, Paris, Verdier, 1998.
9   Translator's note: This sentence refers to a previous chapter. The next sentence was deleted as it just refers to that previous chapter.
10 This text was presented in March 2004 in Barcelona, at the Forum of the Caixa dedicated to the "Geographies of Contemporary Thought."

Chapter Three

Constructions and Deconstructions of the Universal[1]

Etienne Balibar

I

I would like to take this opportunity to antici-
pate some propositions—I dare not say con-
clusions—that are not yet available to me and
will perhaps never be, in the hope precisely
of inducing the words to say something a lit-
tle different to what is traditionally said,
despite drawing on phrases that we are famil-
iar with and that we all use every day. These
working propositions, in part still to come,
bear on what I hypothetically call the enun-
ciation of the universal, or rather *enunciation
from the standpoint of the universal*, an ex-
pression that I am forging alongside other
formulae that we are familiar with: that of
Spinoza, who speaks of knowledge 'from the
standpoint of the eternal' (*sub specie aeterni*)
and that of Foucault, who speaks of the philo-
sophical and political question posed by the
act of 'truth-telling', which the Greeks, under
the name of *parrhesia*, had made one of the
bases of what today we call—not without
conflicts and equivocations—democracy. The

fact of 'speaking the universal', with the problems that it poses, does not however coincide with either of these two models, even if there is some inevitable overlap. It poses specific problems of 'construction' and 'deconstruction,' a few of which I would like to raise and arrange, without any claim to exhaustiveness. I will also take advantage of these introductory remarks to say that the title under which this essay has been written, and which I am not disowning, nevertheless reflects a project of organising the topic which I have abandoned, for reasons of time, difficulty, and in the end of logic.

There are certainly several ways of approaching the question of the enunciation of the universal, and in particular there is the question of knowing in what ways it is distinct from a metaphysical endeavour to *define the universal*, or to establish its criteria, and it would be tempting to place these alongside each other, by trying to associate them with particular objects, circumstances and above all texts, whose difference one would try to bring out. *For* there are criteria of universality just as there are criteria of truth, at least this is what a considerable part of the philosophical tradition has believed. We can recall for example Rousseau's formulations in Book II, Chapter VI of the *Social Contract*, in relation to the law and the *General Will*, which he thus made into one of the *names of the universal* destined to know the greatest fortune and laden with the greatest efficacy:

> I have already said that there can be no general will directed to a particular object [for example, if you'll excuse me for illustrating Rousseau using current events, the Islamic veil or the artificial life support of the seriously ill in an unconscious state]. . . . But when the whole people decrees for the whole people, it is considering only itself; and if a relation is then formed, it is between two aspects of the entire object, without there being any division of the whole. In that case the matter about which the decree is made is, like the decreeing will, general. This act is what I call a law. . . . We see further that, as the law unites universality of will with universality of object, what a man, whoever he be, commands of his own motion cannot be a law; and even what the Sovereign commands with regard to a particular matter is no nearer being a law, but is a decree, an act, not of sovereignty, but of magistracy.[2]

Forgive this long quote from a great author who comes across as so French and yet was not, but it is not without relevance to our question. It is certain then that the question of the enunciation of the universal, in its distinction from a question of definition or criterion, can be approached from a constructivist perspective and from a deconstructivist perspective. This is what I first had in mind, and I'll leave it to you to imagine the first names that came to mind in order to illustrate each of these two orientations. But I abandoned it because it seemed to me that after perhaps spending a great deal of time on this, the essential would still remain to be done, by which I mean not an attempt at a synthesis, but rather showing how the interest of a construction of universality—and in particular a dialectical construction of universality—is in the moments of internal deconstruction it involves. Furthermore, what constitutes the value and perhaps also the difficulty of an attempt to deconstruct the universal, or rather the oppositions it enters into (for any deconstruction is essentially concerned with relations, oppositions and fixed antitheses like that of the universal and the particular), are the possibilities of construction that it preserves or even creates anew. I thus decided that it was more worthwhile to put the two movements together straight away, to enclose one inside the other, and quite specifically through reading the great texts of reference, Hegel, Marx, Freud, etc., by directly seeking out what creates the paradox, the irrevocably aporetic character of the project of enunciating the universal, of the discourse that is uttered and that we utter from the standpoint of the universal, a discourse whose disappointments we have long experienced and which nevertheless has lost nothing of its necessity, or better still, its reality, since in certain fundamental domains—in particular the political domain—we are always already located within its heart and as a consequence cannot prevent it from defining our communicational constraints.

This question, as we know, is a philosophical question *par excellence*, perhaps the very question of philosophy, which has almost always presented itself as a discourse from the standpoint of the universal, a discourse of truth, a discourse of totality, a cosmopolitan discourse, a discourse of humanity and the human, thus also of what exceeds and relativises it—the exceptions 'confirming the rule', as they say. But it is also a political question, and even a burning political question—signalled by this abstract, technical category of 'the universal' moving perhaps for the first time into the language of common debate,

if not into everyday language. We can almost see the formation of something like a 'universalist party' or a party 'of universalists', an immediate victim in fact of numerous splits. To illustrate this urgency and ubiquity it is enough to state a few series of oppositions to be constructed and deconstructed, whether binary, tertiary or even more complex, many of which in fact correspond to each other. Such as the oppositions between republicanism and multiculturalism; mission/divine election and tolerance/secularity; sovereignty, international law and the politics of human rights; nationalism and cosmopolitanism or internationalism; the market and culture, but also economy and ecology; or that between the 'two cultures', the so-called literary and scientific cultures, between philology or translation and communication or hypertext; but also between liberalism and socialism, the class struggle and the race struggle or the *Clash of Civilizations*, etc., etc. I have no intention of discussing all these questions in detail, despite the interest and the stakes that they represent, and the urgency that there often is to clarify their terms. But I would like to keep them to mind, as well as yet others that could be added to them, while I will risk taking us to a more abstract level, where we will be dealing rather with the categories of *consciousness, ideology* and *community*. But even so I would like to accompany them with three brief and formal remarks.

The first is that these questions, and the conceptual or practical stakes that they indicate, are not talked about *in the same way depending on where one is located*. For example, this is so whether one is in Gainesville, Florida or at Nanterre, Hauts-de-Seine, even though a campus is a campus and though in many respects the difference between these two sites of enunciation is less than that between them on the one hand and other places which are more or less close spatially, but which are separated from them by gulfs of incommunicability. This is not simply to do with the fact that different vernaculars give rise to different conceptual constraints, if not different philosophies, and by the same token produce through the friction between them constantly shifting sites of 'problematisation', as Barbara Cassin's recent *Vocabulaire Européen des Philosophies*,[3] in which I had the honour of participating, tried to show. It is also to do with the fact that different geo-histories engender profoundly heterogeneous points of view on the same questions of principle—or which seem to be the same—as would be immediately shown by a discussion between us on for example the problem of secularity and secularisation.

The second remark is that, while many of the antitheses I just referred to, in a sort of accelerated survey of contemporary political and ideological 'commonplaces', traditionally oppose the universal, or one of its names (such as republic or communication), to what seems to be its contrary, let's say the particular or its valorisation (for example multiculturalism or the race struggle, etc.), many of these oppositions can in fact be reversed, can function *the other way around*, and above all many, perhaps the majority, in fact oppose *names of the universal to each other*, which we can also interpret as signs and expressions of conflict between competing 'universalisms', a problem which I will return to in a moment. A good example is the opposition between liberalism and socialism, but also that between economy and ecology. Perhaps we could even suggest that, at this current juncture—leaving entirely open the question of whether this represents anything new—oppositions of the universal-particular type are much less significant and violent than oppositions *within the universal*, between its names, its determinations, its realisations or simply its rival enunciations, when these are not simply their mask. A phenomenon whose counterpart could be that, ultimately, in the field of politics and ideology *the particular does not exist*, or *cannot be enounced as such*, but is instantaneously transformed into its opposite (we will see in a moment that Hegel maintained an exactly symmetrical hypothesis, which is perhaps in the end the same: namely that it is enough to enounce the universal for it to be irremediably particularised). The fact is that when one offers a criticism of universalism—religious or secular, political or scientific—in the name of defending cultures, idioms, beliefs, and their absolute right to particularity, this enunciation is immediately expressed *from the standpoint of the universal*, which means both in a rhetoric that is rigorously interchangeable and from the perspective of a totalisation of differences, thus of another universalism.

Finally, the third remark that I want to make bears on the singularity of the juncture that we find ourselves at. I say singularity, but in fact what I have in mind is *a problem* and not an obvious fact: I am not at all certain, to say the least, that this characteristic is radically new, with no past equivalent on the level of what was, in other eras, already perceived as the 'world' and the unification of the world. I am thinking of the fact that the world in which we live, which from now on presents itself as the support of communication processes, as the immediate condition of our material existence (for example in terms of food, energy resources, employment possibilities), as what is at

stake in the alternative policies of articulating sovereignty and law, war and peace, growth and development, etc., between which we have to choose as citizens, the world for which the word 'globalisation' henceforth reigns, thus a globalised world, is a world in which *the universal is not something to be realised, but is always already realised and already there*. Consequently, the enunciation of the universal, or if we want to repeat Hegel's grand metaphor, the flight of the owl of Minerva, does not happen at nightfall, but at sunrise, for the cycle of universal history which is destined to produce its own conditions, to render the world and humanity with it definitively contemporary with themselves, eternally co-present, is already complete, and the performative or optative modes are heavily over-determined by the constative. In such a world, *the universal is always already said* in a certain way, there is no longer anything virtual about it, it cannot be abolished, and on the other hand everything that presents itself as universalism, from the very fact of its embeddedness in a language, a history, an economy, seems to be irremediably particularised, in however 'broad' a sense one tries to utter its name, whether in relation to monotheistic revelation, democratic values, worker internationalism, or even demonstrative science *ordine geometrico*. Which also means that the discursive space of universalisms, of enunciations of the universal, is not rarefied, but *dense*. It is not like an 'America' in Locke's sense, an ideally or fictionally virgin space, but is instead like a Hobbesian-type State, where everyone struggles against everyone else and sees them as a rival. The natural form—though obviously cultural and historical—of the universal's relation to itself, at least in the discursive arena, is conflict, redundant multiplicity. *Not to enounce the universal is impossible, to enounce it is untenable*, is to be permanently under attack. It is against this background, within this horizon, that I would now like to return to a few great debates in philosophy, connected with entirely classical names: Hegel, Marx, Freud. Of course, in the time available to me, but also given the point I am at in my re-readings, it will only be a matter of some outlines, or even simple characterisations, in anticipation of their further development.

The first, regarding a few of Hegel's texts, will concern the question of 'conflicting universalities', an expression I borrow from Judith Butler.[4] The second, regarding Marx's famous and enigmatic expression: "the ruling ideology is the ideology of the ruling class,"[5] will concern the relationship between the enunciation of the universal and the idea of domination, or, more precisely,

of dominating and dominated relations. The third, which I will no doubt cover more rapidly, but which is also the most difficult, takes as its point of departure certain theses of Freud on identification and idealisation, which contemporary debates allow us to read again in a different way, and concerns the relationship between the universal and the idea of community, and the aporia of its deconstruction or critique.

II

I will start then with conflicting universalities. In one sense, as I indicated a moment ago, this situation of conflict is the most immediately obvious and the most easily perceived aspect of our relationship to the discourse of the universal, and what we are most accustomed to discussing. It forms a powerful argument in favour of relativism, which readily presents itself, following a long-established sceptical tradition, in the form of a challenge to the *claims to universality* raised by competing discourses, which are generally assumed to be under-written by power interests or the effects of customs and institutions. People often cite Pascal: "Truth on this side of the Pyrénées, error on the other side."[6] But in citing this we must not forget the apologetic function of this aphorism, which is destined to disqualify the claim to universality of a properly human order of discourse, in order to refer it to the transcendent order of revelation and the singular institutional tradition which confirms it: "The history of the Church ought properly to be called the history of truth," Pascal writes in a fragment of the *Pensées* that editors and critics have not been able to attach to any immediate context, perhaps because it governs the whole.[7] But this tradition in turn has passed into the field of finitude, contingency and thus historical contestation. The 'foundation' it invokes has shown itself to be fragile.[8] This terminological nuance between *universal*, *universality*, and *universalism* has its own importance and it can allow us to give a more rigorous formulation to the first solution that offers itself to us in order to place conflicting universalities within a teleology of the universal—not in order to refute it, but as a means of definition and affirmation. It is a matter of distinguishing the *universal* as such—removed by definition from conflict, from the contestation and relativisation of conflict—and the *universalisms* that represent a claim to it, its institutional manifestation, or its simulacra in the field of opinion and belief. The Hegelian dialectic of the forms

of spirit, to which I will return in a moment, has sometimes been understood in this sense, as a way of transforming scepticism from the admitted relativity of the enunciations of the universal, into a construction and constitution in the course of history, sustained by the real logic of universalisation or of globalisation, as it were, that gives it its meaning. But in this first form, it is more a case of a Platonic thesis than a Hegelian one. The *universal*, then, is the essence, or it is the absolute event which is located even beyond essence, and which we may never attain except in an asymptotic manner. The *universalisms* are the multiple opinions or even the 'true opinions', which capture its reflection but also dissolve its authenticity within the realm of appearances and particular interests that are not recognised as such. One can apply a dialectic of this sort to the history of the conflict between the great religions or religious traditions that are precisely said to be 'universal'—and which, significantly, extend beyond the frame of Western monotheism, meaning that all the great civilisations are contributors—and that seem to share, with or without proselytism, the association of a principle of uniqueness with an opening to the whole of humanity. But it can also be applied, at a second degree, to the history—this time very current—of the conflict between *religious universalism and secular universalism*, whose typically modern configuration in the West, constitutive of what we call *modernity* and which we readily consider as the heritage of the Enlightenment, associates universality with scientific method or the 'natural light', that of lawful rationality founded on individual freedom and the equality before the law of right-bearing subjects, and finally with the cosmopolitan prospect of the extension of these values to the whole of humanity. And finally we can apply the same dialectic of the universal, or of the retreat of the universal and the conflict of universalisms, to the history of confrontations between the political ideologies of the modern age, in particular that between liberalism and socialism, which are clearly two interpretations of the classical cosmopolitan idea.

I am not at all challenging *a priori* such a distinction between the *universal* and *universalisms*, at least as a working tool. It is perhaps as unavoidable as the opposition between truth and error, or the real and the imaginary, and in a way it reproduces at the heart of universality the constitutive opposition between the universal and the particular. But by the same token it perpetuates their metaphysical assumptions. This is why a more dialectical movement consists in challenging the ontological difference between the *real-*

ity of the universal, whether materialist or idealist, and the *appearance*, not to say the imposture, which would be inherent to 'universalisms', and instead to attempt to analyse *the difference of universalisms*—I would be tempted to say with Jean-François Lyotard the *différend* of universalisms—as the very mode in which the historicity of the universal, or its constitutive *equivocity*, is given.

It's in this way that I attempted, a few years ago, to oppose an 'extensive' universalism and an 'intensive' universalism.[9] An enunciation of the universal according to an 'extensive' modality, has the core idea that a principle of right, or salvation, or justice, or culture, must be extended to the whole of humanity and reach its most distant borders, thus enabling it to unify and totalise itself (to 'lose nothing' of itself, in a sense), which we can note in passing practically envelops a geography and cosmology of the human.[10] For an enunciation of the universal according to an intensive modality, I will give as an example (and it is perhaps much more than an example) of the proposition of equal liberty, or *equaliberty* in a single world, or what Arendt calls the 'right to rights', which is to say a proposition which states that, within a given society or political community—a 'city' if you like—regardless of its extension, the condition of the freedom of individuals and social groups and the absence of tyranny is their mutual equality and the absence of privileges, and vice versa, without it being possible in the end to play these two principles against each other, or even to simply rank them. I am not defending this idea here, which I thought could be drawn from a certain reading of the declarations of rights and revolutionary constitutions of the modern era, of the French or American type, but I give it as an example of a way of dialecticising the very concept of the universal, going beyond the simple opposition between true and false, the truth of the universal and the appearance of competing universalisms. I was obviously very interested to find later on an opposition that was in many ways similar, even if located within an entirely different tradition, by the American philosopher Michael Walzer, who in a text which appeared in French in 1992 under the title "The Two Universalisms,"[11] uses the example of the two currents of Judaism to oppose the messianism of the chosen people and the prophetism of justice, what he calls a 'covering-law' universalism, virtually dominant and assimilatory, to a horizontal universalism which would be immanent to each community, but would also communicate with all the others, not following

the vertical modality of assimilation, but the modality of the example or exemplarity.

I do not have the time to really discuss this exciting exposition, and to compare it with my own formulation or other more or less equivalent ones, but one day perhaps I will. I would like now instead to go on and take a further step, with the help of Hegel. I believe in effect that Hegel closely associated—especially in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which must be read as a veritable dialectic of enunciations of the universal and their constitutive paradoxes—two theses whose conjunction is much stronger than these binary distinctions, whether Walzer's or my own. It comes from his rigorous challenge of the possibility of a meta-language, the possibility or rather the illusion of being able to stand even beyond the discourses of the universal, in order to evaluate and relativise them according to an absolute principle—thus from the fact that he placed himself within the finitude of historical universality, and in the infinite succession of the forms of this finitude. Hegel's first thesis, that I recalled a moment ago, states a devastating paradox: *as soon as one enounces the universal*, or speaks from the standpoint of the universal, one finds oneself immediately and irrevocably in extreme particularity. In effect, the idea of an absolute enunciation—removed from its place, its time, its conditions, thus from its determinations, including its determination as a speech act: a speaker and a listener, constituted as subjects within this very act, thus a determined *language*, to which Jacques Derrida would no doubt also add that this language is always still an *idiom*—the idea of such an *absolute* enunciation is a contradiction in terms. But the universal does not exist elsewhere, before or beyond its own enunciations, it is nothing other than their effect, or their aim. To which we must immediately add Hegel's second idea: namely that the typical form of particularisation, or of the determination of the universal, plunging its roots into the very figure of consciousness—which for Hegel is a self-splitting and dividing, an incessant turning from unity to opposition and from opposition to unity, from the subjective appropriation of truth in the form of 'certainty' to its exteriorisation in the form of the objective 'truth' and vice versa—is the figure of conflict, and ultimately *the life-and-death struggle between the competing enunciations of the universal*, between symmetrical and incompatible universalisms, as it were. *Conflicting Universalities*, in the strongest sense of the term. This is not the empirical, relativising by-

product of the universal, but its very movement, its 'life' as Hegel says or, as we could in turn say, its discursivity.

This idea is developed throughout the whole of the *Phenomenology* in the analysis of consciousness, and already, prior to consciousness, in the description of what, following Benveniste,[12] we could call the *formal apparatus of enunciation*, which is to say, the double constraint that obliges the subject to appropriate language and obliges language to pass via the enunciation of a collective or individual subject—from which it immediately follows that this subject is, at the same time, in a radical unity of opposites, absolutely particular and absolutely universal, or universalising. But in a central section Hegel gives us the historically decisive version of this line of argument, where we see that the two theses really refer to one another: where we see that the fate of the universal to be particularised in its enunciation, and the necessary tendency of the universal to be realised in the form of a conflict between systems of thought that are opposed point by point, each one being the virtual destruction of the other, are the two faces of a single phenomenon. This famous section is precisely the one entitled *Spirit*, which immediately becomes *self-alienated Spirit*—what Hegel calls in general 'culture' (*Bildung*). We are familiar with the two successive figures of these antagonisms of the universal, the ancient and the modern—marvellous tools of interpretation and critique that we live with every day on an intellectual level, and that I never stop thinking anticipate the situations and discursive constraints, but also the political and theoretical stakes involved in our own contemporary debates on universalism. Firstly it is the figure of conflict inherent to the relationship between the law and power, or legitimacy and efficacy, set by Hegel in the context of the Greek city where the 'birth of politics' took place, using the example of Sophocles' *Antigone*. Here the *conflicting universalities* assume on the one hand the form of the *laws of the city*, or its 'constitution' if you like, which the monarch has the task of enforcing, and which transcends particular interests in the name of the higher interests of the community of citizens, and on the other hand the form of what Antigone herself calls the 'unwritten laws', the ethical imperatives that are apparently based in a particular feeling of fraternal love, but which in reality are directed at the unconditional character of piety and humanity. A conflict that, as we know, is irreconcilable, where the universal is neither on one side nor the other, but on both

sides at once, or between them. Then it is the modern figure of the conflict between faith and reason, *Glauben* and *Vernunft*, two antithetical figures under which an ideal of the cultivation and education of humankind is realised, and through this *Bildung* an ideal of the explanation and intelligibility of the world. Hegel implicitly connects the first figure to Christianity, and more specifically to its purified form in the Reformation—as the French translator and interpreter Jean Hyppolite judiciously points out—and he explicitly connects the second figure, that of rationalist universality, or universalism *qua* rationalism, to the 'Enlightenment' movement.[13] These two figures, engaged in a life-and-death struggle throughout modernity—which we know today (and Hegel's presentation goes entirely in this direction) to be nothing less than linear and irreversible—both aspire to *insight* into the world (the German term is *Einsicht*, thus we are in the visual realm, but it is of course the vision of the mind). But they do so in radically opposed ways, which means that each of them is precisely the irreconcilable *other* for the other, the enemy: religious 'superstition' on the one hand, 'materialism' or 'utilitarianism' on the other. The first figure, the universality of faith, seems to retain characteristics of what I called above an intensive universalism, embedded within a self-referential subjectivity or even a mysticism, whereas the second, the Enlightenment, *die Aufklärung*, is on the side of extensive universalism, of encyclopaedic knowledge and cosmopolitan law. Both however, endeavour to diffuse a principle, that of morality or civilisation, and both aim to control the State or more generally the *institution*, the bond of the spiritual 'masses', of generations and of mutual recognition. They are figures of institutional 'recognition' *par excellence*, within which consciousness becomes the inhering of society within the individual.

I am sorry not to able to go further into the details—in truth the ideal would be to reread Hegel's chapter line by line—but I must now pose a simple question: what is *missing* from this symmetrical presentation of the conflict of universals and the conflictual essence of universalism, in the version offered by the author of the *Phenomenology*? The response will be: the overcoming, of course, the 'sublation' of the conflict (*die Aufhebung*), and it is here that we will regain our footing, at least if we indeed want to be Hegelians, if we accept to believe in the teleology that leads to a certain conception of the State of law and, via this path, to the ultimate realisation of the universal in

absolute spirit. To which others will no doubt reply, reiterating the sceptical gesture: see how these figures of the absolute, or so they are called, are marked by particularity, by Judeo-Christian and Eurocentric prejudices, limitations, even colonialism, etc. Not a day goes by, or almost, that I do not read very good academic and student work on this theme.[14] But I would take another route. I would like to show, if only by allusion, what in Hegel deconstructs Hegel, or enables its deconstruction, which is something other than its nullification. I retain two elements in this regard. One comes from what is a constant philosophical affirmation of Hegel's: if there are figures of consciousness, which we see are nothing but figures of the universal, it is not because everything happens within consciousness, or more precisely for consciousness. On the contrary it is because there is *a residue of unconsciousness, Bewußtlosigkeit*, which remains inaccessible to it (Hegel says that the overcoming movement of the figures of consciousness, a result of their very limitation, or of the gap between certainty and truth that they will never fill, happens 'behind their back'), and because this residue is in the end the essential thing, the very force and trace of the constitutive limitation of consciousness, the sign of its finitude, which comes from its need to *represent* what it enounces in a determined fashion and thus to sacrifice what moves it—the infinite desire to know and appropriate the world. The other element—it is perhaps in the end the same thing—comes from the fact that the conflicts between ethical principles, civilisations and political institutions that Hegel refers to are not and cannot be exhaustive. Above all they cannot be entirely symmetrical. There again we see emerge the figure of the *residue*, but we see it emerge in a very strange, symptomal way, at the limits of what Hegel says and what he does not say.

Thus Hegel presents the conflict that is inherent to the Greek city, between the state law borne by its magistrates, the keepers of the *arche, and* the unwritten laws of *philein*, of *overcoming*, as a conflict between two principles—he says a conflict between two 'laws' or legitimacies—but this conflict is borne by a woman, Antigone, as recreated by the poet, and the commentary since Hegel has sufficiently shown that the sex of this woman can neither be neutralised nor isolated and essentialised. It is this very undecided but very insistent sex that is the bearer of the conflict within the universal, and thus of the universal as such, as unconscious consciousness. But Hegel cannot say

it like that. That is why at the end of the discussion on Antigone he produces an astonishing formula, destined to produce interminable effects beyond his text, and nevertheless from the very heart of his writing: woman (it is not clear whether it is still a question of Antigone, or if we have gone beyond this singular, even monstrous, case to a sort of trans-historical generic) is 'the everlasting irony of the community' (*die ewige Ironie der Gemeinschaft*), which can be understood both as the '*emmerdeuse*' (the 'nuisance' we would say in English, which makes us think of Old French 'deconstructed') who is a spoilsport for political communities, and as perhaps the community's only resource for it to effectively achieve universality by questioning its exclusions, its social and political fetishes, its institutional violence, becoming in this way something like a 'community without community'.

But even more striking is the outcome of the discussion of the conflict between Christian faith and Enlightenment reason. Given the way in which Hegel has attempted to stylise and order the deconstructed series of principles on which Western European societies have established themselves, and taking into account, *a fortiori*, the date that this work was written (1807), it is obviously impossible not to ask oneself what has become of the most recent, striking and contemporary enunciation of the universal, knowing well, in any case, that Hegel constantly grappled with it, seeking to separate what seemed to him to be progressive—bourgeois if you like—from its anarchistic and chaotic aspect: I am referring to the discourse of *human rights*. How can we understand, without invoking useless considerations of prudence or censorship, that this revolutionary discourse is literally absent, foreclosed, from the dialectic of the development of the universal, whereas it is precisely this discourse that gives it its name, including for Hegel? A *Bewusstlosigkeit* not of 'consciousness' this time, but of the author, this same Hegel who describes the movement of consciousness while always maintaining a subtle balance of identification and distance? But it is enough to do a re-reading, one you will allow me to call symptomal, to realise that this *lacuna* is fictional, that it is not really a *lacuna*, or rather that it corresponds to a decision of astounding radicality (a gesture which in truth Hegel will never repeat, it is what will remain absolutely singular in the writing of the *Phenomenology*). The universality of human rights and their enunciation in the form of a declaration, which is such a turning point in the history of the West, and per-

haps beyond the West, is not described as a figure of consciousness, it is described as a figure of death, in the section immediately following the *Aufklärung*, which completes the chapter on Spirit, in relation to which it is an absolute reversal, by opening it onto the abyss—I mean the section on Terror. Terror is presented as a realisation of the ideas of Rousseau, a delirium of equality, or better still of equaliberty, in which the illusion of being able to construct a society on a civic virtue which comes from reason but is akin to faith, a 'civic religion' or perhaps already what the twentieth-century sociologists of totalitarianism will call a 'secular religion', ultimately leads to a generalised suspicion, the reversal of love or philanthropy into the desire to purge the community, which ceaselessly draws out the internal enemy so as to be able to eliminate its obstacle to the realisation of the universal, and which thus leads not to a death charged with collective symbolism, a patriotism or a messianism of freedom, but to a dissolution of meaning. Hegel, as we recall, describes the daily function of the guillotine, the egalitarian, humanist and universalist instrument of execution *par excellence*, as the equivalent of a machete that fells cabbage heads in a field.

But once again there are two ways, at least 'for us', to read such a development, one of the most frenetic written by a philosopher in his speculative ink. We can see it as a symptom of prejudices, of Hegel's counter-revolutionary, if not reactionary, political positions, let us say, no doubt acquired at the cost of a painful disillusionment that was contemporary with the events. Let us say then that the recognition of the unconscious aspect by consciousness, due to the fact that the conflict of universalities is underwritten by a life-and-death struggle on the level of life and not only of representation, or which forms the residue of a representation of life, has as its counterpart an explosive denegation of this unconsciousness, whose irreducibly political dimension would come into plain sight here: namely the fact that the conflict of universalities ultimately implicates the very figures of domination and resistance, of the revolt of the masses against any form of universality which coincides with their own abjection, their own invisibility for others and for themselves. But it is enough for things to be presented in this way to see that there is yet another way of reading this development, which would see in it the recognition *by Hegel himself*—even if in an oblique way, or perhaps in effect in the form of a denegation, of what I would almost dare to call a denegatory enunciation of the universal—of the fact that the discourse of

human rights *does not involve consciousness and its 'figures'*, but exceeds them, in virtue of the risk it carries, on the borders of extreme violence, which turns it into an act of insurrection and dissolution rather than a foundation and a constitution. This would obviously not be the case with every kind of statement bearing on human rights and the politics of human rights, which quite clearly belong entirely to the history of conflicts of the universal, but concerns the 'pure' statement of the proposition of equal liberty as political principle, both at the edge of the unpronounceable, since it must avoid invoking principles, generalities, revelations as well as deductions, and also always reiterated, in very different eras, in very different languages, in words that are not strictly speaking equivalent, that are not exclusively attached to any of the institutions of universality in particular, but which come periodically to mark the same point, where the limits of representation and the fault-lines of domination intersect.

Perhaps it would be possible then, having situated the ironic figure of Antigone in the margin of the laws which work the city and then the abyss of the Terror on the horizon of the conflicts between faith and reason, to qualify the dialectic of *conflicting universalities* with respect to certain contemporary debates in a slightly better way. Judith Butler herself seemed to want to place herself within a pluralist perspective, one that was rethought using the category of 'translation' and translatability. Translation, no doubt, is not dialogue, it can be violent. But above all it inescapably involves an element of the untranslatable. And this untranslatable element forbids the formulation of a common and consensual basis for the discourses of emancipation, which at the same time concern different, non-contemporaneous structures of oppression, whose negations are accumulated on the same bodies and within the same souls, but whose resistances and revolts cannot purely and simply be *added up*, in the name of the abstract universality of the defence of human rights. This is why Butler borrows Gayatri Spivak's description of the *double bind* that traps the 'subalterns' *par excellence*, the poor women of the Third World who 'cannot speak' ('the Subaltern cannot speak' a phrase whose irony will not be forgotten), for they find themselves up against both colonial and postcolonial racism, and patriarchal sexism, and thus they must both join forces with their men and radically dissociate themselves from them. Which is also why Spivak, and Butler after her, resort to the category of the '*différend*' elab-

orated by Lyotard, while somewhat displacing its initial point of application: expressions of the universal are not only engaged in struggle and conflict due to the very fact of their determination, their inscription within history and the institution, they are heterogeneous, or ultimately become so, to the extent that the 'repressed' returns in them, the unconscious of their own history. They therefore are not subject to any pre-established synthesis, but only usages and enunciations whose effects—conservative or revolutionary, destructive or creative—depend on the current moment.[15]

III

I have let myself discuss Hegel at length, and through Hegel this first aspect of the problem of enunciations of the universal, or from the standpoint of the universal. But how could one do otherwise, if one wants to show what is at issue? It was only however the issue, you will recall, of my first point. I am obviously not going to 'address' the two others: not only am I not going to address them in the same way, but I am not going to address them at all. I will *say* nevertheless what they bear on, from the perspective of this work in progress. And I am going to indicate why I uttered the names of Marx and Freud, once again. And why, once again, in that order, with the example in mind of all those—including Althusser, but not only he—who sought to connect them or correct the one with the other, there being frequently behind them, behind their back in a way, Hegel's posing of the problem of universality in its relationship to domination and emancipation, or the class struggle in the general sense of the term, as well as in its relationship to what Freud called culture, which is to say the agent of repression of the wildness of the drives necessary for the construction of a community. Which, in a word, will lead me back to the question of equal liberty and the paradoxical modes of its enunciation. The paradox of the paradox, in a way.

What Hegel calls consciousness, or rather consciousness of the universal, Marx calls 'ideology'. It is the same thing, and yet this change of name, like Spinoza's *deus sive natura* (*conscientia sive ideologia*, I would suggest), provides the possibility of saying something new about it, showing in part the unsaid, or bringing front and centre what I called the unconscious element a moment ago, constantly pushed by Hegel to the limits of the phenomenological field.

It is a question, obviously, of *domination* (*Herrshaft*, the word that Hegel associates with servitude: *Knechtschaft*), and of the structural *violence* (*Gewalt*), visible or invisible, that is inseparable from domination. But we know that Marx uses the term domination twice, or rather he reiterates it in such a way that it produces what is apparently a redundancy, and is in reality a problem: perhaps the most difficult, the most piercing, the most insoluble and also the most fertile of the philosophical problems associated with Marxist thought and its critical heritage. There is the 'ruling class' and there is the 'ruling ideology.' Roland Barthes, as I was reminded by Tom Conley, had the habit of saying in his classes: 'All ideology is dominant,' which means, tautologically: ideology dominates, it only exists through its function and modes of domination, and what does not dominate, discourse or consciousness, is not strictly speaking an ideology. Yes, but what does it dominate? Often we are satisfied with replying: individuals, groups, classes, which doesn't clarify anything. Althusser tried to shift this instrumental representation, he said: what the dominant ideology dominates is not men, but subjects, which is to say another ideology, a 'dominated' one if you like, and through this intermediary the individuals that it constitutes as subjects. With the difference being that the dominated ideology is undiscoverable, invisible, it remains evanescent or virtual precisely because it is dominated. Marx's phrase, as we know, is this: 'the ruling ideology is the ideology of the ruling class', for example the bourgeois ideology is the ideology of the bourgeoisie. We have not gone very far beyond the tautology.

In fact, this tautology, or pseudo-tautology, envelops a profound dilemma, around which the heritage of Marx, and through him of Hegel, has been constantly divided. How can we talk about domination, how do we account for the violence of the universal—the physical violence it allows, but also the violence it constitutes in itself, and ultimately the counter-violence it gives rise to—without describing the domination of the dominant ideology as an invasion and an imposition from above, whether it is a matter of class struggle, of colonisation and racism, or sexism and homophobia, etc.? But how do we account for the fact that, when it attains the universality it requires to fulfil the function that Gramsci will later call 'organic' or 'hegemonic' in a given society, *the dominant ideology must speak the universal and not the particular, enounce the law from the standpoint of the universal or the general interest and not that of privilege*? How do we account for this fact unless we assume that, his-

torically and logically, the dominant ideology comes not from the ideas or values of the dominating group, but *from the dominated themselves*, the bearers of claims to justice, to equality, liberty, emancipation and education, etc.? The question here is not that of the sincerity or hypocrisy with which these values are promoted by those above, but that of the structural constraint which makes it the unavoidable language of domination—and in any case we know that if the dominators did not 'believe in it' at all, they would not be able to use it. We must therefore assume that above and below the economic mechanisms of exploitation there is something like an *expropriation of the ideology of the dominated by the dominant group themselves*, examples of which have proliferated from the great universalist religions of salvation to the revolutionary ideology of human rights. Which no doubt leaves open the possibility of a 'performative reversal' of the discourse of the universal against its dominating uses and functions, but also seems to irreversibly associate it with the limitation of a subaltern position, which is not abolished with its final overturning in the pure act, or in terror, very much on the contrary.

IV

At this point, or rather at this point if it had been developed, it becomes necessary to make a detour through Freud, the last Freud who took as an object of investigation the Christian relationship of the individual to what he calls the 'mass' (*die Masse*) in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* and in the texts on 'culture' which go from *The Future of an Illusion* to *Civilisation and its Discontents*. Shall we say that under the name of culture, Freud states for the third time the paradox (which here he calls *the unease: das Unbehagen*) of universality, by locating its enunciation or its injunction not at the level of consciousness, but on the level of the unconscious, in which the anthropological necessity of the institution is embedded? Since we must be quick this is indeed what I will say. And I will draw attention to two characteristics of his discourse. Freud is a liberal politically, but his theses on the masses and on the relationship of the masses to culture, and thus to the universal, are fundamentally conservative. This doesn't mean racist, or nationalistic. At the beginning of *The Future of an Illusion*, Freud explicitly distances himself from the Germanistic ideology that opposes civilisation and the abyss, still shared at the time by someone like Thomas Mann, even if not for very much longer.

But Freud thinks that culture is necessary not only in order to compensate for renouncing the satisfaction of infantile desires but in order to inspire a love of work in a humanity governed by the pleasure principle, and he thinks that these two necessities are both more urgent and more difficult to realise in the case of the lower classes, who don't share in the pleasures of sublimation and are caught up in resentment against the educated classes. For them culture is thus not a development proper to them but an external imposition, a double alienation. Hence the historical and political importance of the religious form, which precisely represents the form of instinctual sublimation that most completely preserves the realisation of infantile desire, even though it is transposed onto the mode of collective messianic hopes, to which Freud gives the specific name of *illusion* (and he explicitly avoids opposing illusion and the real: illusion is opposed to the ascetism of knowledge, to the cult of doubt). Freud is explicitly a man of the Enlightenment; he reprises for his own part the dialectic between faith and knowledge, not only as two ethics but also as two politics. But he is a radically pessimistic man of the Enlightenment: he sees contemporary humanity caught between the decline of the universals of faith, which he rightly or wrongly thinks have lost their cultivating ability with the masses, at least in the West, having been disqualified or devalued, and the impotence of the universals of reason, in particular of scientific reason, which he rightly or wrongly thinks, even if he evokes in passing the pedagogical experiments of his time, including those in progress in the Soviet Union in the nineteen-twenties, do not have the power to effectively destroy belief, which is to say that they cannot serve as a substitute for the mechanisms of collective identification in order to bind and evolve communities. These theses become clearer if we refer to the analyses of 1921, in *Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse,* that I do not have time to examine now in detail, but from which I will retain only the way they closely associate, in their description of the mechanisms of obedience to authority, references to the charisma of leaders and references to the abstraction and universality of systems of ideas, or ideologies if you like. It is in relation to this same topic, speaking explicitly of the Church and making transparent allusions to contemporary revolutionary parties, that Freud insists on the presence of a constitutive tension within the mechanism of collective identification between its *authoritarian* dimension and its *egalitarian* dimen-

sion. It is true that this egalitarian dimension seems to be radically dissociated from the idea of emancipation; it is rather on the side of voluntary servitude.

This means that Freud conceived of *a third characteristic of enunciations of the universal*, which not only comprises *conflict*, as in Hegel, or *domination*, as in Marx, but the formation of an *ideal of the community*, implying the mechanisms of repression (or even foreclosure) and the sublimation of the love and death drives which run through it. The universal is not the representation of the community, Rousseau knew this already, but it represents its idealisation, in relation to which it realises and institutionalises itself as a bond between those who gather together, obey the same leaders, believe in the same dogmas, as in the case of those who rebel or fight for the same justice. Obviously these are not the same discourses, the same emblems, the same names of the universal (although most of the truly active, effective and meaningful names are in effect equivocal, constantly appropriated and expropriated). We rediscover for the third time, and not by chance, the idea of difference and the *différend*. We also know that there is no definitive, unequivocal way of creating the *différend* or deconstructing the being of the community in the element or modality of the universal. Reversals of each term are not enough, nor are transgressions, but nor either is the pure and simple substitution of one universal for another, for example the substitution of the market, exchange, equivalence or reciprocal obligations for that of the cultural community, but also the substitution of communism or brotherhood for the dominant universality of the market. The 'community without community' spoken of by the philosophers of deconstruction (Blanchot, Derrida, Nancy), which is no doubt nothing other than the 'community without the ideal of the community,' nevertheless also involves an ideal: that of a suspension of domination, or a liberation from illusion in the Freudian sense. It thus remains a problem, not a solution, and even less a recipe. And it is much more interesting that way, because more difficult.

Translated by Melissa McMahon

Notes

1   Translation of "Constructions et Déconstructions de L'Universel," plenary paper at the 20th and 21st Century French and Francophone Studies International Colloquium: "Verbal, Visual, Virtual. New Canons for the Twenty-first Century," March 31-April 1st, 2005, hosted by the France-Florida Institute, Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, University of Florida, Gainesville.

2   Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses*, translated with an Introduction by G.D.H. Cole, Dent, London, Everyman's Library, 1973, p. 192.

3   See Barbara Cassin, ed. *Le Vocabulaire Européen des Philosophies: Dictionnaire des Intraduisibles* (*European Vocabulary of Philosophies: Dictionary of Untranslatable Terms*), Paris, Seuil/Le Robert, 2004.

4   See in particular her contribution to the debate with Ernesto Laclau and Slavoj Žižek published under the title *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*, London, Verso, 2000.

5   Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology*, edited and with and Introduction by C.J. Arthur, New York, International Publishers, 1974.

6   ". . . we see neither justice nor injustice which does not change its nature with change in climate. Three degrees of latitude reverse all jurisprudence; a meridian decides the truth. Fundamental laws change after a few years of possession; right has its epochs; the entry of Saturn into the Lion marks to us the origin of such and such a crime. A strange justice that is bounded by a river! Truth on this side of the Pyrénées, error on the other side." *Pensées*, Section V: "Justice and the Reason of Effects," § 294.

7   Pascal, *Pensées*, Section XIV: Appendix: Polemical Fragments, § 858.

8   I deliberately use this term, with Alain Badiou's book in mind: *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, trans. Ray Brassier, Stanford University Press, 2003.

9   See Etienne Balibar, "Quel Universalisme Aujourd'hui?", paper given to the Cercle Gramsci, 3 December 1993, Limoges. Accessible from the Cercle Gramsci website (http://www.cerclegramsci.org/) under "Conférences."

10 Hence the importance, in Kant for example, and more generally among eighteenth-century writers of questions of geography and human races. See the recent book by Raphaël Lagier, *Les Races Humaines Selon Kant*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 2004.

11 Michael Walzer, "Two Kinds of Universalism," *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, vol. XI, Salt Lake City, University of Utah Press, 1990. French translation: "Les deux Universalismes," *Esprit*, no. 187, December 1992.

12 In a brilliant article devoted to the philosophical and political presuppositions of Benveniste's theorisation of 'subjectivity in language', Jean-Claude Milner has

been able to show that he himself was inspired by Hegel's chapter on 'sense certainty'. See *Le Périple Structural. Figures et Paradigmes*, Paris, Seuil, 2002.

13 "*Die Aufklärung*" an expression which he himself places between quotation marks, and to which he contributes in his exposition a category of historical interpretation which is itself universal.

14 See for example Susan Buck-Morss, *Thinking Past Terror: Islamism and Critical Theory on the Left*, London, Verso, 2003; and *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West*, Cambridge Mass., MIT Press, 2000.

15 See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1999.

Chapter Four

Subjectivity, Work, and Action

Christophe Dejours

Introduction

In this essay, we shall try to explain what the psychodynamics of work can contribute to the analysis of the relations between *work and subjectivity*. The issues underlying such an analysis are twofold: understanding the human consequences of the neo-liberal agenda on the one hand, and expanding the conception of action in the political field on the other. In this context, I would argue that if we want to associate subjectivity with the theory of action, it is necessary to undertake a precise analysis of relations between work and life.

The psychodynamics of work is first of all a *clinical* discipline that draws on the description and knowledge of relations between work and mental health. But it is also a *theoretical* discipline that attempts to situate the results of the clinical investigation of the relation to work within a theory of the subject taking into account both psychoanalysis and social theory.

I. What is Work?

Definition

The controversies between disciplines—sociology, economics, ergonomics, psychology, engineering—arise from very different conceptions of work. For some, the determinant factor is a social relationship (generally a wage relationship); for others, it is employment, for others again, an activity of social production, and so on.

In our view, from a clinical standpoint, work is what is implied, in human terms, by the fact of working: gestures, know-how, the involvement of the body and the intelligence, the ability to analyse, interpret, and react to situations. It is the power to feel, to think, and to invent. In other words, for the clinician, work is not above all the wage relation or employment but 'working', which is to say, the way the personality is involved in confronting a task that is subject to constraints (material and social). What emerges as the main feature of 'working' (for the clinician once again) is that, even when the work is well conceived, even when the organisation of work is rigorous, even when the instructions and procedures are clear, it is impossible to achieve quality if the orders are scrupulously respected. Indeed, ordinary work situations are rife with unexpected events, breakdowns, incidents, operational anomalies, organisational inconsistency and things that are simply impossible to predict, arising from the materials, tools, and machines as well as from other workers, colleagues, bosses, subordinates, the team, the chain of authority, the clients, and so on. In short, there is no such thing as purely mechanical work.

This means that there is always a gap between the prescriptive and the concrete reality of the situation. This gap is found at all levels of analysis between task and activity,[1] or between the formal and informal organisation of work.[2] *Working* thus means *bridging the gap* between prescriptive and concrete reality. However, what is needed in order to do so cannot be determined in advance; the path to be navigated between the prescriptive and the real must constantly be invented or rediscovered by the subject who is working. Thus, for the clinician, work is defined as what the subjects must add to the orders so as to reach the objectives assigned to them, or alternately, what they must add of themselves in order to deal with what does not function when they limit themselves to a scrupulous execution of orders.

The Reality of Work

How then does this inevitable gap between reality on the one hand and forecasts, orders, and procedures on the other manifest itself to the working subject? Always in the form of *failure*—the real manifests itself to the subject through its resistance to procedures, know-how, techniques, and knowledge, in other words, by thwarting control. The real world resists. It confronts the subject with failure, which gives rise to a feeling of powerlessness, indeed, irritation and anger, or alternately disappointment or discouragement. The real manifests itself to the subject in the form of an unpleasant surprise, in other words, in an *affective* way. The reality of the world always manifests itself to the subject affectively. But at the very moment when the subject experiences the resistance of the world affectively, that affectivity is manifested within the self. Thus, the body simultaneously experiences the world and the self in a fundamental relationship of suffering in work.

Suffering and Intelligence

'Working,' however, cannot be reduced to the pathic experience of the world. Insofar as it marks an interruption of action, the affective suffering of the encounter with the real (an absolutely passive form of suffering) is not only the result or end point of the process linking subjectivity to work. Suffering is also a *point of departure*, for the concentration of subjectivity that it entails prefigures a subsequent period of expansion, redeployment, and re-expansion. Suffering is not simply a final consequence of the relationship to reality but at the same time a protention of subjectivity towards the world; it is a search for the means of acting on the world in order to get beyond itself by surmounting the resistance of reality. Thus, suffering is at once a subjective impression of the world and the source of the attempt to conquer that world. To the extent that it is absolute affectivity, suffering lies at the origin of the intelligence that sets out in search of the world in order to challenge, transform, and increase itself. And thus, in this movement that starts out from the reality of the world as resistance to will or desire and culminates in intelligence and the power to transform the world, *subjectivity itself is transformed, increased, and revealed to itself.*

Subjectivity, Body, and Subject

In the process going from the experience of resistance of the world to the intuition of a practico-technical solution and experimentation with responses to reality, the body is always involved from the outset. Contrary to what common sense might suppose, intellectual work cannot be reduced to pure cognition. Rather, working first goes through the affective experience of suffering, the pathic, and there can be no suffering without a body to undergo it. This means that intelligence in work can never be reduced to subjectivity looming over the subject. Subjectivity is only experienced in the insurmountable singularity of an incarnation, a particular body, and a unique corporeality.

Intelligence and the Body

Defining the relations between intelligence in work and the body would require a long discussion. Skilfulness, dexterity, virtuosity, and technical know-how all pass through the body; they are accumulated and memorised in the body and deployed from the body. The body as a whole, and not just the brain, is the locus of intelligence and skilfulness in work. Work reveals that the intelligence of the world resides in the body itself and that it is through the body that the subject first enters the world in order to appropriate and inhabit it.

The shaping of this intelligence occurs through the body's prolonged, persistent relationship with the task at hand, through a series of subtle processes of familiarisation with materials, tools, and technical objects. To master a machine tool, for example, to become truly skilled in its use, I need to feel this machine, to develop a sensitivity to all of its mechanical features. I need—and this is not easy—to achieve a kind of symbiosis with the machine, as if it were my own body that, through the intermediary of the drill, was fingering and penetrating the metal in order to make holes in it or remove the turnings. If I don't feel this action of metal against metal with my body, I can overheat the machine and break it. Indeed, the skilled worker does not just concentrate on the object to be machined but constantly thinks about the machine itself in order to keep it from breaking down.

How do we acquire this extraordinary sensitivity that American authors call 'tacit skills' and others characterise by the term 'technical sense' or 'sixth sense'? We need to become familiar with the machine in order to 'become' the machine—what we call 'forming one body' with the machine.

To arrive at that result, it is necessary to create a *dialogue* with the machine. However, such a dialogue is unequal because the machine does not speak. Under certain conditions, this obstacle may be surmounted, by getting to know its reactions, for example by accelerating the rotation and sensing its vibrations, its trembling, its noises, the changing odours of the cup oil, until, suddenly, the machine breaks down. At that point, by pushing it to its limits, I learn the little signals that precede the breakdown—a particular grating sound, an abnormal vibration, a smell of burning oil—and as soon as I sense this signal, I know that I have to stop the machine in order to let it rest, let it cool down.

Dialoguing with the machine in this way requires entertaining a fantasy, a strange, vitalist fantasy. It is necessary to attribute a life to that machine, to manipulate it as if it were an animal, in order to domesticate it, and by developing such intimacy with the machine, I come to love it. This is why workers sometimes give their machines nicknames and talk to them: 'OK, let's go', 'Come on now!' and so on. And when they have the time, they take them apart, clean them, and maintain them, as if they were taking care of loved ones—a child, a pet or a body in need of attention. Emile Zola describes this process with the mechanic and his steam engine in *La Bête Humaine* (known in English as *The Beast in Man*).

This is what bodily intelligence is about. However, at the same time that I acquire this intimacy with the machine, I discover new skills, new forms of know-how and new kinds of sensitivity within myself. I learn to feel the contact with the metal, the wood, the stone—and to enjoy it. I can even experience real emotion when I finger a stone or stroke a piece of wood. And it is thus while I'm working that my sensitivity and subjectivity develop and expand. By becoming more skilful in my work, I transform myself, enrich myself, and perhaps even fulfil myself.

Everything I have just described is not limited to the skilled worker. It is also true for the fighter pilot, because you pilot an airplane with your backside, not with a list of procedures. And you only become a good driver when you feel the car to the very tips of the fenders and the bumpers, with your skin. And when I come too close to a bus, I get a shiver in the bottom of my spine, which means that I've reached the point of inhabiting the chassis with my own body. In fact, the same is true for running a nuclear power plant or being

in contact with the public. It all passes through the body, the ability to sense whether the audience is listening, or losing interest. And schoolteachers, as well, can only hold on to their classes if they feel the children and their attention—or their fatigue—with their bodies.

Technical skill and technical sense presuppose a process of 'subjectivisation' of the materials and objects, which takes place through a physical dialogue. Such a dialogue may be described in detail, as Böhle and Milkau have suggested in their theory of the 'subjectivising activity'—*subjektivierendes Handeln*— which is rooted in phenomenology and notably that of Merleau-Ponty.[3] The Greeks also had a notion of this bodily intelligence, which they designated as *metis*, the 'cunning intelligence'.[4]

Which Body?

The point is worth emphasising: the body we are talking about here, the body that appropriates the world through a process that Michel Henry has termed 'body-propriation' (*corpspropriation*), is not the biologists' body.[5] It is a second body, the one we live in, the one that feels affectively, the one that is also involved in the relationship with the Other, where body language, facial gestures, sweating, seduction, or aggressiveness are all potential notes to be played on a keyboard of 'body techniques' (in the sense that Marcel Mauss gave this term),[6] which are placed in the service of the expression of meaning and the desire to act on the sensibility of the Other.

In psychoanalysis, this second, subjective body that is constituted from the biological body is called the erogenous body. For in fact, we have two bodies. And this second one, the one that we live in, the one of the affects, the one that makes love, that can at times feel excitement but can also be frigid or impotent, in a way that is totally independent of a biological body in perfect condition—this second body is not given at birth. It develops gradually through the bodily contact between child and adult involved in bathing, feeding, and so on. Indeed, these acts are never purely hygieno-dietary or instrumental. Voluntarily or not, an adult who takes care of a child's body experiences erotic emotions, and these manipulations give rise to erotic fantasies in the adult. The sexual dimension of this contact lies at the origin of the child's excitement and curiosity, which in turn give rise to his or her erotic body and sexuality.

And it is indeed this body, the one involved in the most intimate experience of the self and the relationship to the Other that is summoned up in working—which, it must be recognised, is a surprising discovery that emerges from the clinical study of work. One particular feature of this process of appropriation, or 'body-propriation', of the world and technical objects must be emphasised, namely that it involves subjectivity as a whole, for subjectivity is one and indivisible, and its dissociation can only herald the spectre of mental illness (psychotic dissociation, fragmentation of depersonalisation). 'Body-propriation' presumes the maintenance of a long, unyielding encounter with the experience of failure, dead ends, vain endeavours, frustrated attempts, and powerlessness.[7] It presumes that the subject is possessed by the suffering that arises from working, from resistance, and from the way that the world sidesteps his or her power and control. Such an intimacy with materials and technical objects can only emerge if the subject accepts to be possessed by working, to the point of insomnia and dreaming alike. This is the price to be paid for acquiring the familiarity with the object of working that gives the intelligence its inspired nature, in other words, its power of ingenuity.

It should be clear, therefore, that work is not, as it is often thought, limited to the actual physical time spent on the shop floor or in the office. Work exceeds any limit assigned to working hours and mobilises the whole of the personality.

Work and Visibility

1. What has just been described about work is basically the province of subjectivity, which means that the essence of work does not belong to the visible world. Like everything that is affective, the suffering that lies at the source of intelligence and constitutes the very substance of working is, for transcendental reasons, impossible to quantify. Work cannot be evaluated because only what belongs to the visible world is accessible to scientific experimentation and thus subject to an objective evaluation. As a result, what is evaluated can only correspond to what is visible (the materialised part of production) and what has no proportional relationship to real working.

2. Other aspects of work situations aggravate the invisibility of working still further. As already indicated, being intelligent in work always means taking

a distance from procedures and instructions. Working well implies violating recommendations, regulations, procedures, codes, specifications and normative organisation. In many work situations, however, the monitoring and surveillance of gestures, movements, operating methods, and procedures are rigorous if not severe, with the result that intelligence in work is often condemned to remain discreet, or even clandestine, notably when the tasks at hand involve the safety of individuals, the security of the facilities, or risks for the environment and the surrounding populations. This is why an important share of real work remains in the background and thus cannot be evaluated.

3. This difficulty, as can easily be demonstrated, is aggravated even further when work activities evolve toward intangible tasks—in other words, when we are no longer talking about the production of material objects such as cars or washing machines. This is notably the case with the so-called service activities, where the largest portion of real work is invisible.

4. Intelligence in work is, as we have already seen, essentially the intelligence of the body, deposited in the body. This means that skilled workers often know how to use their intelligence but do not always manage to describe it. They do not have all the necessary words to explain this real work, and it is even likely that the vocabulary, the language itself, are fundamentally deficient where this corporeal experience is concerned.[8] For this reason, such intelligence is often ahead of the subject's own consciousness or knowledge of it. What cannot be symbolised in real work is all the more impossible to objectify. We are thus obliged to conclude that at this stage of our knowledge of work, *we do not know how to evaluate it and we are unable to evaluate it.*

II. Which Subjectivity?

Subjectivity Between Work and Sexuality

In the context of the psychodynamics of work, the analysis of the relationship between subjectivity and work suggests that skilled work involves subjectivity as a whole. But if we reverse the relationship, we might ask what subjectivity owes to work. Does work constitute one contingent challenge among others for subjectivity? Or is it a necessary condition for the emergence of subjectivity? This question cannot be answered by relying solely on

the psychodynamics of work; rather, it requires going back to the theory of subjectivity itself. Even if we are dealing with the clinic, health, and pathology, we must consider the psychoanalytic theory of the subject. But we know that in psychoanalysis, what is at the centre of subjectivity is not work but sex (or sexuality). We have already recognised, however, the importance of the encounter between the body and the reality of the world, as it is concretised in the work experience, relative to the growth of subjectivity. The psychodynamics of work favours the hypothesis that work cannot be reduced to a productive activity in the objective world. Work always presents a challenge for subjectivity, from which the latter will emerge enlarged and enhanced, or conversely, reduced and wounded. Working constitutes a trial that transforms subjectivity, for working is not only producing but also transforming oneself, and, in the best of cases, it offers an opportunity for subjectivity to test or even fulfil itself.

It would require lengthier explanations than this presentation permits in order to examine the relations between the growth of subjectivity through the *work* experience and the emergence of subjectivity through *sexuality*, desire, and love. We shall thus limit ourselves to indicating the theoretical intersections that must be explored in order to arrive at a synthesis of the data. The main theoretical difficulty lies in the contradiction between the centrality of work and the centrality of sexuality with regard to the emergence and development of subjectivity. In the psychodynamic theory of working, the development of subjectivity occurs through the relationship between suffering and reality. In the psychoanalytical theory of the subject, the development of subjectivity comes about primarily through drives and their outcomes. Finding a theoretical response to the *paradox of this double centrality* would presume resolving the relations between suffering and drives on the one hand and between the reality of the world and the unconscious on the other.

It may be—but this remains to be shown—that relations between suffering and drives are much closer than we might initially think. Suffering and drives could in fact find a common denominator in work on the one hand and the body on the other. Indeed, Freud defines the instinct as "a measure of the demand made upon the mind for *work* in consequence of its connection with the *body*."[9] But this analogy between the terms used in both the psychodynamics of work and psychoanalysis can only be of heuristic value

for the paradox of the double centrality once an exhaustive archaeology of the notion of work in the Freudian meta-psychology has been established. More specifically, this would entail defining the semantic ties between the Freudian *Arbeit*—as it emerges through the notions of *Traumarbeit* (dream-work), *Trauerarbeit* (work of mourning), *Durcharbeiten* (working through), *Verdrängungsarbeit* (work of repression), *Arbeitsanforderung* (work requirement), *Verdichtungsarbeit* (work of condensation), and so on—and work in the classic sense of production (*poiesis*).

In the absence of an adequate development of this idea, we shall ask the reader to give us the benefit of the doubt. To admit, not the absolute truth, but simply the possibility of an overlapping between *Arbeit* and *working* (rather than *work*). In such a case, the paradox of the double centrality would be resolved through an exegesis of the concept of drive (as Freud defined it in 1915) in the light of the theory of working that has emerged from clinical practice.

Subjectivity, Work and Action

At that point, speaking of the centrality of work in psychic functioning would amount to placing work and subjectivity in a consubstantial relationship. Work would thus acquire a psycho-anthropological status in its own right. What status? That of the specific challenge allowing subjectivity to be revealed to itself. Working would thus be a transcendental condition for the manifestation of absolute life.

It is for this reason—the status of working in relation to *life*—that the question of the ties between work and subjectivity (and that of the fundamental affective experience of suffering in which the latter manifests itself) should find its rightful place in the theory of action and political philosophy. Whether we like it or not, what is at stake with the changes in working imposed by the new forms of work organisation and management specific to neo-liberalism is the very future of humanity. Raising the question of subjectivity in political theory amounts to raising the question of the place assigned to life in the conception of action itself.

III. Subjectivity Between Individual Experience and Collective Action

Intelligence in the Singular and the Plural

We have thus far simplified the problem of working by analysing it essentially as a solipsistic experience of the relationship between self and self. However, ordinary work does not only present itself in this way. In the contemporary context (and perhaps much earlier), ordinary work situations cannot be described as the juxtaposition of individual experiences and intelligences, for as a rule, we work for someone—a boss, a foreman or immediate supervisor, subordinates or colleagues, a client, and so on. Work is not just an activity but also a social relationship; in other words, it takes place in a human world characterised by relationships of inequality, power, and domination. Working means involving one's subjectivity in a world that is hierarchical, ordered, constrained, and rife with struggles for domination. Thus, the reality of work is not simply that of the task, which is to say, what makes itself known to the subject through its resistance to control in the course of the hands-on struggle with the materials and technical objects. Working is also experiencing the resistance of the social world, and more precisely that of social relations, to the deployment of intelligence and subjectivity. The reality of work is not only the reality of the objective world but also that of the social world.

The foregoing discussion has perhaps already suggested certain difficulties that the intelligence might cause for someone concerned with the organisation of work. For the part of working that does not belong to the visible world because it depends on subjectivity, and which, in addition, is sometimes wilfully hidden from the eyes of others by the subject at work (in order to avoid potential sanctions occasioned by his or her intelligence when it leads to committing infractions relative to orders and procedures) can raise serious problems of technical management. What would happen if everyone worked intelligently in his or her own way, according to his or her own tastes, genius, or cleverness? Individual intelligence can in fact make quite different inroads into personal know-how, skills, and techniques, and reciprocally, a divergence in styles of work that are likely to destabilise the cohesiveness of the work group. To correct the fearsome risks of such contradictions and

conflicts, there is no choice but to compensate for the disorganisation of the overly individualised styles of work by *coordinating intelligence*.

Coordination and Cooperation

But coordination gives rise in turn to new difficulties. Since the introduction of Taylorism, job engineering has essentially been devoted to the social and technical division of labour, assigning limited tasks, responsibilities, and prerogatives to each person. But here too, if workers scrupulously respected the directives of these time-study engineers and administrators, no production would be possible. In order for the work process to function, it is necessary to revise the orders and adjust the *real* organisation of work, which is different from the *prescriptive* organisation. The workers' response to coordination (prescriptive) is cooperation (actual). Between the two arises a complex series of initiatives which, when they are efficient, result in the formation of 'work rules' or 'trade rules' that are elaborated by the workers and serve to stabilise agreements between the members of the team on the ways of working—in other words, a compromise between work styles and the preferences of each worker in order to make them compatible. Arriving at such a result presumes that the workers become individually involved in the collective debate in order to contribute their respective experiences, attempt to make their particular dexterity, know-how, tricks of the trade, and operating methods visible and intelligible. It is not just a question of describing their real activities but making them understandable and justifying the various deviations from procedures that the workers permit themselves. In the best of cases, the individual modes of work are subject to confrontation, comparison, and collective discussion thus allowing a choice between what can and cannot be accepted. Clear decisions are sometimes necessary. In the end, all of this collective activity presumes an exchange of arguments that are based not only on technical considerations but also on preferences, tastes, age, gender, health and medical history, and indeed, values—in other words, a confrontation of arguments that are at once technical and ethical, or what we call 'opinions.'

The agreements reached between workers within a group, team, or occupation, which are stabilised in the form of normative agreements, and, in the extreme, work rules, always have a double orientation—that of the efficiency and qual-

ity of the work on the one hand, and a social objective on the other. Cooperation presumes a *de facto* compromise that is always both technical and social. This is so because working is never just producing; it is also, and always, living together (in the Aristotelian sense of the term). And living together is not self-evident—it presupposes mobilising the workers' determination in order to ward off violence in the disputes or conflicts that might arise from disagreements over the ways of working. This complex process, known as '*deontic activity*,' is what permits the real organisation of work to evolve and adapt in function of the make-up of the group and the material transformation of the work process.

With regard to the involvement of subjectivity in working, cooperation to some extent presumes an agreed-upon (or imposed?) limit to the experience of intelligence and the implication of individual life in the activity. Bringing one's contribution and consent to normative agreements in a collective effort thus often implies renouncing a part of the individual subjective potentiality in favour of living together and cooperating.

The Shaping of the Collective Will

Agreeing to cooperate presumes, at least in part, limiting one's intelligence and subjectivity. The many conflicts arising within work groups show that this renunciation is not always easy for everyone to accept. Certain members refuse such limitations, which impose an intolerable suffering on their desire to put themselves to the test without any constraint other than their own self-limits. In this case, individualism triumphs, at the risk of destroying the group and its cooperation.

Why does someone agree to participate in a cooperative effort when he or she knows the risks posed by involvement in collective discussion (deontic activity) and the self-limitation of subjectivity? In general, this consent stems from one of the following two motives:

– In the absence of the creation of normative agreements and work rules, individualism leads to repeated conflicts and sometimes even violence, so that in the end, the social and ethical conditions favouring the individual challenge of life in work are themselves destroyed. In such a case, work generates suffering, frustration, injustice, and perhaps pathology. In this

harmful state, it contributes to the destruction of subjectivity as well as the bases of mental health. The individual renunciations demanded by cooperation are thus accepted in order to avoid this deadly process.

– Conversely, the second motive is tied to the specific resources that the group sometimes places at the service of fulfilling individual subjectivities. Evoking one's experience of working, revealing the discoveries of one's experience and know-how are a means of obtaining the recognition of others. For in order to aspire to recognition, it is first necessary to overcome the essential obstacle we have already discussed at length, namely the invisibility of work. When the real work achieves visibility, recognition becomes possible—the recognition resulting from judgements about doing and working, and not about the person who works.

This point is essential to the psychodynamics of recognition. It is this recognition of *doing* that makes it possible to respect and maintain cooperative relations with individuals for whom we have no particular liking, or even those whom we dislike. The recognition of the quality of individual contributions in terms of doing plays an essential role in warding off the violence between human beings. In addition, this recognition of doing also gives the person benefiting from it a sense of belonging—to a group, a team, or a trade. Thus, cooperation is a powerful means of warding off the social solitude that many men and women fear. In this sense, it is also an essential form of socialisation and integration into a community of belonging.

If we consider what cooperation may contribute in individual or social terms, we can understand why a fundamental interdependence may be constituted between the subjective experience in search of itself and the collective involvement in the desire to contribute to the ethical conditions of living together. Unlike certain prejudices that have weighed heavily on the notions of union and political activity, the reference to subjectivity is not necessarily harmful to the shaping of collective will and action. Quite the contrary: rational compromises between individual subjectivity and collective actions are possible. The fundamental viewpoint that the psychodynamics of work brings to the conception of action is that an action is only rational if it takes into account the fate of subjectivity in work and at the same time feeds on what arises from subjectivity in every work activity. Otherwise stated, collective action is rational if it takes as its explicit aim not only the struggle against injustice

but also, and above all, *the celebration of life*. It must be stressed once again that the possibility of establishing a continuity between life on the one hand and culture, or even civilisation, on the other, lies mainly if not exclusively in action for the *improvement of the organisation of work*. This is certainly another way of arriving at the centrality of work evoked at the beginning of this text—if the goal of political action is in fact to honour life and not to bid for power, or better, if the struggle against domination has as its ultimate objective the celebration of life and not the enjoyment of power or the promotion of consumerist individualism, then the action and the struggle should be aimed at making the organisation of work a priority in political debate.

Civilisation and its Discontents

The analysis proposed here attempts to reconstruct the intermediate steps in the processes that would allow us to defend the possibility of integrating individual subjectivity and collective action in the City (civil society). At the core of these processes, the relationship to work seems irreplaceably decisive. I have attempted to show that working can constitute the specific challenge that reveals life to itself. But the relationship to work only offers this possibility if what emerges from subjectivity in work is recognised and respected.

Contemporary changes in the forms of work organisation, administration, and management, in the wake of the neo-liberal turn, rely on principles that precisely suggest sacrificing subjectivity in the name of profitability and competitiveness. For the sake of brevity, I shall cite only two of these principles.

The first is the systematic recourse to the *qualitative, 'objective' evaluation of work.* While evaluation methods are sometimes criticised, most of our contemporaries accept the legitimacy of this overall approach because, caught up in the symbolic domination of the experimental sciences, they believe that everything in our world can be evaluated. If, as we have seen, the essentials of working depend on subjectivity, what is evaluated does not correspond to work. Numerous evaluations, some of which are quite sophisticated, lead to absurd, intolerable injustices relative to the actual contribution of those who work. In point of fact, it is not clear what is being evaluated, but it is certainly not work. As a result, that evaluation serves above all as a means of intimidation and domination—but its essential mission is relegating subjectivity outside the debates on economics and work.

The second principle of the new forms of work organisation, management, and administration, is *individualisation* and the call for all-out competition between individuals, between teams, between departments. Goals, contracts, the individualised evaluation of performances, competition between agents, and the growing lack of job security are leading to the spread of underhanded conduct between peers and the destruction of solidarities. These management practices result in isolation, solitude, and breakdown of social interaction, or better yet, *loneliness* in the sense that Hannah Arendt gives the term, namely the collapse of the ground that allows individuals to recognise what they have in common, what they share, and what lies at the very basis of their confidence in one another.[10]

The consequences of these principles of work organisation include on the one hand the extraordinary growth of productivity and wealth, but on the other, the erosion of the role allotted to subjectivity and life itself in work. This situation is leading to an aggravation of the mental pathologies of work (which are increasing throughout the Western world), the appearance of new pathologies, notably suicides in workplaces themselves, which were unknown before the advent of neo-liberalism, and the spread of violence in work, the increase in pathologies of overwork, the dramatic rise in pathologies of harassment.

It must be repeated, however, that no organisation, no firm, no system functions by itself, automatically, through the genius of one internal logic or another. Every system, if it is to function, needs not only the obedience of men and women, but also their zeal, which is to say, their intelligence. The present evolution of the organisation of work is not inevitable. It depends on the will—and the zeal—of the men and women who make it function. If work can give rise to the worst in the human world, as is the case today, it can also give rise to the best. This depends on us and on our ability, with the help of new conceptual tools, to rethink the relationships between subjectivity, work, and action.

Notes

1   F. Daniellou, A. Laville, and C. Teiger, "Fiction et Réalité du Travail Ouvrier," *Les Cahiers Français,* no. 209, 1983, pp. 39-45.

[2] J.-D. Reynaud, *Les Règles du Jeu, l'Action Collective et la Régulation Sociale*, Paris, Armand Colin, 1989.

[3] F. Böhle and B. Milkau, *Vom Handrad zum Bildschirm*, Munich, Institut für Sozialwissenschaftliche Forschung e.v. ISF, 1991; M. Merleau-Ponty, "The Primacy of Perception" in *The Primacy of Perception and Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, The Philosophy of Art, History, and Politics*, trans. Carleton Dallery, ed. J.M. James. Evanston, Ill., Northwestern University Press, 1964 (1947), pp. 12-42.

[4] M. Detienne and J.P. Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society*, trans. Janet Lloyd, New York, Columbia University Press, 1978.

[5] M. Henry, *La Barbarie*, Paris, Grasset, 1987, pp. 81-85.

[6] M. Mauss, "Body Techniques," In *Sociology and Psychology*, trans. Ben Brewster, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979 (1934), pp. 95-123.

[7] Y. Clot, *Le Travail sans l'Homme?* Paris, Éditions de la Découverte, 1995.

[8] Cf. The 'Semiotic Deficiency' in Boutet's Work; See J. Boutet, ed. *Parole au Travail*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1995.

[9] S. Freud, "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes," in *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. XIV, London, Hogarth Press, 1958 (1915), p. 122.

[10] H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New Edition, San Diego, New York, London, Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, 1973 (1951), pp. 474-479.

Recognition Today
The Theoretical, Ethical and Political Stakes
of the Concept[1]

Christian Lazzeri and Alain Caillé

We are today witnessing in the public space of democratic societies an explosion of demands for and expectations of recognition. These demands concern fundamental rights—civil and political liberties, for example—as well as specific rights that one seeks to integrate into the group of fundamental rights: demands for recognition of a specific cultural, ethnic or religious identity; demands for recognition of the legitimacy of minor languages; demands for recognition concerning 'gender'; demands for recognition coming from victims of forms of oppression that are not, or not adequately, recognised. In addition to this, there are expectations of recognition concerning informal social relations, such as the exercise of power within hierarchical organisations, processes of consultation and deliberation within organisations as well as in various associations; demands for consideration regarding difficult working conditions. Even economic negotiations between the different agents entail expectations of recognition, even when it is a matter

of negotiating simple questions of purchasing power. Finally, all interpersonal relations are also shot through with permanent demands for the recognition of a singularity, which, even if they are not always codifiable, remain nonetheless very intense.

In short, whereas for at least two centuries the essential part of political and social conflicts concerned the question of property and income, with the aspiration to a more equal distribution of wealth at the foreground, within the context of demands for distributive justice, today they are also framed and expressed in the language of a right to equal recognition.[2]

The notion of recognition thus seems to be as much involved in demands that are formulated within the public space as those which concern the private sphere. It is not certain that this set of demands—which can be just as easily expressed in the language of rights as in that of morality, or even in the register of psychology—always possesses clear objectives.

I. A Preliminary Definition

Let us try to sketch a preliminary definition of the concept. Taking Paul Ricoeur's last book, *The Course of Recognition*, as a reference, we can broadly identify at least two major meanings of this notion. The first is of a *cognitive* nature, the second, in its different variations, is of a *practical* nature, but both share a transversal property which allows them to be referred to by the same term. On the cognitive level, we can understand by recognition an ability to identify, which, in the form of a judgement, as in Descartes' *Fourth Meditation*, identifies something one had previously doubted as being henceforth true. Thus for Descartes, to recognise is to really know what one knows, where one had doubted whether it was really known. However, this recognition can also be encountered in the context of the production of a concept, as in Kant's Transcendental Analytic in the *Critique of Pure Reason* ("The Transcendental Deduction of the Pure Concepts of the Understanding"), where the third synthesis, the synthesis of *recognition* in the concept, consists, for consciousness, in identifying its own objectified unity within the production of the unity of the concept through the synthesis of the manifold of representations. In both cases (Descartes and Kant), the 'ability to identify', from the point of view of the judgement or the synthesis of recognition, possesses the status of a

confirmation: something that one knows or whose nature is anticipated in an uncertain manner, is confirmed by an operation of subsumption by which one places the thing to be known beneath the jurisdiction of a concept: the concept of the true, or the concept of the unity of consciousness.

However, this ability to identify on the cognitive level at the same time provides the link, which enables the transition to the *practical* aspect of recognition, and this is also characterised by an act of identification that takes the form of an attestation when one is dealing with the assignment of juridical or moral accountability. Commonly, a recognition of responsibility means that in cases where questions or doubts may arise concerning the identity of the person committing a crime or a fault, there needs to be a response in the form of a *re-assertion* that *attests* the link between the identity of the individual and that of the author of the crime.[3] Here we can see that recognition, as attestation of responsibility, retains the cognitive-type character of the judgement of confirmation. In light of this we can consider this judgement of attestation to incorporate by the same token another attestation: that is, if this confirmation allows for the assignment of juridical or moral accountability, by the same token it indicates that one possessed the *abilities* required to commit the act one is imputed with (rationality, deliberative abilities, decision-making abilities, ability to carry out an intention, and so on), and this attestation inseparably unites the *identity* of the author of the crime and the *possession* of the relevant abilities to commit it. However, even though it remains a question here of the cognitive context, the transition to the practical dimension is almost immediate, since the attestation which allows for the assignment of accountability confers a negative evaluation (blame) on the individual and his capacities, which may or may not include punishment. In short, to recognise oneself as the author of action X is also to recognise oneself as the object of a negative evaluation which is applied to these two instances. With this as a starting point, we are in a position to assess the reverse situation, namely the demand on the part of an individual (or a group) for the value of actions and abilities to be confirmed when doubt is experienced in this respect, which the individual (or group) addresses to its social environment in order to obtain this confirmation. As opposed to the previous case, what is sought here is an attestation of the value of the abilities it possesses, and the attestation that it possesses them and makes acceptable use of them. The demand for recognition,

to use Axel Honneth's terms, is nothing else here but an *expectation* of the confirmation of abilities and value by others.

One must therefore ask with regard to recognition the question that the economist philosopher Amartya Sen poses in relation to equality. In *On Ethics and Economics* and *Inequality Reexamined*,[4] Sen points out that the question of equality between individuals must be formulated in a rigorous fashion for it to be able to be treated, in virtue of the multiple variables of comparison concerning what can be declared equal between them. In a general way, one can evaluate the equality between individuals by comparing one aspect of their situation: it is possible to compare people from the point of view of their income, their wealth, their happiness, their freedom, their rights, the opportunities available to them as well as from the point of view of the satisfaction of their needs. There are multiple possible comparisons using these variables. It seems intuitively obvious at first glance, however, that one cannot compare people according to all of these variables at once: it is impossible to decide whether, if X, who possesses less wealth but more civil rights than Y, who is more able to satisfy his needs but is less happy, is despite everything equal to Y. One therefore must select the variables to define a 'space of comparison'. Every time one wants to address the question of equality between people, one must inevitably precede it with the question 'equality in what?'.[5]

From this point of view, we could paraphrase Sen's question concerning our own subject with and ask: "recognition of what?" Such a question in fact has two sides: an objective side, which concerns the *properties* that are able to be the object of recognition and serve as focal variables; and a subjective side, which consists in knowing what individuals *desire* to have recognised. The treatment of the question would be optimal if the choice of objective variables, limited in number, coincided with people's desires. However, the first difficulty we encounter comes from the fact that the subjective side seems to immediately assume dominance and that it is subject to a rule of extreme diversity in preferences. We are thus dealing *a priori* with an infinite number of abilities that individuals desire to have recognised: civil, cultural or religious affiliations, skills in all sorts of activities that occur in the most diverse life-projects, personal particularities in infinite number.

II. Logics of Recognition

Constructing the Concept of Recognition

What can be suggested on the subject of recognition that takes into account this plurality of preferences without thereby being dissolved in their infinity? It is possible to maintain, if only as a working hypothesis, that there are three fundamental forms of recognition, which—without claiming to exhaust the variety of all the acts of recognition—define the forms that are considered to be the most important and the preferences that are classed at the top of a ranked hierarchy. These three forms were put forward by Hegel in his early works, in the two *Philosophies of Spirit*, of 1804 and 1805. They cover three types of social relations expressing the essential aspects of human life: the social relations associated with the distribution among individuals of forms of social esteem (outlined only in the *System of Ethical Life*),[6] the legal relations associated with property and citizenship status, and the interpersonal relations within the family, which Hegel expresses using three categories: the ethical life of the community, law and love. These early works attempt to construct a theory of recognition using these three types of social relations. Work, however, which appears as *one* of the three 'potencies' in the *Philosophy of Spirit* of 1804, will acquire a central place as a condition of recognition in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

It is in the wake of this three- or four-way Hegelian division that most theories of recognition have situated themselves, even if they have other foundations and have changed or broadened the scope of the Hegelian categories: that of work, for example, has acquired a broader meaning in designating a set of competences expressed in very varied individual and social tasks, to the point where this category can be taken as a particular form of the distribution of social esteem. That of love also possesses an extended meaning and covers the whole set of friendly relations and, more generally, relations proper to primary sociality. That of law, finally, does not only refer to the notion of individual or group rights that guarantee possession (as Hegel maintained in 1804), but is also extended to the notion of citizenship, whether national or international.

Let us then distinguish three broad registers of recognition: that of competence, that of belonging and that of love.

The Status of Competence

Let us begin the examination of these categories with the first one (which has been deliberately kept abstract so as to respect the diversity of different authors' approaches), studied by Mead in *Mind, Self, and Society* and developed—in different directions—by Rawls' *Theory of Justice*, Axel Honneth's *The Struggle for Recognition*, Walzer's *Spheres of Justice*, Taylor's theory of the social categories of morality, the republicanism defended by Philip Pettit or Iseult Honohan, the Habermasian theory of communication, or the works on self-consciousness by Ernst Tugendhat.[7] In sociology, we can also invoke the work of Mauss or, more recently, that of Richard Sennett.[8]

To go straight to the essential point and avoid a long discussion on the variations of this category, we will use Rawls' analysis in the third part of the *Theory of Justice* as an example. In reference to the theory of 'self-realisation' developed by Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Rawls describes what he calls the application in human society of an 'Aristotelian principle'. We can define this principle in the following way:

> other things equal, human beings enjoy the exercise of their realised capacities (their inate or trained abilities), and this enjoyment increases the more the capacity is realised, or the greater its complexity. The intuitive idea here is that human beings take more pleasure in doing something as they become more proficient in it, and of two activities they do equally well, they prefer the one calling on a larger repertoire of more intricate and subtle discriminations.[9]

This Aristotelian principle is not only characterised by its individual aspect, but also by its social aspect, that Rawls defines in the following way:

> As we witness the exercise of well-trained abilities by others, these displays are enjoyed by us and arouse a desire that we should be able to do the same things ourselves. We want to be like those persons who can exercise the abilities that we find latent in nature.[10]

The social aspect of this rational development of competences involves a social interaction that mixes two inseparable elements: admiration and emulation, approval and the desire to imitate. At least this is the first moment of this interaction, for the result of this admiration and this emulation is that the one who causes it is led to take the perspective of others upon himself, as George Herbert Mead had already shown.[11] He thus perceives himself through the perception of others and the consequence of this detour is his approval of himself via the approval of others. This then merges with the self-esteem expressed by the positive value the agent attaches to his abilities as a result of this successful social interaction. We can say that this esteem is the same as the agent's sense of his own value according to his skills and their development, and that it engenders a certain self-confidence.

If recognition therefore simultaneously comprises a dimension of social integration and of social approval, it can be maintained that self-esteem represents the subjective translation of the act of recognition. We can thus complete the proposition and say that the recognition that others grant the agent, contributes both to the creation of the value of her projects, and to the formation of the feeling of confidence in her ability to realise them successfully.

We can immediately gauge the implications of this act of recognition, which cannot fail to have a retroactive effect on the initial premises. The point of departure of Rawls' thesis is that the application of the Aristotelian principle as a fundamental motivation of behaviour is in the first place an individual motivation: it connects, in a purely internal fashion, the satisfaction of the agent to the degree of the polyvalent development of her competences. But we now have to broaden these premises, since self-esteem is not only linked to the development of abilities, but also to the fact that these incorporate a satisfaction that depends on their social approval. What follows from this is that the agent also seeks to develop their abilities in order to obtain this type of approval. But, as we have seen, this approval follows from the fact that the development of the agent's abilities gives rise to a social emulation that develops the capacities of others, which can themselves obtain a form of social approval. From this, we can see that a sort of social expectation concerning the development of abilities is gradually generalised, and that this expectation is expressed subjectively in the form of a synthesis of approval

on the part of what Mead calls 'the generalised other', whose assumed judgement and expectations are interiorised by each individual. By invoking this half-real, half-imaginary social judgement, each agent—following different possible interpretations—attempts to evaluate her place and social function. This can happen either from a utilitarian perspective—the agent seeks to evaluate her social utility, the source of her approval, and is satisfied if she has reasons to believe it exists, even if it only corresponds to a marginal increase in the total social utility; or—from a deontological perspective—the agent evaluates her capacity to generate social emulation and to reveal the latent capacities of her partners who have the same goal in view, thus determining overlapping benefits; or finally—from a more sociological perspective, in the way understood by Mauss, Veblen, Pareto, Elias or Pitt-Rivers, she seeks to define her position and status within the social competition.[12]

Such differences in the way of evaluating the social place and position of agents gives rise to different interpretations of this informal social recognition. One can maintain, with Sennett and Rawls, that the process of recognition increases the positive value of social exchanges through overlapping recognitions that render individuals complementary to each other from the point of view of their talents and projects. But one can also maintain, with Veblen and Pareto, that recognition is inscribed within a competition for its monopolisation, which transforms it in to a scarce resource and thus generates a multiplicity of social conflicts.

Belonging and Citizenship

Let us now look at the transition to a second form of recognition, the one that characterises citizenship or civic belonging. This transition—and this already represents a difficulty to be resolved—can be considered from several contrasting perspectives.

In the context of a *deontological liberalism*, represented in particular by Rawls, one must necessarily start from the different projects expressing diverse conceptions of the good. For these conceptions to be guaranteed, agents must have the freedom to realise any one of them, if it is compatible with the protection of those of everyone else. However, this non-interference is positively duplicated by implementing the conditions of a 'social fellowship' based on

the mutual respect and assistance between citizens. The convergence of these two effects engenders, in principle, a 'relative social stability', such that any defection of cooperation ('free-rider' or envy) will be compensated by the tendency of the social system—incarnated in the structure of institutions and citizens' attitudes—to regain its own equilibrium around the application of the principles of justice.[13]

The specificity of the Rawlsian conception of justice lies in a conceptual work of abstraction and systematisation that tends to simplify the number of 'primary goods' (fundamental political and civil rights, economic and social rights) distributed by the principles of justice by reducing the distribution of the different possible goods to the distribution of their conditions of acquisition, which also constitute goods.

There is one type of primary good, however, that does not directly fall into either of the two preceding categories, but which follows from their combined effects: it is constituted by the *social bases of self-respect* that allow citizens to possess a 'real sense of their own value', which gives them the deep conviction that their conception of the good and their life project are worth being realised and which allows them to advance their goals by having confidence in their ability to realise them.[14] Without this self-respect, which represents the subjective translation of a mechanism of recognition, it is impossible for agents to want to realise their conception of the good, whether this conception lies in applying first-order interests (the different conceptions of the good) or in interests of a higher order (the exercise and development of their moral faculties). The social bases of self-respect thus appear as a sort of *primary meta-good*.

The principles of justice, like the primary goods, play an essential role in the distribution and reproduction of recognition and respect. Indeed, for agents to keep wanting to realise their first-order and higher-order interests—and thus wanting to defend the primary goods that they have demanded—they obviously must retain their self-respect. The principles of justice must therefore help to produce a form of social recognition that shows itself as being, in relation to the preceding one, *of a public kind*. The informal realisation of social recognition is in this way not abolished but, in principle, completed and guaranteed by the political institutions, and there is, in virtue of this, a

continuity between the first and the second. Nevertheless, public recognition has nothing of the interpersonal process about it; it cannot address itself to citizens by directly engendering self-respect.[15] All it is able to do, through the mediation of the constitution, institutions and laws, is simply provide the '*social bases* of self-respect', according to specific modalities.

But there are other theoretical perspectives that also aim to account for the construction of the civic notion of recognition and which take the opposite course to the Rawlsian one. Within a problematic of the elaboration of a communicative ethics, Habermas maintains that the best means of rationally grounding the appropriateness of norms is not by starting from the fictional situation of isolated individuals who would choose principles on the basis of a rational decision. For him there is a primacy of intersubjectivity based on processes of communication and argumentation that suffices to determine the forms of political as well as social choice. On the other hand, the norms that individuals must choose cannot be limited to a few broad constitutional principles of a political, social and economic nature: it is also necessary to coordinate the daily actions of individuals belonging to groups of all sizes—associations, intermediary organisations or States. Intersubjectivity and cooperation are irreducible and cannot be abstracted from. Nevertheless, since individuals cooperate in their actions, they will also be able to cooperate with regard to the rules of action themselves. This is precisely what they do when arguing and collectively deliberating, which is to say when seeking to persuade each other. From this point of view, the norm will be the result of this process of rational intercomprehension between individuals. From this a first principle is deduced concerning the rational establishment of a norm that is the principle of universalisation, which Habermas also calls the 'moral principle':

> The moral principle is conceived in such a way that the norms which cannot be met with the qualified support of all those concerned will be considered as invalid and thus excluded [. . .] The norms that will be accepted as valid are those, and only those, which express a general will, in other words, as Kant constantly said, which are appropriate to a universal law.[16]

But Kantianism undergoes a displacement here. For the maxim of Kantian morality that says "Act in such a way that the principle of your action can

become a universal law," Habermas substitutes another: "Instead of imposing on all others a principle that I wish to be a universal law, I must submit my principle to all the others in order to examine through discussion its claim to universality."[17] The interests of each individual must be accessible to discussion and the criticisms of others in order to be admissible. Habermas thus deduces from the very notion of rational discussion the norms that each individual will be obliged to respect—under pain of being reduced to silence. In other words, the argumentative procedure comprises within itself the moral rules that one necessarily accepts once one accepts entry into a space of deliberation. Such is the foundation that leads to establishing appropriate norms on the basis of the process of discussion aiming for an agreement. But we can see that the agreement does not exist only *as an outcome* of the discussion when the latter turns out to produce convincing arguments: it necessarily exists in what pertains to the *conditions* of the discussion itself. No discussion exists without recognition of the legitimacy of the other discussants taking part.

It is no doubt clear—and Habermas is the first to admit it—that many discussions, and political deliberations in particular, are in the first place and almost always 'strategic' and thus do not primarily aim at this intercomprehension or this full 'transparent' communication between subjects. But to say that, in the concrete, we only observe 'strategic' communications is not enough, according to him, to nullify the validity of an ethics of communication, since the role of this ethics consists precisely in showing that this practice is publicly unjustifiable because contradictory. The consequence of this ethics of communication is a recognition of the equality between interlocutors and, to the extent that the object of the deliberation in question is the genesis of the public norms that regulate the life of a society, the type of recognition which is born of this intercomprehension is a political recognition.

A third approach can be distinguished as much from the Rawlsian problematic as the Habermasian theory of communication: the one which the republican theory defends, one of whose most important contemporary representatives is Philip Pettit. His conception of recognition, in particular civic recognition, has its source in a criticism of the 'negative freedom' defended by the liberal tradition, from Constant to Berlin and from Berlin to Rawls. The counterpart of this critique of negative freedom is the valorisation of the concept of liberty

as 'non-domination'. It is at the intersection of the critical thesis and the positive thesis that the notion of public recognition is outlined. To the extent that the conservation of negative freedom is not necessarily accompanied by a democratic option, as Berlin had already recognised in his famous paper on "the two concepts of liberty,"[18] it is perfectly possible for an authoritarian power to tolerate spheres of negative freedom in which it does not interfere in a coercive manner. The extension of the domain of the private opportunities of the agent remains immune from all effective interference, even though the power in question always possesses the ability (the power) to interfere at will in the opportunities of subjects and may sometimes do so.

In these conditions, by reviving a key concept of Roman juridical thought, codified in the *Digest*, which distinguishes between the one who is *sui juris* (subject to his own law) and the one who is *alterius juris* (subject to the law of others), Pettit explains that there is dependence and domination here, even in the absence of interference.[19] Conversely, it is possible for individuals to agree to limit their own opportunities on the basis of laws and institutions that they help to create, and in this case there may well be interference and coercion, but without domination. We can thus distinguish between a domination without interference, an interference without domination, a domination with interference, and, of course, a non-domination without interference.

For domination to be recognised as such, the potential interference of the dominating party must be understood as *arbitrary*, and it is such if, and only if, it is possible for the dominating party to choose to interfere or not according to its whim without taking into account the preferences of those who are affected by it, which is to say without being preoccupied with the importance, to them, of their own choices. This can be illustrated, among other cases, by the status of the employment relationship in which, according to Pettit, economic rationality can lead the employer to not interfere at any given time in a coercive way in the employee's sphere of liberty, but where his will can encroach on the preferences and opportunities of the employee via the control exercised over his resources, the possible rupture of the work contract or by affecting the working conditions. This is all the more likely to happen given that the employer can demand a protection of negative liberty through which, precisely, it exercises control over its own resources without the State being able to intervene, except to guarantee that the work contract

is executed between two 'free' wills. This type of domination can be encountered in other forms: in questions of gender, in the relations between a dominant and a dominated culture or in the way the environment is harmed.

Such a formulation of the concept of domination highlights the fact that the concept of negative liberty says too little to the extent that, in reducing the harm suffered by the agent to the simple limitation of opportunities, it paradoxically limits her freedom. But, from another angle, it highlights the fact that this same concept says too much to the extent that it is exaggerated to assimilate all protection against domination that limits certain opportunities of action to a limitation of the freedom of the agent. And as a matter of fact, interference without domination is possible as long as it ensues from institutional and legal arrangements that agree with the interests and objectives of the dominated individuals, that are the product of their will and their participation and that protect them from any actual or possible arbitrary interference under the forms examined. This protection, however, is real only to the extent that it is not exercised in an arbitrary way and that the laws and institutions do not exercise domination over those they should protect.

One can thus define non-domination in a Rawlsian way by saying that it constitutes a *primary good*, which is to say something that an individual has instrumental reasons for wanting, whatever else he may want: something that promises to bring results he desires, whatever the things he desires and attaches importance to may be. But non-domination is also a good which must be considered for itself and recognised as possessing a value *per se* in so far as it reduces all strategies of subordination, defines the individual as being able to enjoy his own esteem, to be taken into account in his own choices and unable to be put aside without reason. This concerns, Pettit maintains, a "profound and universal human desire":[20] to recover one's own abilities to choose, without them being reduced by arbitrary interference, amounts to being able to avoid deferential behaviours towards dominating agents, and that amounts to "living with honour," which, according to Pettit, must necessarily begin in the political sphere in order to be able to be obtained also within the social and private spheres.[21]

Love and Interpersonal Recognition

We can now come to the last form of recognition concerning inter-individual relationships of a purely personal kind. With this form of recognition, there exists at the outset a difference from the first two categories. Political recognition and informal social recognition alike were based on the valorisation of common properties. With the type of recognition that concerns love and, more broadly, relations of friendship, one does not take into account what can be shared and creates a relationship of belonging to a given social group. One is interested in what is most individual in the person in question and which has its place within an interpersonal relationship. What can form the object of recognition in this type of relationship? It is, for individual X, the value and importance of her individuality by the singularity of individual Y and it is for Y the same thing by the singularity of X. What characterises this type of relationship is that it is founded on individual characteristics which accord with each other and where each of these has a value for the other because of what it confers of value to them. Put in another way, what X loves in Y is not the property or abilities that Y shares in common with others, but the particularity of Y (*qua* Y) that makes Y accept the particularity of X. X loves in Y the particular aspect by which Y seeks and approves the particularity of X, which makes Y love the same thing in X. We see, in this case, that what X and Y have in common is that each of them, through this singular recognition, see their singular identity outlined in the other, in such a way that they tend—as Spinoza maintained—to form a single individual. This individual is in fact nothing other than a community of two (or a small number of people).

This conception obviously has no lack of predecessors within the heart of the philosophical tradition and it is encountered as much in Descartes in the treaty of the *Passions of the Soul* as in Spinoza in Parts III and IV of the *Ethics*. But we also find it in the early writings of Hegel, notably in the *Philosophy of Spirit* of 1804. In Chapter III, at the point where one passes from work to desire and from desire to love, he provides the following definition of the latter: "*they subsist in such a way that in the being-for-self of the other, each is him/herself; so that each is conscious of their own singularity-for-self in the consciousness of the other, that is, in his/her singularity, or being for self.*"[22] Perhaps it is Bourdieu, following Simmel and Sartre, who must be credited with the

reviving of this definition in the conclusion to his book on *La Domination Masculine*,[23] when he shows that, despite the relations of domination between the sexes, there remains a space for this relationship of 'mutual recognition'. On the anthropological level, he explains, this relationship is

> based on the suspension of the struggle for recognition and the associated temptation to dominate, the mutual recognition by which each recognises himself or herself in another whom he or she recognises as another self and who also recognises him or her as such, can lead, in its perfect reflexivity, beyond the alternatives of egoism and altruism and even beyond the distinction between subject and object, to the state of fusion and communion.[24]

There are no doubt further discussions to be had here to determine the conditions of this singular reciprocal recognition: must it only be considered possible to the extent that it emerges against the background of the reciprocal service that individuals render to each other, such that it only appears as the extension of utilitarian relations? Or must it be considered as completely independent of this and that only the pure inter-individual relation comes into play?

Whatever the case, in relation to the three categories of recognition considered, a theory of recognition will have to develop its investigations in at least two directions: 1) the philosophical and sociological construction of a concept of recognition which enables a clear distinction between the different conceptions just examined; there is much at stake in this for both disciplines because each of the adopted definitions involves very different ethical, political and social consequences; 2) to ask what the relations are between the three examined categories of recognition. Must we consider that they are organised hierarchically based on relations between condition and conditioned, such that it becomes necessary to identify which are to be considered fundamental in relation to the others? We could thus maintain with Honneth and Taylor that familial relationships—or primary sociality (Cooley, Caillé)— form the initial kernel of recognition on the basis of which the other forms of recognition can be apprehended and even required to be socially and politically distributed. But it is also possible, with Rawls, to consider that the fundamental process of recognition passes in the first instance via political institutions and then descends to the family nucleus and even allows a

'family morality' of recognition to be formulated.[25] One can also maintain, with Habermas, that it is firstly the constitution of civic identity that allows the two other forms of recognition to find a framework within which they are not only possible, but also become meaningful.[26] Further still, depending on the historical and cultural context of reference, one can suppose that this hierarchy (whichever form of recognition is considered to be fundamental) is liable to require in certain cases the sacrifice of the 'subordinate' forms, which allows us to reread from a new perspective the opposition between the ancients and the moderns concerning the primacy of the public sphere over the private sphere, or vice versa. Precise reflections should therefore be made on the possible contextual conditions in which these different types of hierarchy between the three forms of recognition apply.

Recognition and Ethical Life

We will maintain here as a hypothesis that recognition constitutes an element of the 'good life', or, more precisely, a condition of the good life, without defining its content. For the ancients, as we know, the happy life is inseparable from the ethical life and when they speak of the good life, they use the same expression to refer to the ethical life and the happy life. Recognition forms a condition of the ethical life, since it is a condition of the good life, but by itself it possesses no ethical value: this value can only exist to the extent that such or such qualities or abilities for self-realisation are accepted as important for leading such or such a type of life, and it is because such an importance is accepted that they mutually recognise each other as possessing them and thus as belonging to the same community. Recognition therefore depends on a sort of inaugural decision capable of defining what should be considered important. It is this decision which confers on recognition its ethical value and transforms it into an ethical medium. However, since in Antiquity these qualities are only possessed by the masters, recognition then traces a line of demarcation between the class of masters and that of slaves. What applies in the relation between masters and slaves could be transposed onto other categories that also trace lines of division and create fundamentally asymmetrical and non-reversible relationships between human beings.

From this point of view, what constitutes the fundamental feature of modern ethical systems does not so much lie in the invention of new abilities or new qualities as in the possibility of seeing that the abilities that were hitherto reserved for the class of masters, those that ensure self-government, can in fact be extended to all individuals—this being precisely what defines their equality. Hobbes is one of the first to have formulated this principle of extension as defining the status of equality of abilities. Recognition can then be extended to all individuals considered as equal from the angle of the possibility of deliberating in order to choose the fundamental elements of the good life, guaranteeing this choice for others and participating in the political community within which these deliberations take place. It therefore appears that recognition is able to serve opposing ends and it can be just as much encountered in the service of an aristocratic *ethos* as a democratic *ethos*. This attests to the fact that recognition seems to comprise a dimension of *ethical neutrality* resulting from the fact that it can be subordinated to any kind of possible end. Consequently there can be conflicts between forms of recognition because there is a conflict of interpretation concerning the value and sharing of the human capacities to be recognised. The specificity of recognition in ancient and medieval societies is that it ends in a form of exclusion of those who are not supposed to possess the abilities required to be really considered free, whereas recognition in modern societies is, in principle, entirely inclusive since it assumes a universal form sanctioned by constitutional principles.

A first possibility of thinking recognition as a subordinate means in relation to the good life within this democratic context goes back to Rawls' own attempt. According to him, individuals possess talents or abilities that they exercise, among which are the two faculties of the reasonable and the rational. These faculties are higher-order interests since the satisfaction that ensues from their use involves their function of realising a conception of the good as well as their exercise *qua* satisfying talents capable of progression. Beyond the individual satisfaction stemming from this function and exercise, individuals, as we have seen, obtain an informal social recognition.[27] This grants them the sense of the value of their talents and thus of themselves as well as a confidence in their ability to realise their projects. Included in these projects are those that consist in developing their moral faculties and that form

a necessary part of any rational life project. This also contributes to defining their priority as higher interests. Given this, the recognition of talents, like that of faculties, cannot possess in itself any moral value within the framework of a purely procedural theory of justice.

From the Rawlsian perspective, social and political recognition fall under the jurisdiction of the two principles of justice that define moral and political values. These values do not properly speaking create recognition since it is firstly necessary for agents to experience it within an informal social context before being able to want to demand the primary goods necessary for its conservation. But they create recognition's public guarantee. What applies within Rawls' perspective could be identified in all the normative philosophies that also defend the subordination of recognition with respect to a set of moral norms. We have seen, for example, that in the context of the communicational ethics defended by Habermas, the rules of collective rational deliberation define the conditions of an ethics that is immanent to the argumentative communication within which interlocutors reciprocally recognise each other as subjects of conviction who accept the risk of playing this as a stake in the discussion.

In the eyes of other authors, however, such a foundationalist approach of a normative kind is considered to be simplificatory, and offers only a very crude account of the place and function of recognition. It starts from the assumption that the agents first make a choice concerning the life projects they want to carry out and the abilities necessary to realise them, and then recognise and are recognised by those who possess the same abilities in order to form a community with them. But this does not reflect any social process and, according to some authors, cannot reflect any because this is not the way that agents proceed in reality. When agents assess the validity of a mode of life and the abilities that go with it, they do not do so independently of those who realise them. These abilities are valorised via the individuals who bear them, but only to the extent that one draws on forms of collective judgement that predetermine their value and the value of those who are their bearers.

For Charles Taylor, for example, this recognition of value has to presuppose the existence of a same socially shared conception of the good (or several competing conceptions) that defines the conditions of recognition of the importance of the abilities in question and of those who possess them.[28] From this perspective, this collective choice of values can only be explained by a cul-

tural context that is in each case particular and historically variable, within which the different forms of recognition take place. This does not at all mean that ethics is rejected but, more fundamentally, that it is relative to these cultural contexts and is defined in relation to them, and that recognition expresses this sense of belonging and this practice of social integration. This type of conceptualisation draws on a reference to the notion of a 'moral framework', understood as a set of often implicit and unformulated fundamental intuitions within a given culture that enable agents to make the qualitative distinctions with which they define the things and actions to strive for as well as those that must be avoided, differentiate and rank the different forms of goods (higher and lower goods) and define the types of obligation or attraction that correspond to them. These different moral frameworks define the horizons within which the life projects of different agents take on a meaning by seeking the good determined by these moral frameworks, which gives them an identity in relation to these goods and in relation to those who also seek them. In this way, whatever one claims to do, it is impossible to abstract from such moral frameworks and to define according to ones own preferences a morality or counter-morality: even critiques of morality are carried out in reference to moral frameworks—often indeed unbeknownst to them.

One could show that the theory of recognition developed by Michael Walzer in his *Spheres of Justice* and that developed by Michael Sandel in his conception of the communitarian constitution of individual identity are oriented, despite undeniable differences, in a similar direction.[29] There remains, however, a third possible option outlined in the philosophies of Spinoza and Hegel, which tends to consider recognition itself as a principle of the emergence of ethical behaviour and political norms. Recognition constitutes the process by which these norms are produced and judged on the standard of the possibility of favouring recognition itself. Finally, one can mention the existence of an intermediary possibility between the first and third, which consists in thinking recognition within a theoretical framework that inseparably unites a descriptive dimension and a normative dimension, as Axel Honneth does.[30]

We can now see the outlines of the nature of the problem posed by the relationship between ethics and recognition. There exist in effect three types of

possible responses (with their variations): the first places recognition in a sub-ordinate relationship to the ethical values that make it possible and seek to guarantee it; the second places ethics itself in a subordinate relationship to specific cultural and social contexts, and even particular social structures which predetermine both; the third places recognition in a situation of auton-omy to the extent that it contributes to the definition of ethical and political norms. Any theory of recognition must necessarily be determined in relation to the choice of one or the other of these responses. But recognition must not only be thought of in a positive way.

Recognition in the Negative

Next to the forms of positive recognition, it is necessary to focus on what could be called the 'negative' forms of recognition. In the language of Ernst Tugendhadt or Axel Honneth and Emmanuel Renault, we could say that the specificity of negative recognition consists in inflicting 'moral wounds'.[31] A moral wound is nothing other than a particular kind of suffering which man-ifests the vulnerability of an individual (or of a social group) confronted with a series of depreciations to which it is subjected, whether these take the form of simple indifference or assume the form of 'social contempt'. The exami-nation must begin by stating the conditions of possibility of depreciation, for the latter cannot come about in just any way: it requires specific conditions of production. These conditions—though these are not at all restrictive—come to three, and the first comprises three variations.

First condition: This condition stipulates that in order for depreciation to occur, the mechanism of recognition must already be functioning and have pro-duced effects of self-esteem, which is to say that whoever is subject to depre-ciation already possesses a positive self-image and is endowed with a certain value in their own eyes. If this previous mechanism has not been operative, depreciation cannot produce any effect since it is not preceded by any prior appreciation.

– The first variation describes the case where an ability possessed by an agent and which is also recognised in other circumstances or in other contexts, comes to be assigned a negative value. What is in question here is not so much the agent itself but the *value* of the abilities she possesses.

– In the second variation, the depreciation can consist in not admitting that the agent possesses an ability that is an object of recognition. What is at issue here is less the ability than the agent *himself* who, in the eyes of others, does not possess it, or not at the required level.

– The third variation: in a weaker sense than the first two, it can simply consist in a form of ignorance or more precisely of indifference that does not constitute a direct denial, but that refrains from attributing any value at all to the qualities or abilities of the agent or assumes that she does not possess them. It is a variation of the two preceding forms of depreciation.

Second condition: This lies in the particular modality that must be added to depreciation, which is that of the cultural context of recognition, a context which possesses a certain importance for understanding acts of social contempt. In order for this contempt to be experienced as such, those who are subjected to it must understand the social significance of the negative value assigned to a given ability or its absence; failing this, they cannot really understand what they are excluded from, why they are excluded or what they are identified as.

Third condition: In order for contempt to exist, it must be the case that the agents in question do not possess any real or ideal community of reference whose positive recognition would wholly compensate for the negative kind, or that the recognition it provides is not sufficiently *intense* (in the case of an ideal community, they are not able to *imagine* it strongly enough) to effectively counterbalance the other. To be precise, this condition simply stipulates that the resistance is not strong enough to ensure invulnerability.

Without going further down this path,[32] we will say that if these three conditions are present, or else one or other of them, the process of depreciation will then produce its effects, which can be described in the form of a conflict of self-representations from which the agent's identity results according to whether the one or the other of these two representations wins out. The specific trait of such a conflict, however, is that, in this first moment, it generates doubt: individuals do not know which of these two representations accurately describes what they are and they oscillate between the two. They do not yet know whether their identity is acceptable or not, whether they are integrated or excluded. But they can remain in this situation for a long time,

for if there is conflict it is because the two representations are dynamic and each tends to impose itself even if they can't both do so at the same time and in the same way. Moreover, this situation of doubt is even less tolerable in virtue of its paralysing effect: if they are not sure of the value of their abilities and their skills and—as we have seen—the projects they formulate depend on this, they find themselves in a situation where it is impossible to pursue them and the confidence that they had in themselves is deferred. They tend to act and not to act both at the same time.

We can see that the moral injury is defined as a kind of *violence* on account of the fact that it first introduces a contradiction in them: as Spinoza would say, it introduces a sort of 'poison' in them that decomposes their relationship with themselves. And we could add that its intolerable aspect lies in the fact that it only exists because the person suffering the injury finds herself in the situation where she *cooperates* in her own depreciation. This is what leads Sartre to write regarding the phenomena of resistance to the social contempt involved in colonialism that "we only become what we are through the intimate and radical negation of what has been made of us."[33]

This effort to eliminate all form of depreciation and to try to restore positive recognition can assume two distinct but nevertheless complementary forms: the first consists in demanding compensation through argumentative discussion, negotiation, resorting to narration or other symbolic avenues.[34] But when this strategy meets with a refusal to compensate, one can then enter, and this is the second form, into conflicts of recognition properly speaking, both on the individual and collective level. This entry into conflict, with the kind of mobilisation that it involves in the case of collective conflicts for example, opens onto new interrogations. To the extent that the recognition demanded by a social group appears to this group as a 'collective good', one can then ask oneself whether the decision to engage in such conflicts—which appears inevitable to theorists of recognition—is not subject to the objections put forward by rational choice theorists concerning the problem of participation in collective actions and in particular the paradox of this participation. In the same line as the work of Mancur Olson, theorists like Gordon Tullock, Gregory Kavka or Peter Kuril-Klitgaard have been able to demonstrate that all forms of conflictual mobilisation must satisfy rational choice principles of engagement,[35] whereas other authors moderate this requirement[36] or challenge it.[37]

Here again, a theory of recognition will have to decide between these competing interpretations of conflictual engagement.

III. The Paradigm of Recognition and the Paradigm of the Gift

Rational Action Theory and its 'Remainder'

Over the course of the preceding pages, we have seen two hypotheses outlined that assume their full weight within the articulation of moral and political philosophy on the one hand, and of the social sciences on the other.

The first is that one of the dividing lines that structures a number of essential debates in the two fields is that which opposes the theories inspired by what is commonly called 'rational action theory' (RAT) or the 'economic model' of action (Van Parijs), and a more or less fuzzy group of theories that dissociate themselves from these or contradict it and that still lacks a name, clarification and paradigmatic coherence.

The second is that the 'paradigm of recognition' represents the heart of these theories that are both alternative and complementary to the theory of individual action. But this hypothesis immediately gives rise to a third one that justifies the alliance of political philosophy and the social sciences that we are calling for. This hypothesis is that the paradigm of recognition can only be developed to its full potential if it is interpreted in terms of what Alain Caillé, in the wake of Marcel Mauss and the *Revue du MAUSS*, has called the 'paradigm of the gift' and that, reciprocally, that moral and political operator *par excellence* that is the gift only takes on its full sense when understood as a means, performer, and symbol of public and/or private recognition. Let us take a few (too) brief coordinates to situate the stakes of this hypothesis.

The complementary opposition between rational action theory and a still uncertain 'remainder' broadly maps over that between economic science and sociology (complemented by anthropology), even if, in this area, all sorts of paradoxical reversals and unexpected alliances are obviously possible, conceivable and indeed often realised. The paradigmatic and epistemological fragility or indeterminacy of sociology by comparison with economic science comes from the fact that, never having given a clear conceptual status to this 'remainder', it has confined itself too much to a simply critical and negative

anti-utilitarianism (or anti-economicism), restricting itself to reproaches against economists for their simplistic approach, without being able to establish stable alternative models of explanation or interpretation that would be the object of a consensus among sociologists (or anthropologists).[38] Within the sociological tradition, it is quite certainly in Durkheim and the French sociological tradition that one can find the most resolute and determined opposition to 'utilitarianism' (that of Herbert Spencer in this case) and the most solid attempt to build a properly sociological model of intelligibility irreducible to the model of rational individual action—Max Weber constructing for his part the other great branch of the sociological alternative that is more historicist and comparativist than systematic. Marcel Mauss' famous *Essay on the Gift* can be considered as the apex of both the critique of the speculative anthropology of the economists and of the development of an alternative sociological and anthropological point of view. In this regard, two points especially deserve to be raised immediately here.

– Firstly, by focusing on the agonistic gift governed by the logic of honour and points of honour (and not on the 'total prestations' in general), Mauss immediately establishes a close relationship between the gift and the question of recognition, even if he doesn't use the term: it is a matter in the *potlatch* of "placing [the other] 'in the shadow of one's name',"

> for in the American Northwest, to lose one's prestige is indeed to lose one's soul. It is in fact the 'face', the dancing mask, the right to incarnate a spirit, to wear a coat of arms, a totem, it is really the *persona*—that are all called into question in this way, and that are lost at the potlatch, at the game of gifts, just as they can be lost in war, or through a mistake in ritual.[39]

It was therefore a correct interpretation to see in the *potlatch* the most spectacular form of Hegelian life-and-death struggle for recognition (Bataille, Lefort). Or better still, retranslating Mauss into the language of John Rawls, one could say that it is through the struggle of generosity that the social bases of 'self-esteem' are built, mastered, acquired or lost.

– In addition, whilst it is well-known—even if the consequences are insufficiently drawn out—that in attempting to find in the triple obligation of giving, receiving and providing the 'rock' of eternal morality, Mauss in fact intended to provide a sociological response to the key questions of moral

philosophy, it is too often overlooked that it is the political—"the supreme art, politics, in the Socratic sense of the word": these are the last words of the *Essay on the Gift*—that constituted the ultimate aim of all his analyses, as testified by his remarkable and prophetic "Sociological Analysis of Bolshevism." Let us therefore remind ourselves of this close link established by Mauss between social sciences, moral philosophy and politics, and of his attempt to think their juncture in the articulation between the question of the gift and recognition.

It must be said: despite the (relative) fame of this text, this ambitious goal has not been well understood and even less well transmitted. Indeed, the immediate heritage of the *Essay* quickly found itself split between two main lineages that, each giving unilateral emphasis to certain features at the expense of others, quickly ensured the loss of the understanding of the whole. The first, the structural lineage (Lévi-Strauss, Lacan), constantly threatened by scientism, by uncoupling the gift from what Claude Lefort has called the 'struggle of men' (for recognition), gradually reduced it to the exchange, before reducing the exchange itself (however symbolic it is proclaimed to be in other respects) to its bare formal ahistorical and apolitical structure. The second, via Bataille and then Blanchot, in contrast, insisted on the individual and transgressive dimension of the gift, on its 'in-calculable' dimension, seeking, in other words, the passage to a secular sanctity and salvation in an aesthetics of pure expenditure or inner experience. *Exit* the political, once again.

As a result, for about twenty years, the theme of the gift itself almost completely disappeared. Structuralised by some, stigmatised as a mask of conscious (RAT) or unconscious (Bourdieu) rational interest by others, it seemed no longer able to interest anyone but a handful of backward old believers. This makes it all the more astonishing to observe the extraordinary outcrop of works published on this theme over the last ten years. Aside of course from the ethnology and anthropology books that for almost a century have treated the theme from one angle or another, one can distinguish in this vast literature, here again, two main lines of discussion.

– The first comes directly in the wake of George Bataille and Maurice Blanchot to end up, via the intermediary of Lévinas and phenomenology, with a conception of the gift that we can legitimately describe, with Ricoeur, as

hyperbolic. It is the conception of Jacques Derrida or Jean-Luc Marion (in *Being Given*, Marion has since markedly changed his conception), which we could sum up by saying that for this line, there can only be a gift if there is none, if there exists no gift, no object given nor receiver; in short, that there is only the gift if the gift, thus reduced to a pure giving, is wholly deprived of any intentionality.

– The second (carried in particular by the *Revue du MAUSS*), on the contrary, proposes to avoid focusing all the attention on the dichotomy of interest and disinterestedness, calculation or non-calculation, and to assume the Maussian theme of the intermingling, at the heart of the gift, of self-interest and interest for the other, as well as of obligation and freedom, in order to better bring out the properly social and political dimension of the gift. It isn't possible here to cite all of the works that go in this direction.[40] Let us simply note that, in his *Anthropologie du Don*, Alain Caillé develops a political conception of the gift that he considers to be faithful to Mauss' and attempts to derive from this a whole set of theoretical consequences, while Marcel Hénaff, in *Le Prix de la Vérité*, presents the archaic gift as the operator of public recognition (which is why it must be ostentatious), which then gradually becomes a moral, interiorised gift, and loses its importance to the extent that the functions of public recognition of the subjects are taken over by the enactment of the central norms of justice that found a political community.[41] Thus for the first time the motif of the gift and that of recognition are explicitly linked.

We can see how, by reuniting the Maussian themes that were dispersed by their first inheritors, we immediately encounter the questions posed here regarding the contemporary uses of the notion of recognition. How are public and private recognition articulated? Or the recognition within primary sociality and the social recognition of the group? Is one recognised because one really gives (the questions of work, Aristotelian excellence and skill are the questions at stake here), or only because one shows that one gives and is recognised (and envied) as such, as the hyperbolic destroyers of the non-sacrificial gift fear? And what must one give? Utility? The thing itself that is desired or only its sign? A compliance with dominant values? But are these values, and in what proportion, utilitarian values or else identitarian ones, values of self-preservation or values of expense? And so on.

Our theoretical wager is thus that there is every scientific and philosophical interest in explicitly and systematically linking the paradigm of the gift and the paradigm of recognition, whereas so far they are only linked in a vague and implicit way. In understanding that they are only the two sides of a same conceptual coin and that each side is indispensable to the full and sound comprehension of the other. To limit the study of the gift (even the agonistic one) to only the gift side is to run the risk of either multiplying for no reason ethnographical studies—illuminating on a case by case basis but not advancing by an inch the general anthropology that social science so cruelly needs—or of conceiving the register of the reciprocal gift as a simple cooperative mode of economics, at the cost of misunderstanding its properly and irreducibly political function. As Vincent Descombes has perfectly shown (after Seneca's *De Beneficiis* and popular wisdom . . .), there is no gift except under the terms of a giving intentionality. But the intention that makes the gift is the intention of an intersecting recognition between self and other. Conversely, to limit oneself to the discourse of recognition without attempting to enrich it with the Maussian discovery is to run the risk of confining oneself within an abstract speculative eidetic of recognition and alterity—linked to the infinite commentary of a few sacred texts—and to completely overlook its historicity and its properly social density.

More precisely, one cannot limit oneself to a purely intersubjective conception of recognition and agonistic rivalry. The whole force of the Maussian discovery lies precisely in the illumination of the fact that recognition does not only proceed from the confrontation of two unconditioned individual freedoms, but that it emerges against the background of a primary social obligation through which the presence and weight of the already-there, the instituted and the past, manifest themselves. The weight of all the other 'others' in short. Conversely, recognition only becomes effective, beyond the initial gaze and the initial word, if it is crystallised in a set of promises, debts, undertakings, symbols and rituals that structure the circulation of gifts and counter-gifts. A circulation of gifts which is nothing else in the end than the circulation of the signs of recognition. Like currency and like things, they have their own social existence and live their own life, sometimes oblivious of the primary and underlying stakes that lie with recognition. Until the crisis of identities, discord and conflict comes as a reminder that this is what

remains at issue and that the essence of the gift is therefore, indeed, properly political, as Marcel Mauss affirmed in the last sentence of the *Essay on the Gift*.

Gift and Recognition. Some Implications of their Pairing

It is impossible to list all of the fields of debate opened up by the social sciences that are directly concerned with the perspective thus raised, since all of them are. In each case it is a matter of rebalancing analyses conducted in terms of rational choice with approaches that stress the question of recognition and the gift. Let us limit ourselves to a few examples:

– In the field of political science, as we have already suggested, we can clearly see how all the theories of the rational voter, of collective action, protest actions and resource mobilisation—which constantly trip over a tautological circularity and the limits of instrumental rationality—necessarily lead to the question of the motivations of activism and partisan or voluntary activities (why does one give of one's time and person?). These however—whether negative or positive: whether one is mobilised for or against something or someone—are located at the intersection of identity, of its recognition (or its denial), of the gift (or its refusal) and of justice (or injustice).
– It is within the same problematic space that the close-knit question of collective identities and multiculturalism must be reformulated.
– One of the current major alternatives to RAT is ANT (analysis network theory), the analysis of networked agents promoted in the United States by Harrison White and which has since inspired the "new economic sociology" of Mark Granovetter and Richard Swedberg as well as the sociology or anthropology of sciences of Michel Callon and Bruno Latour. Coupled with ethno-methodological streams, it also contributes to the conventionalist sociology of justification of Luc Boltanski or Laurent Thévenot. The central idea of all of these approaches is that in order to positively and normatively analyse social action, one's starting point can neither be the individual of RAT nor the 'society' of sociologists in the Durkheimian or Parsonian tradition, but the alliances, associations and networks formed by human agents (economic sociology) and even non-human ones (sociology of the sciences). Why not—even if this foreclosure of the moment of individual singularity as well as that of political totality gives rise to as

many problems as it resolves? But on the condition of understanding, we would add, that networks cannot form and last over time except to the extent that they generate trust (the master-word in these analyses) and that this trust assumes the inter-recognition of partners through the establishment of gift relations (and vice versa).

– The same is true of all of the theories of 'social capital' that, from James Coleman to Robert Putnam, establish that the principal factor in both economic growth and democracy is the institution of generalised relations of trust between the members of the same political community.

– From this point of view, these theories can be conceived as the synthesis of the economic theories of residual factors and a generalisation of American symbolic interactionalism as is found in its crowning form in the work of Erving Goffman. It is difficult, however, to read Goffman's analysis of the order of interaction and the social management of the 'face' and the self as anything other than a microsociology of recognition (and of the agonistic challenge in which the question posed is that of knowing who gives and who forgives).

– Applied to the properly political question of the foundations of democracy and its fascistic, fundamentalist or totalitarian challenges, the pairing of the question of recognition and that of the gift immediately shows the extent to which it is impossible to theoretically and practically found the democratic order from the sole perspective of the peaceful enjoyment of material goods produced and exchanged on the market. Even on the assumption that this can in fact be achieved, it still requires that the recognition of individual and collective subjects is assured. Symmetrically, the totalitarian aspiration is nourished by the pretension to generate subjects at once better assured of the recognition of their identity, more rational and more generous than the democratic subject.

Prospects for Further Work

In a transversal way, two main prospects for further work must be privileged in the wake of the questions formulated here:

– It will first of all and quite obviously be appropriate to go beyond the schema we have hitherto had to content ourselves with and proceed to an inventory and initial systematic synthesis of, on the one hand, the different

conceptions of recognition, and on the other hand, of the analyses and theories of the gift, and to broach their considered alliance.

– In addition, and conversely, it will be necessary to initiate a confrontation and a systematic debate with the group of schools and approaches in the social sciences that seek to go beyond rational choice theory. This confrontation has already begun in earnest, in relation to the paradigm of the gift, with the institutionalist stream of economic science and in particular with Conventions Theory (Olivier Favereau, François Eymard-Duvernay) and with the analysis of networks or the new economic sociology.

We are entitled to expect from this confrontation an important clarification of the two central points on which the social sciences continue to stumble:

– the excessive dichotomy between holistic and individualistic approaches, which everyone deplores but which no one has really overcome, might finally be overcome if we note that through recognition and its symbolisations, it is the synthesis of the point of view of the individual—the internal point of view—and that of others, and ultimately that of the Big Other (Lacan) or the generalised other (Mead)—the external point of view—which is effected. More or less well, as one has to say;

– the operative efficacy of rational choice theory lies in its simplicity; this is what constitutes both its strength and its limitation. But it remains too caught up in the orbit of instrumental rationality (even if someone like Raymond Boudon increasingly distances himself from this). All of the preceding developments have suggested the same conclusion: no decisive progress in the theory of individual or collective action is conceivable except by taking into consideration, among the goals of the social agent, not only his utilitarian ends, but also his ethical and identity-related ends. In other words, only by taking into consideration a theory of recognition.

Translated by Melissa McMahon

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Notes

1   Translation of Christian Lazzeri and Alain Caillé, "La Reconnaissance Aujourd'hui: Enjeux Théoriques, Éthiques et Politiques du Concept," *La Revue du M.A.U.S.S. (Mouvement Anti-Utilitariste dans les Sciences Sociales)* no. 23 "De la Reconnaissance. Don, Identité et Estime de Soi" (2004). Christian Lazzeri prepared the first part and Alain Caillé the second part of this text, which condenses an interdisciplinary research project in political philosophy and sociology.

2   Compare on this point the debate between Axel Honneth and Nancy Fraser concerning the questions of overlap between distributive justice and recognition (A. Honneth and N. Fraser, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*, London, Verso, 2003).

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13 Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, § 69.

14 Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, § 17.

15 J. Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, Cambridge, Mass., Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001, § 17.

16 Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, p. 63.

17 Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, p. 67.

18 I. Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty*, London and New York, Oxford University Press, 1969.

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20 *Ibid*.

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[23] P. Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, trans. Richard Nice, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2001.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 111.

[25] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, § 70.

[26] J. Habermas, "The Struggle for Recognition in the Democratic State" in J. Habermas, *The Inclusion of the Other: Studies in Political Theory*, eds. C. Cronin and P. De Greif, Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 1998.

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[31] E. Tugenhadt, *Conference sur l'Ethique*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1998; Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*; E. Renault, *Le Mépris Social. Ethique et Politique de la Reconnaissance*, Editions du Passant, 2000.

[32] Although it would be possible to raise further conditions of depreciation, such as those which consist in questioning one's efficacy within a normative context (does on have 'good reasons' to consider oneself depreciated and can one demand compensation outside of these good reasons?) or a causal one (it is enough to feel devalued for the demand for compensation to emerge). Concerning the first case, we can refer to the works of Avishai Margalit (A. Margalit, *The Decent Society*, trans. Naomi Goldblum, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1996) and concerning the second case one would turn rather to an analysis of the type Durkheim carried out on punishment (See E. Durkheim, *De la Division du Travail Social*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1978. English title: *The Division of Labor in Society*).

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38 C. Laval, *L'Ambition Sociologique. Saint-Simon, Comte, Tocqueville, Marx, Durkheim, Weber*, Paris, La Découverte/MAUSS, 2002.

39 M. Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. W.D. Halls, London, Routledge Classics, 2002, p. 50.

40 For example, Bruno Karsenti, Camille Tarot, Jacques Godbout, Mark Anspach and, in a slightly different vein, Jean Baudrillard or Jean-Pierre Dupuy.

41 A. Caillé, *L'Anthropologie du Don: le Tiers Paradigme*, Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 2000; M. Hénaff, *Le Prix de la Vérité. Le Don, l'Argent, la Philosophie*, Paris, Seuil, 2002.

Chapter Six

The Work of Negativity
A Psychoanalytical Revision of the
Theory of Recognition[1]

Axel Honneth

With such a complex topic it is advisable to introduce a few theses that can express one's own viewpoint as trenchantly as possible. I want to proceed in three steps. First 1), I sketch the reasons for critical theory's dependence upon psychoanalysis. 2) In contrast to the objection of revisionism made by the older representatives of the Frankfurt School, I then proceed to discuss the necessity of keeping an open attitude towards object-relations theory. I do this in order to consider, in the last step, 3) whether the price for this paradigm shift is too high. For with this move, the notion of 'negativity', Freud's real 'sting' [*Stachel*], would be removed, in certain respects, from the psychoanalytical approach. It is only with this third, and last thesis that I come to discuss the problem that gave the title of my paper its impetus. The detour through the first two steps is necessary, however, in order to be able to work out at all the status of the question of the 'negative'.[2]

There are at least two reasons that speak for the fact that a critical theory of society in the

Frankfurt School tradition continues to keep a close connection with psychoanalysis as a theoretical formation. To be sure, this grounding will not be discovered so long as one refers only to the legacy of Adorno's or Marcuse's writings. Indeed, looked at from today's perspective, the co-operation between critical theory and psychoanalysis first envisaged by Horkheimer, and then actually worked through by Fromm, has something of an accidental quality. Back then there was a broad range of attempts at an integration of Marxism and psychoanalysis, which had in essence the goal of supplementing the societal-theoretical kernel of historical materialism through psychoanalytical theory. The latter was supposed to explain the absence of revolutionary upheaval, in other words, the degree of social integration. Here psychoanalysis offered its services, since it appeared well suited to make explicit the psychic, unconscious forces of attachment [*Bindungskräfte*] that prevented the dominated subject from perceiving his or her rational interests. Already after the end of fascism, but more emphatically after the (partial) return of Frankfurt Institute members to the now established Federal Republic of Germany, the socio-cultural situation had altered itself to such an extent that it was no longer the psychic integration of the proletariat but rather the peculiar apathy and lack of resistance of the entire population that presented itself as the problem to be explained. But here again psychoanalysis offered itself anew as a complementary theoretical strategy. For in conjunction with assumptions about the decline of the capitalist market, it offered the prospect of interpreting the subject's loss of ego [*Ich-Verlust*], the 'crisis' of the individual, as the inner-psychical consequence of the loss of paternal authority.

Since then, with the dramatic alteration of temporal-historical experience [*Erfahrung*], the primary evidence for the necessity of an integration of psychoanalysis and critical theory has also disappeared. In times of rapid de-traditionalisation of the lifeworld, wherein subjects appear to participate personally in the process of individualisation and autonomisation, it is in any case no longer obviously clear what explanatory aim a critical theory of society fitted out with psychoanalytical concepts would actually pursue. And the conjuring up of a fusion between both theories is often simply the expression of an orthodoxy hostile to experimentation, a thoughtless defence against conceptual innovation. The question concerning which interdisciplinary profile a critical theory of society should possess is not answered once and for all;

rather, the question tailors itself to the basic theoretical concepts just as much as to the state of affairs [*Sachverhalt*] to be explained. That is why it was at first also only consistent that Jürgen Habermas, with the development of his *Theory of Communicative Action*,[3] relinquished the close association with psychoanalysis and put in its place a developmental psychology inspired by Kohlberg and Piaget. The latter theory was supposed to explain, in theoretical agreement with its guiding basic concepts, the chances of achieving a post-conventional moral consciousness.

It is this internal historicity of Critical Theory that makes it necessary, with each new stage of development, to ask about the status and value of psychoanalysis for critical theory. There is nothing in the first instance that points to the necessity of an integration of both theoretical approaches, with the exception of historical tradition, which for its part was marked by a great deal that was inherently contingent, from its [cultural] location in Frankfurt to its [historical] timeframe in the twenties and thirties. Nonetheless, I am of the opinion, contra Habermas, that there are a range of good reasons that allow a critical theory of society to rely on psychoanalysis (in the broadest sense). The two reasons that I shall discuss hang together in equal measure with the representation of the subject that the tradition of psychoanalytical theory brings into play:

(A) On a normative level, a critical theory of society is dependent upon a concept of the human person that is as realistic and close to the phenomena as possible, one capable of also granting an appropriate place to the unconscious, non-rational binding forces of the subject. Without consideration of such reflection-resistant motives and affects, [critical] theory courts the danger of lapsing into a moralistic idealism in which an excess of rational insight, as a personal contribution, is expected of individuals. Until today, however, psychoanalysis, regardless of what variety, has represented the theory that pays the greatest attention to the constitutive boundaries of human rationality. Whether now in the form of repressed drive fantasies, histories of attachments that remain largely unconscious [*Bindungsschicksale*], or constellations of affect unavailable to the subject, here the unconscious drives of the human person are always taken into account, drives that impose certain limitations on rational deliberation that can hardly be overstepped. In order

to be protected from the illusions that go along with the ideas of rationalist morality, critical theory therefore needs to be supplemented though a moral psychology that allows itself to be guided by psychoanalytic insights. In this respect the human person would be represented as a being that would be overburdened, in certain ways, by the strict commitment to a hypothetical standpoint of impartiality, since he or she would have to ignore the basic existential foundations of his or her own life course. Psychoanalysis thus plays the same role for Critical Theory, on a normative level, that Horkheimer had envisaged very generally in the case of 'materialism'. Psychoanalysis firmly maintains that the human being is in one sense bound to its own, non-substitutable life through unconscious drive complexes [*Triebsschicksale*] or reflexively irretrievable forces of attachment [*Bindungskräfte*]; something that must be taken into account in an elementary way by every rationalist morality that is guided by principles.

(B) The critical theory of society, however, requires supplementation through psychoanalysis not only on the normative level but also on the explanatory level. This is because psychoanalysis can most readily take into account the motives of human action that have been withdrawn from the sphere of reflection. The argumentation here runs in parallel to that which was proposed with regard to the idealistic tendencies of rationalist morality. Social events only allow themselves to be adequately explained when, beyond the linguistic articulations of subjects, they are also conceptualised as the result of actions in which the stirrings of the subjects' unconscious drives [*Triebregungen*] or attachment needs [*Bindungsbedürfnisse*] have been crystallised. At a very fundamental level we should reckon with affects and motivations within the social world that are to a large extent withdrawn from the consciousness of the acting agent. In order to be able to take into consideration such non-transparent motivational complexes, remote from the ego, which attain expression in anxieties, longings for attachment [*Bindungssehnsüchten*], desires for fusion and submission fantasies, a psychological theory of the subject is required, a theory of socialisation, which is devoted to giving sufficient attention to the genesis of unconscious affects in the life history [of the individual]. Until now I see no other theory that could achieve this better than one or another version of psychoanalysis.

Precisely at this point, however, the question now arises as to which of the different varieties of psychoanalysis today best can fulfill the task that I have just outlined. And the answer must, in my opinion, weigh up which of the different versions can most genuinely take into account the socialisation milieu of society as a whole. Another formulation for this criterion could also be the following: that the most appropriate candidate for a psychological supplementation of critical theory is that psychoanalytic approach whose basic concepts allow a relatively seamless translation into social-theoretical categories. In my second step, I shall give the reasons in favour of taking object-relations theory as the version of psychoanalysis that appears to be best suited for this task.

To begin with, I shall briefly introduce the basic ideas of object-relations theory before I go on to cite the reasons that make it especially suited today for an interdisciplinary coupling with a critical theory of society. With these reflections I would of course also like to show how the efforts at revision undertaken thirty years ago by Alfred Lorenzer[4] and Jürgen Habermas[5] did not go far enough, since they granted validity to intersubjectivism only at the methodological level of psychoanalytical procedure but not for the basic concepts of an implied social theory. In object-relations theory, conclusions are drawn, based upon the therapeutic analysis of relationship pathologies, as to the conditions that can lead to a successful form of emotional attachment with other persons. Admittedly, before it could come to the kind of concentration on the interpersonal aspects of human action as freely occurs within the sphere of psychoanalysis, a range of theoretical impulses was required that might be capable of putting into question the development of the orthodox account of the childhood life of the drives. For Freud and his successors, the child's interaction partners were initially significant only to the extent to which they served as the objects of libidinal investment arising as a result of the intra-psychic conflict between unconscious instinctual demands and gradually emerging ego-controls. Beyond this merely intermediate, secondary role, only the mother would still be granted an independent status as a significant other [*Bezugsperson*]; for the threatened loss of the mother in the phase of psychological helplessness of the infant was construed as the cause of all mature varieties of anxiety. Since this established an image of the child's

psychological development in which its relationships to other persons were viewed as merely a function of the unfolding of libidinal drives, the empirical studies of René Spitz[6] were enough to awaken the first doubts about such an account. His observations showed, namely, that the withdrawal of maternal care leads to severe disturbances in the behaviour of the infant even in cases where the satisfaction of all its bodily needs is otherwise secured. The first clues as to the independent significance of emotional bonds for early childhood development, as presented by Morris Eagle in his overview of *New Developments in Psychoanalysis*,[7] were then directly supported and strengthened by a series of further experimental results from psychological research. Experimental studies in ethology succeeded in proving that the attachment of infant primates with their so-called substitute mothers cannot derive from the [individual] experience [*Erlebnis*] of the satisfaction of drives, but must stem rather from the [shared] experience [*Erfahrung*] of 'comfort' or 'contact pleasure' [*Kontaktbehagen*]. The path-breaking investigations by John Bowlby[8] lead to the conclusion that the human infant, already in its first months of life, develops an active willingness to establish interpersonal closeness that provides the basis for all later forms of emotional bonding. And largely inspired by the researches of Spitz and Bowlby, Daniel Stern[9] could then provide convincing evidence that the interaction between mother and child unfolds as a highly complex process in which both participants acquire, through practice, the capacity for the shared experience of feelings and sensations.

All this [research] was bound to have had a deeply irritating effect, at least for that strain of research-oriented psychoanalysis that could be found in England and the USA during the post-war period. This was because this research, contrary to the structural model of Id-Ego-Superego belonging to Freudian theory, appeared to point to the lasting significance of the earliest, pre-linguistic experiences of interaction. If the socialisation process was predominantly dependent upon experiences that the young child has in affective engagement with its first significant others, then one could no longer maintain the orthodox psychoanalytic view that psychological development proceeds as a succession of organisational forms of the 'monological' relation between libidinal drives and ego-capacity. Instead, the conceptual framework of psychoanalysis required a fundamental extension to include that separate dimension of social interactions within which the child learns to

conceive of itself as an independent subject through emotional relationships with other persons. Finally, from the therapeutic side, this theoretical conclusion was confirmed, moreover, by the discovery that a growing number of patients suffered from mental illnesses that could no longer be traced back to intra-psychic conflicts between ego- and id elements, but were exclusively traceable, rather, to interpersonal disturbances in the process of the child's detachment. Such forms of pathology, as evident in the case of symptoms of borderline disorders and narcissism, forced therapists to draw, to an increasing extent, upon explanatory principles that were irreconcilable with orthodox psychoanalytic opinion, because such principles granted an independent significance to the reciprocal bonds between children and their significant others.

In view of the various challenges that have just been outlined by these meagre indications, the psychoanalytic theory of object-relations now represents the first attempt at a conceptual answer. Very generally, one could perhaps say that the psychic socialisation process of the child presents itself very differently now than it would have when it was first grasped by Freud and his followers. The construction of intra-psychic authorities [*Instanzen*]—namely that which we can conceptualise philosophically as the self-relation of the subject—unfolds as an interiorisation process in which the child gradually internalises these models of interaction that it has to learn in the encounter with successively appearing significant others, such as mother, father, siblings, and finally also its peers. The organisation of the psyche therefore unfolds as an interactive process in which the maturing subject learns to recognise the independence of objectively existing interactional relationships; it reproduces these intra-psychically in order to allow thereby a plurality of psychic authorities operating in different ways to emerge within its inner realm. It is not difficult to see in this last formulation why the theory of object-relations represents a suitable discipline for co-operation with a critical theory of society. For the psychic structure—namely that which Erich Fromm[10] still called character formation—thereby becomes understood as the sedimentation or expression of typical interactional models; and because of this it is easy to establish the connection to a theory of society that is interested, for its part, in the social formation of interactional relationships. With Fromm, the spectrum of that within social reality which could be drawn into psychoanalytic theory was in the first instance measured in an extremely

narrow fashion. It was basically reducible to the type of paternal relational comportment because this was supposed to be responsible for the [subject's] fixation at a certain stage of psychosexual development.[11] Here with object-relations theory, by contrast, society comes to light in all those interactional models into which the child is successively drawn, in the course of its development, and that it gradually has to learn to manage. Every one of the object-relations of the child, that is every one of its stabilising interactions with a concrete or generalised Other, has a socially typical form, such that even in the [intrapsychic] authorities that have been acquired by internalisation the specific structure of societal interactional relationships is always mirrored. In a third step, I now turn briefly to the question of whether and to what extent there is a danger for critical theory, in this linking with object-relations theory, that we surrender the psychoanalytical 'sting' of negativity—that, at least, is how Adorno would have seen the matter.

After what has been said thus far it might appear as though the socialisation of the child, through the process of the internalisation of interaction models, occurs in a relatively conflict-free manner, so that in the psychic structure of the individual no scars or injuries would remain behind. And even when this socialisation model is supplemented further through a correspondingly reformulated theory of drives, in which the drives are understood as the driving energy for the formation of [intrapsychic] authorities [*Instanzen*],[12] nothing essential appears to be changed in this image of conflictlessness. That is why, against such a conception, the objection can be raised that it underestimates those negative forces—whether in the form of the death drive, or whether in the form of an endogenous aggressive tendency—that always stood, after all, at the centre of orthodox psychoanalysis. What critical theory loses, so to speak, through the dovetailing with object-relations theory, would be the insight regarding that *constitutional non-conformism* [*konstitutionelle Unangepaßtheit*] of human beings, the very insight that Adorno had always grasped as the central contribution of psychoanalysis. Now the question raised by this, if I am correct, reduces essentially to the following point: must this negative force, or perhaps better, this psychic tendency towards transgression, the psychic brokenness [*Gebrochenheit*] of human beings, necessarily be thought as an elementary component of our being equipped with drives? Or can this negative force also be conceptualised as an unavoidable result of the

unfolding of our socialisation process as internalisation? This question is so decisive in this respect because it is the one by which the critical potential of object-relations theory is measured. For even object-relations theory concedes, much like Winnicott's idea of 'transitional objects', that it is through the constraint of recognising an independent world of interaction that an injury is inflicted on the child for which it is difficult to compensate; an injury that remains effective as a lifelong tendency towards the restoration of symbiotic unities. Such an impulse is even understood by French psychoanalyst Cornelius Castoriadis as an inner psychic source of energy that always forces the individual subject to transgress anew each of its established ego-boundaries and to strive after new, expanded forms of interaction.[13] The decisive difference with the orthodox conception is admittedly that this dynamic negativity is not to be conceived of as the dowry of our nature as beings with drives [*Triebnatur*], but rather as the unavoidable result of the process of our socialisation. Whether the normative or the explanatory role of psychoanalysis for critical theory is considered, the difference between these two conceptions can be taken to be simply insignificant. For in both cases there emerges an image of the subject that is only in the position of a broken form of inter-subjectivity because it is overburdened by the independence and unavailability of the world of interaction. And everything that we have to take into consideration, normatively and explanatorily, in [human] subjects—such as unconsciously effective desires for attachment, longings for submission, or fantasies of being overwhelmed—can be gleaned from both versions of psychoanalysis.

In light of this theoretical situation, it appears to me that, with all the doubts that have in the meantime been raised empirically against the assumption of endogenous tendencies toward aggression in human beings,[14] it is sensible to renounce an overly strong theory of drives. We lose little for the critical intentions of a theory of society if we abandon the assumption that the human being is constitutionally equipped with a death- or aggression-drive.

Translated by Robert Sinnerbrink

Notes

[1] Translation of "Das Werk der Negativität. Eine Psychoanalytische Revision der Anerkennungstheorie," in Werner Bohleber und Sibylle Drews (Hg.), *Die Gegenwart der Psychoanalyse—Die Psychoanalyse der Gegenwart*, Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, 2001, pp. 238-245.

[2] Cf. R. Reiche, "Subjekt, Patient, Außenwelt," *Psyche*, 53, 1999, pp. 572-596; J. Whitebook, "Mutual Recognition and the Work of the Negative. Some Thoughts about German Idealism and the Nursery," 2000, (unpublished manuscript).

[3] J. Habermas, *Theorie des Kommunikativen Handelns*, 2 Bde. Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1981; J. Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action* (2 vols.), trans. T. McCarthy, Boston, Beacon Press, 1984/87.

[4] Alfred Lorenzer, *Sprachzerstörung und Rekonstruktion*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1971.

[5] Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action.*

[6] René Spitz, *Vom Säugling zum Kleinkind*, Stuttgart, Klett, 1974 (1965).

[7] Morris Eagle, *Recent Developments in Psychoanalysis: A Critical Analysis*, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1984.

[8] John Bowlby, *Bindung. Eine Analyse der Mutter-Kind-Beziehung*, München, Kindler, 1975; *Attachment*, (*Attachment and Loss*, Volume One), London, Hogarth Press; New York, Basic Books; Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1971, (1969).

[9] Daniel Stern, *Die Lebenserfahrung des Säuglings*, Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, 1992; *Interpersonal World of the Infant. A View from Psychoanalysis and Developmental Psychoanalysis*, New York, Basic Books, 1985.

[10] Erich Fromm, "Über Methode und Aufgabe einer Analytischen Sozialpsychologie: Bemerkungen über Psychoanalyse und Historischen Materialismus," (1932), in *Analytische Sozialpsychologie und Gesellschaftstheorie*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1970, pp. 9-40.

[11] G. Schmid Noerr, "Zwischen Sozialpsychologie und Ethik. Erich Fromm und die 'Frankfurter Schule'," in *Institut für Sozialforschung*, Mitteilungen, Bd. 11, Frankfurt am Main, 2000, pp. 7-40.

[12] H.W. Loewald, "Triebtheorie, Objektbildung und Psychische Strukturbildung," in *Psychoanalyse. Aufsätze aus den Jahren 1951-1979*, Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, 1986, pp. 193-205.

[13] C. Castoriadis, *Gesellschaft als Imaginäre Institution*, Frankfurt a.M., Suhrkamp, 1984; *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, trans. K. Blamey, Cambridge, Polity, 1987, Chapter 6.

[14] M. Dornes, *Die Frühe Kindheit. Entwicklungspsychologie der Ersten Lebensjahre*, Frankfurt am Main, Fischer, 1997, Chapter 9.

Chapter Seven

Repressed Materiality: Retrieving the Materialism in Axel Honneth's Theory of Recognition

Jean-Philippe Deranty

This paper attempts to accomplish two related tasks: a genealogical, exegetical one and a programmatic one. The genealogical reconstruction of Axel Honneth's theory of recognition serves the aim of making a few propositions for the continuation of the project of a critical theory of society. The basic premise of the paper is that Honneth's theory of recognition is indeed a valid model from which to conduct fruitful critical studies of contemporary society, but one that needs to be corrected, more specifically, one that needs to be corrected by reconnecting with its original background.

The first task is guided by the purpose of highlighting the materialist background against which Axel Honneth's ethics of recognition grew. By materialism I mean two different but germane perspectives: first, materialism in the sense of historical materialism. The underlying concern behind Honneth's project has been to construct a valid reactualisation of historical materialism to answer

the conceptual and empirical challenges that this paradigm has had to face as a result of changed theoretical and social circumstances. The second sense of materialism is the one attached to the name of Ludwig Feuerbach. In his early writings, Honneth believed that historical materialism could overcome its conceptual shortcomings and the outdated aspect of some of its diagnoses by returning to its anthropological basis. In short, the beginnings of the theory of recognition lie in the assumption that historical materialism could be salvaged if it was re-grounded in anthropological materialism. In the course of its development, however, the ethics of recognition has tended to focus more and more on intersubjective interactions understood narrowly, and to repress the material mediations with which these interactions are implicated.

My argument in conclusion will be that this was a misguided development and that retrieving these material mediations might allow a more substantive model of critical theory. I attempt to give an example of what such theory could look like with the paradigmatic case of work.

I. Honneth's Early Project: Critical Actualisation of Historical Materialism

Honneth's theory of recognition as it is presented in *The Struggle for Recognition* and in *Redistribution or Recognition?*, is generally ranked within the post-Hegelian literature in contemporary social and political philosophy.[1] A lot of the time, especially in the American context, Honneth is mentioned in the same breath as Taylor, even though their readings and uses of Hegel are not compatible. This image of Honneth as a thinker influenced by Hegel is obviously well justified since Hegel is, with Mead, the central inspiration in the book in which his mature model has been systematically presented. However, before the 1992 book, Hegel was hardly ever mentioned in Honneth's writings; he was not an important reference. The central author before 1992 was in fact Karl Marx, and the central concern in Honneth's early writings was the development of a materialist theory of society. In his first texts, Honneth, following the example of Habermas, was attempting to offer a reconstruction of historical materialism in light of changed theoretical and historical conditions. The theory of recognition that is presented in the texts of the 1990s is

seen in a very different light if it is read as the solution to a set of questions that were formulated in a Marxian, or post-Marxian, rather than a properly Hegelian, context.

This basic textual remark already puts Honneth's ethics of recognition in a light that is significantly at odds with most current readings of it. As the attempt at devising an actualised historical-materialist theory of society, the theory of recognition is above all else an ambitious project aiming to replace previous models in social theory. Before attempting to answer specific questions in ethics or political philosophy, before being a theory of justice, it is a theory attempting to account for social integration, social reproduction, and the possibility of social transformation in contemporary societies. Obviously, as a theory of society, the theory of recognition owes its most important debt to Habermas. It follows Habermas in a fundamental way in accepting and developing two of its central premises: that social integration is a normative, not (just) a systemic process, and that it is an 'intersubjectivistic' process, that is, a process where the coordination of individual actions is to be explained, not as the aggregate of *a priori* existing and constituted individuals, but through the mechanisms whereby socialised individuals share supra-subjective symbolic apparatuses. The theory of recognition, however, is not just a variation on Habermas' communicative theory of society. It differs from the latter in major ways because, as much as being heavily indebted to Habermas, it also takes a decisive critical stance towards him. Indeed, the full hermeneutic complex devised by Honneth in his early writings was quite sophisticated since Habermas was critiqued from a neo-Marxian perspective, one however, which had itself been established by borrowing the key premises of Habermas' communicative theory of society. Honneth followed Habermas in his critique of Marx and orthodox Marxism, but departed from him by continuing to hold up specifically Marxian concerns against the full model of a communicative theory of society. If we look a little more closely at some of the detail of this strategy, my claim that the theory of recognition has materialist origins will hopefully be somewhat substantiated.

The decisive thought in Honneth's research in social theory stems from his embracing Habermas' famous critique of Marx's collapse of interaction onto social labour, and the argument directly arising from this critique, the notion

of intersubjective understanding as an independent mechanism of social integration, next to labour.[2] It is this famous distinction between labour and interaction which provided Honneth with the key argument to develop a perspective that enabled him to take a position in the debates of the time on the philosophical and political meaning of Marx's work.[3]

Adopting an intersubjectivistic approach in order to reactualise historical materialism leads to a rejection of functionalist readings and to an alignment with theories of praxis. The different strands of praxis Marxism, by contrast with the determinism of economist and functionalist readings, focus on the centrality of social and historical action. In terms of Marxist exegesis, they tend to deny any major shift between Marx's early, humanist writings and his mature historical studies on the one hand, and the more 'systematic' studies in political economy on the other. Most of the time, interpretations centred on the category of praxis find in the early theory of alienation the core normative argument operating in *Capital*'s critique of abstract labour and wage labour. One of Honneth's very first texts, published in 1977, is a good example of his early alignment with praxis Marxism. In this early text, Honneth exposed a detailed critique of structuralist Marxism for its reductionist stance on subjectivity and historicity, arguing instead in favour of social action conceived of as "interactive praxis between subjects of action," and as "historical intersubjectivity."[4] This programme for a philosophy of 'historical intersubjectivity' and 'social action' was connected substantially with the critique of the notion of social labour, a critique that was the central theme of Honneth's early research. For conceptual and empirical reasons, Honneth argued in another text of the same time, labour can no longer fulfil its role as the central category that could account for both social integration and emancipatory action.[5] However, this connection between social theory and social criticism, between the theory of social reproduction and the theory of social transformation, was identified by Honneth as the distinguishing and most important theoretical feature in Marx's theory of society. Moreover, it is because this connection must be retained if the programme of a materialist theory of society is to be convincingly continued, that the confused notion of social labour must be replaced by that of communicative interaction.

This series of theoretical premises highlighted by Honneth in his early articles was clearly organised in such way that Habermas was indeed used to

critique both Marx and certain strands of contemporary Marxism, but with the aim of developing an alternative reactualisation of Marxist social philosophy. To put this in Honneth's later terminology of 'recognition', his altered version of communicative action is indeed a Hegelian concept, but it is a Hegelian concept that serves Marxian, not Hegelian, purposes. For Honneth, it is supposed to replace the outdated category of labour for one that historical experience and the progress of philosophy have shown to be more appropriate. Crucially, though, the structure of the theory: a theory of society that is tied inseparably with a theory of emancipation, remains the same, and it is a structure that is Marxian and not Hegelian. In my view, this insight is decisive in order to correctly approach Honneth's theory of society. In particular, it accounts for his insistence on retaining a methodological 'monism' in social theory, which appears outdated or misplaced to many.[6] Honneth's 'moral monism', however, is well explained if we place it in the context of his early identification of the specific methodological features of a materialist theory of society, in which the theory of social integration contains the very norms upon which transformation can be justified and explained. Indeed this 'monistic' structure of social theory is a feature not just of Marx's own project, but of the initial Critical Theory programme. This is the exact meaning of the famous motto of 'transcendence within immanence', which characterises the first programme of the Frankfurt School. We could thus even venture into saying that it is not just Hegel who is used for Marxist purposes, but Critical Theory itself.

The first step in Honneth's intellectual trajectory was thus to establish an 'intersubjectivistic' stance within neo-Marxist debates. Once this was done, however, a renewed understanding of praxis could be retroactively applied to Habermas himself. Indeed, it is a fact well worth highlighting, one that itself already strongly advocates in favour of a historical-materialist interpretation of the paradigm of recognition, that all the critical arguments brought against Habermas in the writings culminating in the last three chapters of *The Critique of Power*, that is to say the texts dating from the early to the mid-1980s, are made from the neo-Marxist perspective of a philosophy of 'social action', or praxis. A brief glance at the critical points raised by Honneth in his early work against Habermas should help to substantiate this claim.

1. Despite the critique of the conceptual confusion and empirical datedness of Marx's concept of labour, Honneth, in one of his best known early articles, measured Habermas' fateful reduction of work to instrumental action against the rich normative tenor of Marx's own concept of labour and advocated the return to a normative "critical conception of work."[7] This programme was soon abandoned, but the idea that the analytical distinction between instrumental and communicative action led to a potentially reductive understanding of interaction remained an important intuition in the later writings.

2. A number of features in Habermas' communicative theory of society were identified by Honneth as containing major difficulties for a continuation of the materialist programme.

First, Honneth's decisive critique of the dualism of system and lifeworld was inspired by Marx's attempt to construct a unified theory around one central mechanism of social integration. Taking this methodological monism as a fundamental cue, Honneth then critiqued the duplicating of communication with systemic integration, perceiving in this theoretical gesture the danger that this would rob his theory of society of the ability to undertake the critique of economic and administrative institutions. The economic system in particular seems to be left intact, as it were, in Habermas, and only its encroachments upon the lifeworlds are denounced. The thesis of the colonisation of lifeworlds thus seems to result in a serious deflation of the critical project. Such critical deficiency appears clearly by comparison with Marx's immanent critique of the capitalist political economy. Consequently, one of Honneth's major aims behind the shift from communication to recognition is to avoid any dualism in the theory of social integration, so that the critique of institutions can once again be carried out from within.[8]

Second, Honneth's critique of Habermas' various attempts at drawing up an evolutionary model of social development is informed by the focus on Marx as a philosopher of social action.[9] Habermas is accused of propounding a vision of history that is no longer sensitive to the role of conflict in social evolution. This is the same argument that was brought up against structuralist Marxists and which was underpinned by a reading of Marx's entire *oeuvre* as a theory of 'historical intersubjectivity'.

Third, Habermas' early proposals for a logic of social evolution are also accused of being unable—despite their self-avowed goal—to relate back to actual contemporary struggles in a relevant and useful manner. Here, the argument is the typical historical-materialist one of the necessity to articulate theory and practice in the exercise of theory itself.

3. More specifically, Honneth's criticism of Habermas' discourse ethics for its failure to clearly take into account the problem of class, indeed of Habermas' tendency to overlook the continuous structural role played by class struggle in late modern societies, is obviously raised out of a concern of direct Marxist inspiration.[10]

4. Finally, Honneth's critique of Habermas' linguistification of social theory is, as we will now see, inspired by the conviction that the action-theoretic strand in Marx can be attributed to the latter's implicit and continuing reliance on a substantive model of human nature which dates back to Marx's early leanings on Feuerbach and anthropological materialism. This anthropological strand in historical materialism draws the attention to extra-linguistic forms of interaction and normativity which escape the view of a social theory overly concerned with the methodological constraints deriving from the embrace of the linguistic turn.

II. The Retrieval of Anthropological Materialism

One of the most original features of Honneth's attempt to reconstruct historical materialism for the purpose of reactualisation, relates to his critique of the constraints of the linguistic turn mentioned above. By returning to the anthropological source of historical materialism, Honneth seemed to want to navigate a course between Marx and Habermas, keeping their most important social-theoretical insights whilst correcting their respective abstractions. Habermas' fundamental contribution is to demonstrate the necessity for philosophy and the social sciences to undergo a major paradigm shift—the intersubjectivistic turn. This turn is said to arise out of decisive developments in philosophy and the social sciences, but more specifically for social theory, helps overcome the functionalist reductionism found in Marx's own work, and in later Marxist developments. However, in Honneth's work, this

Habermasian argument was not used for its own sake, but served the pur-
pose of an actualised appropriation of Marxist thinking. This re-appropriation
in its turn leads all the way back to the origins of Marx's thought in anthro-
pological materialism, and also helps develop a materialist version of the
intersubjectivistic shift. Consequently, a materialist theory of intersubjectiv-
ity can then be turned against Habermas by making the abstractions of
his own linguistic model of interaction apparent. In order to study this sec-
ond materialist aspect of Honneth's thought, we need to focus briefly on
Honneth's first book, published in 1980 with Hans Joas, *Social Action and
Human Nature*.

The book offers a historical-conceptual reconstruction of the tradition of
German philosophical anthropology, from Feuerbach to Habermas.
Anthropology is here understood in the sense of the twentieth-century Ger-
man tradition, with the works of Arnold Gehlen, Helmut Plessner and Agnes
Heller the most famous references in the English-speaking world. Philosophical
anthropology designates the study of *anthropos* by comparison with other
forms of life, especially animals, as opposed to the comparative study of the
different ways of being human. This reconstruction of philosophical anthro-
pology traces the origins of the discipline all the way back to Feuerbach, and
ends with the theory of communicative action. As in Habermas' writing of
that time, the central reference is that of the pragmatist philosopher and social
psychologist G.H. Mead. His theory of 'practical intersubjectivity' forms the
central reference in the book, and more generally in Honneth's early think-
ing, up until and including *The Struggle for Recognition*.[11]

With Joas, Honneth hoped to fulfil the programme of a revision of histori-
cal materialism leading to a new philosophy of praxis by retrieving an alter-
native philosophical anthropology drawing on the German tradition.
This tradition recommended itself because, read from the perspective of a
Feuerbach-Mead line which emphasises the intersubjective constitution of
human subjectivity, it seems to be able provide a concrete fleshing out of the
intersubjectivistic premise which would avoid the reductions entailed in a
full-scale embracing of the linguistic turn. It offers a fully materialist charac-
terisation of action, both individual and social action, and in particular of
work. Honneth's first programme was therefore built upon an 'anthropology

of social action'. These brief descriptive statements are obviously not sufficient to justify the recourse to anthropology for the purpose of offering a modernised version of historical materialism, especially if one considers the general suspicion towards anthropological arguments in the Marxist tradition, and in social philosophy and the social sciences generally. By delving further into the reasons behind Honneth's early return to philosophical anthropology, the anthropological-materialist background of his research will receive a more precise characterisation.

Honneth and Joas justified the recourse to philosophical anthropology first of all by appealing to a political imperative:

> Today, it is hardly necessary to give lengthy justifications for concerning oneself with anthropology in the German sense within the framework of the social and cultural sciences. The themes of various social movements lead all too clearly in this direction.[12]

The young scholars thus interpreted the rise of the social movements of the 1970s, the "ecological, counter-cultural and feminist struggles," as pointing equally to the same questions, namely the fundamental questions of nature, human nature, and the relation between them: "The legitimacy of the question of the relationship of the human being to nature and of nature in the human being is today beyond all doubt."[13] The political imperative, then, in full keeping with the historical-materialist programme, guided their theoretical research. The generation that questions the civilisational model as a result of major crises and contestations, is also the one that reformulates the tasks of a critical theory of society and forces it to think afresh the relationship between the human and the natural. In particular, it forces social theory to focus again on the problem of the 'humanisation of nature', of the humanisation of both inner and external nature. Also, this move drew attention to the locus where the human ability to act, and to develop culturally, is naturally grounded—namely the human organism. Philosophical anthropology is precisely that tradition of thought that approaches the uniqueness of human beings' access to symbolic functions via the study of its preconditions in that being's organic specificity. The recourse to German philosophical anthropology was thus justified from two converging perspectives: from an immanent

perspective arising out of the reconstruction of historical materialism, with the highlighting of abstractions in Habermas' models; and from the external perspective of the social problems and the social struggles of the time.

Amongst the different attempts at reactualising historical materialism in the Western Marxism of the 1980s, such an imperative to recast social theory on the basis of a renewed research into the natural conditions of culture could follow a number of impressive existing and competing models. One way was simply to leave these questions behind, as Habermas tended to do with his emphasis on language as the great hominising and socialising institution. The emphasis on language as the specific difference and medium of human sociality leads the explanatory, and especially the normative, study of human society away from its interrelations with other non-human worlds.[14] Habermas' linguistic turn in the reconstruction of historical materialism leads to a dualistic separation of instrumental and communicative action, of systemic and social integration, which, from Honneth's perspective at the time, entails a reductionist, instrumentalist view of nature and of humans' relationship to nature.[15] Nature in this model is simply a realm to be objectified and mastered for the purpose of material survival. Honneth's early project was inspired to a large extent by the goal of overcoming the dualisms operating in Habermas' communicative theory of society, through a re-centering of social theory around nature, first by asking the general question of the natural preconditions of culture, and more specifically, by focusing on the question of the human body as a constitutive and normative locus of social action.[16]

A second powerful strand at the time was represented by the influential writings of Marcuse and Bloch who proposed comparable versions of a revolutionary, utopian praxis driven by the telos of a reconciliation of human and natural history, of a nature "finding its place in the theory of revolution."[17] These 'utopian' theories of praxis were confronting the other great force in the field of Western Marxism in the 1970s, the Althusserian structuralist theory of praxis against which Honneth had defined his own perspective early on. Structuralist Marxism, in direct opposition to Marcuse and Bloch's ecological utopias, rejected the humanist, 'Hegelian' Marx of the early writings and consequently also the contemporary reappraisal of Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach* and the *Paris Manuscripts*. A decisive intervention, which did much to encourage the return to the anthropological strand in Marx's thought, was

the research of Alfred Schmidt, which provided a scholarly emphasis on Marx's continuing reliance on natural-philosophical arguments and stressed the importance of Feuerbach in this respect.[18] Resituated in this context of Marxist social theory in the early 1980s, both the theoretical choices and the strong originality of Honneth's early programme of a return to anthropological materialism appear fully. The use of philosophical anthropology and of its interesting overlaps with a certain version of historical materialism were used by the young Honneth to steer a middle course between structuralist and utopian Marxisms and allow a critical appropriation of the communicative turn. Habermas' own interpretations could ultimately not satisfy since they produced a theoretical and practical dissolution of the programme of praxis philosophy, and lacked the strong ecological concern, which was seen as essential at the time. On the other hand, Habermas' qualms about the neoromantic motto of a reconciliation with nature found an echo in Honneth's more sober, scientifically minded intellectual landscape. The recourse to German philosophical anthropology gave Honneth the possibility of overcoming Habermas' blindness to the natural embeddedness of human action, but it was also sufficiently grounded in the special sciences to avoid the reproach of mysticism and metaphysical speculation.

The most important theoretical innovation in Honneth's early writings was therefore not so much the use of philosophical anthropological arguments, since Habermas had already begun to take this direction himself, by drawing heavily on Gehlen and Mead. Rather, Honneth's most important innovation is the reappraisal of Feuerbach, not just for purposes of Marxist exegesis but for the much more ambitious purpose of a re-grounding of a critical theory of modern society. Honneth and Joas presented Feuerbach as the initiator of philosophical anthropology. It is before Mead, they argued, in Feuerbach's 'anthropological materialism' that one finds a powerful, alternative way of writing an anthropology of intersubjectivity that finds its roots in the 'sensuous' aspect of anthropogenesis, one that is not limited to language; "Feuerbach rehabilitates sensuous pre-philosophical experience of the world not only as the foundation, but also as the medium and end of thought." But he also

> complements the idea of a sensuousness rooted in the human organism with the notion of an a priori intersubjectivity of the human being. He was the first to take into consideration both epistemologically and substantially the significance of the specifically human structure of intersubjectivity.[19]

Feuerbach was thus read retrospectively against the background of the later development of an intersubjectivistic social psychology, a line which not only for Honneth, but also for Habermas, was later developed by Mead and Winnicott.

The importance of anthropological materialism in Honneth's early writings was so great that, against all other materialist scholars of the time, including the most Feuerbachian of them, Alfred Schmidt, Honneth inverted the relationship between Marx and Feuerbach, and bemoaned the theoretical loss from the latter to the former. Put positively, this meant a retrieval of anthropological materialism for the very purpose of a valid continuation of the historical-materialist programme.

The critique by the young Marx of Feuerbach's sensualist materialism is well known. It insists on the fact that the organicity at the root of humans' relation to the world should not be conceived in a contemplative way, but as 'human-sensuous activity'. Also, it insists on the fact that objects are not given in all eternity, but are themselves the product of human labour, and therefore historically and socially located. The notion of labour not only enables Marx to connect the theory of society and the theory of emancipation, but it also preserves the different strands of his critique of Feuerbach.[20] With the correction of materialism into historical materialism, so Marx's self-justification goes, the paradoxical theoreticist prejudice and quietist streaks in Feuerbach are corrected and his insights transformed into a true theory of praxis.

However, by concentrating the Feuerbachian themes in the unique category of social labour, one runs the risk of underplaying the full conceptual depth of these separate themes. Firstly, the foundational 'sensuality' of the human being is not limited to its praxeological dimension. It is different to claim, as does philosophical anthropology, that human perception is defined in its specific structure in the encounter between the underspecialisation of the human organism and the necessities of action, and to say that in its essential structure it is reducible to action. On the contrary, philosophical anthropologists, and especially Feuerbach, insist on the fact that, born within the necessity of action, perception and more generally the openness to the world, the basic sensitivity of the human organism, endows the human being with a power of detachment in relation to the world, a power of 'contemplation', to use

Marx's pejorative tag. In a rejoinder to Marx, however, such power of 'contemplation' is shown by the philosophical-anthropological tradition to also carry a fundamentally positive sense. It designates the human ability to perceive objects in their own qualitative specificity above and beyond their interest for needs and action. This is the ability to "let things be",[21] a power of universal perception,[22] the fundamental aesthetic sensibility of the human being,[23] which is also the origin of human freedom in relation to the world by comparison with other animals.[24] This is an ability that should not be opposed to action because it makes action possible. Its ecological implications are also evident.

Secondly, Feuerbach's altruism insists on the intersubjective condition of subjectivity and rationality. Marx's reformulation of Feuerbach's intersubjectivistic praxis as social labour runs the risk of reducing the domain of interaction to the sole dimension of cooperation in labour. Vast domains of the intersubjective constitution of subjects, and the normative dimensions that go with it, disappear in such a move. The emphasis on intersubjectivity, both as the element of social integration and as a special normative domain demand, once again, a Feuerbachian correction to the grounding category of social labour.

III. The Theory of Recognition as a Continuation of Marx's Emancipatory Project

This succinct rereading of Honneth's early texts shows that the striking recourse in his later writings to contemporary psycho-sociological theory was prepared by his early project of a revision of historical materialism to be conducted through a retrieval of the main arguments in philosophical anthropology, since the latter foreshadowed in substantive ways the theoretical innovations of interactionist psychology. More generally, the genealogical perspective accounts for the broad features of Honneth's mature model of social theory.

After the early studies in historical materialism culminating in *Social Action and Human Nature*, recognition takes the place of labour at the centre of Honneth's philosophy of praxis, but his model still follows the formal structure of a historical-materialist theory of society since recognition designates the historical processes which have produced the social frameworks determining specific relations to nature, specific types of personality and specific

institutional worlds. The difference between Marx's and Honneth's visions is simply that for the latter, 'production' is now pitched at a more abstract level and designates the fundamental, normative frameworks in which different forms of praxis take place and receive their meaning. But this shift from material production to normative, intersubjective interaction is not totally 'dematerialised', as it were, since the crucial 'anthropological materialist' element remains, and indeed serves a central function. The difference with previous versions of historical materialism is that what is specifically materialistic about Honneth's version of social and historical action now points to the rootedness of social action in organic preconditions rather than to the specificity of a mode of production, and the social is conceived of as communicative integration around norms, and not as the result of a dialectic of production.

The fact that the concept of labour is replaced by a moral concept should not lead to the conclusion that the ethics of recognition lacks political radicality. Rather, the theory of recognition is critically more robust and hermeneutically more sensitive to those pre-scientific experiences in which the theory of emancipation, according to the central epistemological tenet of critical theory, is supposed to be anchored. Honneth always justifies the shift from the paradigm of communication to that of recognition in this manner. The crucial benefit in conceiving of society as the fragile compromise-solution of historical struggles for recognition is that it puts at its centre the capacity of socialised individuals and groups to act, and, as the root cause of their action, their experiences of injustice. This practical concern of the theory of recognition can also be perceived in the conceptual resources that Honneth has drawn on for his model, by retracing the history of social movements and studying the normative content of the revolts against historical situations of social injustice. For example, it is the historical experiences of injustice that have guided the distinction between the three spheres of recognition. The practical anchoring of theory does not just signify that social theory aims to uncover the 'immanent transcendence', which from within social life makes resistance and struggle possible. It also signifies that the practical application of theory, the explanation, justification and ultimately, in a feedback loop, the empowering of struggles, is the ultimate end and justification of theory. Critical theory has a practical telos. There is no doubt that Honneth's enterprise is ultimately founded upon a political imperative. To once again quote from his first book and its critique of Habermas' depoliticised model, the aim

is to "construct a model which could be linked hermeneutically to the unique experiential situation of subjects acting in the present," a model that could be "introduced into historical praxis for the purpose of supplying practical orientation for the acting subjects."[25]

IV. The Repression of Materiality in Honneth's Mature Ethics of Recognition

However, there is no denying the fact that today the ethics of recognition appears to many as a critical theory lacking a critical edge. For many proponents of some version of historical materialism, a model centred on recognition appears too thin. A germane concern can be expressed within the specific context of this paper. Against the double materialist background that was recovered in the first two sections, one has to be surprised by the disincarnated aspect of interactions as they are discussed in Honneth's mature model. The passage from the production, to the communication, to the recognition paradigm, seems to coincide with a gradual dematerialisation of the meaning of interaction. In the current model of recognition, interaction seems to have been reduced to inter-human intersubjectivity.

What seems to be missing or at least to have been minimised are first of all institutional mediations, as Emmanuel Renault, in his important book *The Experience of Injustice* has most emphatically shown.[26] The fact of the social, that is, the thick reality of social life which transcends and indeed frames inter-subjective interactions seems to feature only indirectly, as a product of inter-subjective interactions, not as an autonomous, determining reality. My concern in this paper is with the other mediations that are irreducibly linked to social or intersubjective interaction. To put it metaphorically, Honneth seems to have reduced interaction to horizontal inter-subjectivity, and to underplay the structural importance of other, 'vertical' relationships, the importance of institutional worlds for the formation of subjective and intersubjective experiences, and also the importance of the material worlds. It seems to me that interpersonal relations need to be studied in their imbrications with other forms of interactions: interactions between human and non-human beings, interactions of the individual with personal objects, with tools, machines, the resistance of matter, society's 'metabolism' with its environment, and so on. These imbricated interactions carry their own structuring

weight and, more importantly for normatively inclined social philosophy, have their own, specific normative impact. One has the impression that the 'sensualist' dimension is now more or less missing, the essential dimension of the human being's openness to the world, the relationship of contemplation-transformation of the human individual and human society with natural and symbolic worlds.

In brief all those dimensions that the rediscovery of Feuerbach and of the Feuerbachian Marx were supposed to have brought back into the reactualisation of historical materialism, seem to have been minimised. The materialist basis of the theory of society propounded in *The Struggle for Recognition*, and its amended version in more recent texts, is reduced to arguments drawn from genetic psychology and social psychology for the explanatory side of the theory, and arguments from psychology and moral epistemology for its normative side.[27] It is as though, despite his critique of the dichotomy of instrumental and communicative action, Honneth himself had retained only a one-sided interpretation of the communicative turn, which, by critiquing the subject-object model, loses sight of the object-pole. Initially there was a great rediscovery of the human being's essential openness to the world, an openness to be sure, that is structurally conditioned by the intersubjective constitution of subjectivity, but one that does not make sense if the object's material being and the human body's own capacities and limitations are ignored. However, this rediscovery does not seem to have had a full impact on the very theory that made it possible.

In the mature ethics of recognition, the minimal type of communication between two agents, which Habermas had used as ideal-typical situation to study the logic of speech acts, in fact, continues to function as the paradigmatic structure in which all forms of interactions are conceived. This is,

> a social action conceived as communicative procedure in the process of which at least two subjects coordinate their finalised actions amongst themselves by reaching an understanding over a shared definition of their situation, through the use of symbols.[28]

As a consequence, not only do the forms of material mediations that are linked to social interactions recede into the background, social interaction

itself seems to be conceived only in a strict dialogical fashion, as relation from agent to agent. Even the second and third spheres of recognition, which seem to involve institutions and irreducible relations to the material worlds are in fact approached from a 'horizontal' inter-subjective perspective. More broadly, the classical problem of all anthropologically minded materialism, that of the 'metabolism with nature', which, as we saw, was the driving concern behind Honneth's first critique of Habermas and the guiding thread in his retrieval of philosophical anthropology, now features only at the margins of the developed theory of recognition.

This appears in particularly striking fashion in the 2005 Tanner Lectures.[29] In the last five years, the theory of recognition has undergone a shift from a model centred around the notion of 'struggle for recognition' to one centred around the notion of 'affective recognition'. This shift is encapsulated in a new interpretation of the motto according to which, "recognition precedes cognition conceptually and genetically."[30] Honneth's latest model puts much more emphasis than previously on the idea already presented in *The Struggle for Recognition*, that the primacy of affective identification with significant others is the genetic precondition and the logical condition of possibility for the normativity of all other interactions. The subject needs to have identified intensely with another subject who will have opened the social and the material worlds to him or her, for a normative, potentially respectful and ethical attitude towards these worlds to be at all possible. Different types of reification are structurally comparable to the autistic child who can relate to the world only in a purely objective fashion because the primary affective identification with important others was not possible. The consequence of this model is that nature, and more generally all non-human entities, are only indirectly of normative significance. They matter normatively only to the extent that they will have mattered to other subjects. The inter-relations between subjects has become the sole normative interaction upon which all others depend.

The repression of the material is all the more paradoxical since, as we have just recalled, the first book had explicitly identified it as a fateful direction. Recounting the reception of Mead in Germany, Honneth and Joas wrote that his association with symbolic interactionism:

> gave the impression that he shared its restriction of action to interaction, that he too considered the natural foundations of action to be only of trivial

importance, whether these were the human being's bodily endowment with needs, or an environment necessary for life.[31]

It was precisely because Mead offered a more materialist theory of human action, one that granted a place to the 'natural foundations of action', that Honneth had used it as the central reference in his first writings. An important dimension in these 'natural foundations' is the relationship of the human agent to his or her environment, the manipulation of objects, in short, the embeddedness of social action in the concreteness of the non-human real. Indeed this aspect was rated highly by Honneth and Joas since it retained the 'sensualism' of Feuerbach. As the young authors noted,

> Mead does not at all accord central importance to the form of action termed interaction, but rather to human beings' manipulation of physical objects. (. . .) Mead's goal is not a theory of interaction, or of instrumental action, but the linking together of both of these theories.[32]

It could be argued, therefore, that the theory of recognition is in need of a broadening of its scope. However, as the present article has attempted to demonstrate, this move would not require a shift away from the theory's original paradigm; on the contrary, it would simply exploit the potentialities that lay in the background from which it originally emerged. One could formulate this broadening in a series of mottoes: the intersubjectivistic turn, however grounded, should not lead to the abandonment of the pole of the object. A philosophy of praxis corrected in such a way that it would take into account the intersubjective structure of subjectivity and rationality should not forget that, to speak the language of the *Ten Theses*, activity, *Tätigkeit*, is also objectual, '*gegenständlich*'. To identify the dangers of the subject-object paradigm, the reduction of rationality to its instrumental dimension, should not lead to the utter abandonment of the latter. If the dualism of instrumental and communicative action is conceptually and normatively fateful, then a reduction of interaction to inter-subjectivity is itself mistaken.

V. Towards a Materialist Turn in Recognition Theory: The Case of Work

The avenue that such reflections open for the theory of recognition is thus one where the anthropological core of historical materialism would be

reactualised once more, but this time developed to its full potential. The task that this entails is exactly synonymous with Mead's own problem: 'not a theory of interaction, or of instrumental action, but the linking together of both of these theories'. Given the interactionist shift in Honneth's theory, this implies first of all a refocusing on the pole of the object, a retrieval of the non-human, material mediations that interplay with properly intersubjective, interhuman interactions. This reappraisal of the role of the object leads to a broader notion of interaction. It leads to the realisation that the real problem about interaction is not restricted to the problem of the subject's relation to the object, or to that of intersubjectivity, but that it is the problem of the interactions between those interactions. Interestingly, the new appraisal of the pole of the object in cognition has also emerged in the analytic tradition, with the emergence of the model of 'active externalism'. In this model, the mind is not just referred to the external world through intentionality, or intersubjectively constituted, but is seen as 'extended' in the world, as extending outside skin and skull through feedback mechanisms and "cognitive loops" which encompass social-cultural and material objects.[33] In such a view, the three fundamental interactions, the horizontal subject-to-subject and the two 'vertical' interactions, of the human with the non-human, and of the individual with the institutional, are all integrated. Extended-mind cognitive science is much closer to the tradition discussed here than is perhaps expected, notably if one focuses on the potentially mediating role that an author like Merleau-Ponty can play in bringing these traditions together, and indeed Merleau-Ponty is probably the one philosopher who had integrated these three interactions in the most sophisticated way. Another discipline with which a dialogue would be most fruitful is cultural anthropology, with which a broader recognition model and extended mind theory would have strong affinities. Given Honneth's early interest in philosophical anthropology, it is surprising to see that he has all but abandoned the idea of a strong, partially constitutive metabolism of the human agent with the non-human.[34]

If we continue to speak the language of the post-Hegelian materialist tradition, the proposed broadening of the theory of recognition into a more general theory of relationality, encompassing different types of interaction, would sound something like the following. From Feuerbach, we borrow the idea that:

> the concept of the object is originally nothing else but the concept of another I—everything appears to man in childhood as a freely and arbitrarily acting being—which means that in principle the concept of the object is mediated through the concept of You, the objective ego. To use the language of Fichte, an object or an alter ego is given not to the ego, but to the non-ego in me; for only where I am transformed from an ego into a You—that is, where I am passive—does the idea of an activity existing outside myself, the idea of objectivity, really originates.[35]

We could then follow Honneth's early proposition and see how Mead systematically developed Feuerbach's philosophy of the object as a quasi-'I', imposing its qualities on the perceiving 'I', now transported into the role of the object, by rephrasing it in the terms of nascent neurological science. Indeed, Feuerbach's insistence on the pole of the object announces in an extraordinary manner the analyses of Mead in regard to the constitution of the body as my own body and the perception of permanent objects. According to Mead, the unity of one's own body emerges for the individual subject as a result of the unitary reaction and resistance opposed by the external world to the subject's action. In this, Mead applies to the human body the very same logic that enables the perceiving subject to identify identical and permanent objects in the chaotic flux of qualities in the external world. In perception, it is the constant resistance of objects to the actual prehension with the hands, or to the virtual prehension through the eyes, which makes the subject realise that there are quasi-'I's behind the surface of things.

It is symptomatic that in *Social Action and Human Nature*, Honneth already interprets Feuerbach's analysis about the interchange of subject and object in perception in a purely interpersonal sense, as a first expression of the intersubjective constitution of perception. In fact, Feuerbach is just as equally concerned with asserting the autonomous being of the object against its reduction in transcendental idealism. The idea of an intersubjective constitution of perception is one of the great thoughts bequeathed to us by Mead, one that was indeed already present in Feuerbach. However, the reciprocal thesis regarding the objectual conditioning of subjectivity is equally significant. This is a thesis that Honneth surprisingly leaves unexplored in *Social Action and Human Nature*. This is all the more surprising since it was the same book that was supposed to correct historical materialism with a retrieval of its sensualist

strand. Indeed, for Feuerbach just as much as for Mead, I am dependent on relationships with other human subjects for the constitution of my subjectivity, and even for the structuration of perception. However, just as important for both of these authors, is the other mechanism by which I am myself turned into an object of the object conceived in its turn as a quasi-subject. Through this objectual dimension of interaction not only can I perceive objects as identical objects remaining constant over time, but more profoundly I become conscious of my own body as one self-identical, temporal object. It is only through the mediation of the material world that I take possession of my body as my own. Subjectivity might be constituted by intersubjective, and indeed social relations, but it can become incarnated only by and in the material worlds. Indeed, this is an argument that is presented in a similar fashion by Merleau-Ponty.

This general thought has important implications, I would like to suggest, for the first sphere of recognition delineated by Honneth. Perhaps it is time to complement object-relations theory and re-emphasise the importance of things and objects, not just as passive symbols and carriers of intersubjective and social interactions, but for themselves and in their very materiality, as being, in any case, irreducibly constitutive of subjectivity and sociality. Much of modern psychology, and Honneth with it, appear to have an overly optimistic conception of the material world, seemingly viewing the world as a passive reality that can be imbued with human, symbolic, meaning at will. In much contemporary psychology, the world of objects does not object any kind of resistance, it seems to be a purely passive carrier of human intentions. However, matter, objects, things, tools, instruments, machines, have this knack of taking human action where it did not intend to go, of resisting its efforts to mould it, of giving human intentions a meaning they had not foreseen, and so on. Reification can also apply to human action when it is diverted, inverted, and gets lost in the indifferent world of matter. This basic thought, as earlier existentialist philosophers[36] and contemporary theorists of technology have well highlighted,[37] should surely also be taken seriously by those who study the developments of subjectivities.

Instead of focusing on this aspect, I will make a few tentative steps in a direction that opens the way for a 'rematerialised' theory of recognition in the third sphere. In one of his famous early articles, Honneth highlighted the

normative deficit in Habermas' concept of instrumental action and instead attempted to devise a 'critical conception of work', one that would retain the fundamental normative importance of labour which Marx had given to it, without reproducing his conceptual confusions.[38] In his latest texts, Honneth has reinterpreted the normative aspect of work by approaching it purely from the social perspective of its evaluation in given social-cultural frameworks. This is the famous idea according to which modern subjects demand to be recognised, not only as universal subjects of rights, but also in their particular achievements, according to the *Leistungsprinzip*, the 'principle of performance' or the 'principle of achievement'.

However important this norm undoubtedly is, it is clearly not sufficient to account for the great impact of the work experience on subjectivities. In work, the objectual, material dimensions are most obviously decisive, but not just from a descriptive point of view, in fact they also matter a great deal normatively. First of all, recognition in and through work concerns not just the recognition of abilities and personal contributions to the 'division of social labour', but also the recognition of the product of work. Even when the rights of workers are formally acknowledged, and even when their profession is granted social recognition, the denial of recognition of the product of work can have just as deleterious effects on subjectivities as the denial of recognition of abilities and identities. There can be a recognition of a social status, but one that is also combined with a denial of recognition or misrecognition of the production of the agents belonging to that status. People are recognised as contributors, but their contribution is mis- or unrecognised. This contradiction is in fact widespread in today's world of work.

Furthermore, the material aspect of work, the confrontation of working subjects with matter, objects and machines, the 'cunning' as the Jena Hegel said, with which matter's obstructions have to be combated, circumvented, tricked via the mediation of other matter, all this plays a decisive constitutive role for subjectivities, a constitutive role with its own, specific normative impact. Recognition is also one that the worker receives or expects from peers and colleagues for having been able to 'trick' the resistance of the concrete materiality and its systematic obstructionism. This might appear an extremely naïve view to continue to defend given the fact that work has become, like society itself, more and more 'immaterial' and 'informational'.[39] With the

transformation of work processes through the massive introduction of communications technologies, and the exponential increase in the service sector, the direct confrontation of a worker with a brute materiality seems to be an image of times long gone. However, it would be just as erroneous to conclude, from the gradual 'dematerialisation' of work and of social activities generally, that the part of materiality has totally disappeared. Services refashion the object of exchange by producing and offering skills and time rather than material commodities, but underneath, they continue to have an irreducible material basis. Whichever economic activity one takes as an example of a service, whether it is the commodification of an activity that was undertaken in the private sphere (tourism, catering, transport), or as prosthesis to human communication and intelligence (telecommunications, information technology), or as the outsourcing of activities that the Fordist firm used to undertake internally,[40] in all these areas, service involves a material support, whether that support was already owned by the service-user and is simply changed, hopefully enhanced, by the service-provider (cleaners from outside the firm ensuring the cleanliness of the work place), or whether, as still happens in most cases, a material product is delivered to the user (even if a telephone company describes itself as service provider, the telephone and the servicing of the activity of telephoning are only made possible by material elements). The undeniable abstraction and complexification of objects and activities should not lead to the extreme conclusion whereby the whole world of the modern economy would have become 'immaterial'.

However, the reality of that irrepressible materiality continues to obstruct human intentions, whether it is the brute resistance of a screw refusing to turn, the lack of adaptability of the machine to the changing composition of the material substrate it is supposed to process, or the glitches in the complex computer networks linking different subgroups working on an industrial project together. In all cases, the irreducible element, which much critical social theory seems to have forgotten, is that element of materiality that is at the heart of exchange and the work process. The special recognition by the peers of a subject's ability to 'trick' reality to make it conform to the prescriptions of the work situation is very different from the general social recognition which hangs on the general social value system. This aspect of work, which featured centrally in Marx's conception of labour under the title of cooperation, is, according to a current strand of psychopathology of work, essential in

deciding whether the work experience is a pathological one or not.[41] However, it is clear that the normativity attached to this aspect of work is structurally characterised by the 'tricking' of the real. It is indeed the social acknowledgement of skill and expertise that produces a sense of self-worth, but the important feature of that acknowledgment is that it comes from peers who are able to judge the technical skill as technical, as the victory of human competence over the resistance of the real. The judgement is social, but its object is objective.

In fact, a microanalysis of the work situation would uncover many more aspects of recognition, since the shift to post-Fordist organisations of work has meant the relative broadening of the sphere of autonomy of many workers, even at the lowest level of skill and qualification. According to Dejours, the recognition that is essential for alleviating the continuing presence of potential pathogenic elements in the work experience is not just the horizontal one of peers, but also the vertical one of hierarchy. As contemporary workers are requested more and more to actively engage their whole personality in the success of the business, their demands for a symbolic recompense in terms of the recognition of their specific contribution to the work process also increase.

These scant remarks should be sufficient in showing that the concept of recognition is indeed an invaluable critical and descriptive concept to approach the sphere of work as an essential vector of subjectivation in contemporary societies, but that it needs to be differentiated, in particular, by analysing the complex and varied ways in which symbolic, inter-human social recognition is inextricably linked with the difficult confrontation of working subjects with the resistance of the real, however immaterial the latter might appear. Dejours' school of psychology defines work as the "activity that is demanded of subjects to fill the gap between the prescriptions and the reality of work."[42] This definition by itself shows how intricate the intertwining of instrumental and intersubjective demands is, with their related break-downs and promises for working subjects. It shows that there is an urgent need to undertake renewed research into the 'critical conception of work' that Honneth flagged twenty-five years ago. More broadly, it calls on critical social theory to reintegrate the dimension of materiality that it had so well highlighted in its original departure from the founder of its own tradition.

Notes

1 Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition. The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, trans. J. Anderson, London, Polity, 1995; and Nancy Fraser & Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*, London & New York, Verso, 2003.

2 Jürgen Habermas, "Labour and Interaction. Remarks on Hegel's Jena Philosophy of Mind" in *Theory and Practice*, trans. John Viertel, London, Heinemann, 1974, pp. 142-169. See also chapter three of *Knowledge and Human Interests*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1987, pp. 43-64.

3 Indeed, the two texts referred to in the previous note already contained the suggestion that Hegel's Jena model of a 'struggle for recognition' could serve as the mechanism of social integration by contrast with the integration through material reproduction.

4 "Geschichte und Interaktionsverhältnisse. Zur strukturalistischen Deutung des Historischen Materialismus" in *Theorien des Historischen Materialismus*, eds. U. Jaeggi and A. Honneth, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1997, pp. 405-464. Reprinted as "History and Interaction: On the Structuralist Interpretation of Historical Materlialism" in *Althusser: a Critical Reader*, ed. Gregory Elliott, Oxford, Blackwell, 1994, pp. 73-103.

5 A. Honneth, "Domination and Moral Struggle. The Philosophical Heritage of Marxism Reconsidered" in *The Fragmented World of the Social*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1990, pp. 2-14.

6 This is obviously one of the most striking self-reflective assessments in the polemic with Fraser, see *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*, London & New York, Verso, 2003, p. 157.

7 A. Honneth, "Work and Instrumental Action: On the Normative Basis of Critical Theory" in *The Fragmented World of the Social*, pp. 15-49.

8 This is obviously the main thread of the critique of Habermas in Honneth's, *The Critique of Power*, trans. K. Baynes, Cambridge, MA, & London, MIT Press, 1991.

9 See the end of A. Honneth & H. Joas, *Social Action and Human Nature*, trans. R. Meyer, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp. 162-167.

10 See A. Honneth, "Moral Consciousness and Class Domination. Some Problems in the Analysis of Hidden Morality" in *The Fragmented World of the Social*, pp. 205-219.

11 See especially Honneth & Joas, *Social Action and Human Nature*, p. 70.

12 Honneth & Joas, *Social Action and Human Nature*, p. 1.

13 Honneth & Joas, *Social Action and Human Nature*, p. 3.

14 See T. McCarthy, *The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas*, London, Hutchinson,

1978, pp. 110-126. See also the classical article by Joel Whitebook, "The Problem of Nature in Habermas," *Telos*, Summer 79, pp. 41-69, reprinted in *Minding Nature. The Philosophers of Ecology*, ed. D. Macauley, New York, The Guilford Press, 1996, pp. 283-317. See also the revisiting of these problems from the point of view of recent Schelling scholarship in Peter Douglas, "Habermas, Schelling and Nature" in *Critical Theory after Habermas*, eds. D. Freundlieb, Wayne Hudson and John Rundell, Leiden & Boston, Brill, 2004, pp. 155-180. A good study was to be found in Stephan Vogel, *Nature in Critical Theory*. And an especially careful and detailed study in Stéphane Haber, *Critique de l'Antinaturalisme*, Paris, PUF, 2006, Chapter Three.

[15]   Honneth, *The Critique of Power*, p. 218.

[16]   See Jean-Philippe Deranty, "The Loss of Nature in Axel Honneth's Theory of Recognition. Rereading Mead with Merleau-Ponty" in *Critical Horizons*, vol. 6, 2005, pp. 153-182. The present article contains some passages of the latter article, as well as passages from the following article: "Les Horizons Marxistes de l'Ethique de la Reconnaissance," *Actuel Marx*, no. 38, 2005, pp. 159-178.

[17]   Herbert Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1989, p. 63.

[18]   See Alfred Schmidt, *The Concept of Nature in Marx*, trans. B. Fowkes, London, NLB, 1971 and *Emanzipatorische Sinnlichkeit: Ludwig Feuerbach's Anthropologischer Materialismus*, Munich, Hanser, 1973. Indeed, Schmidt emphasises the importance of Feuerbach's anthropological arguments within the critique of political economy itself, *Emanzipatorische Sinnlichkeit*, p. 21.

[19]   Honneth & Joas, *Social Action and Human Nature*, p. 15.

[20]   See Gyorgÿ Márkus' classical study, *Marxism and 'Anthropology': The Concept of Human Essence in the Philosophy of Marx*, Assen, Van Gorcum, 1978.

[21]   See Ludwig Feuerbach, *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*, trans. M. Vogel, Indianapolis, Hackett Publications, 1986, p. 40.

[22]   See Schmidt, *Emanzipatorische Sinnlichkeit*, pp. 45-50.

[23]   See Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. G. Eliot, New York, Harper, 1957, p. 112.

[24]   This notion of human perception as 'universal' and thus essentially different from the instinct-bound perception of animals is of course directly appropriated by Marx in the Paris manuscripts.

[25]   Honneth & Joas, *Social Action and Human Nature*, p. 166.

[26]   Emmanuel Renault, *L'Expérience de l'Injustice. Reconnaissance et Clinique de l'Injustice*, Paris, La Découverte, 2004.

[27]   See for example, Axel Honneth "Invisibility. On the Epistemology of Recognition", in *Supplement to the Proceedings of The Aristotelian Society*, vol. 75, 2001, pp. 111-126.

28 Honneth & Joas, *Social Action and Human Nature*, p. 155.

29 Axel Honneth, *Verdinglichung. Eine Anerkennungs-theoretische Studie*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 2005.

30 The shift was already well flagged in "Grounding Recognition: A Rejoinder to Critical Questions," *Inquiry*, 45, 2002, pp. 499-519.

31 Honneth & Joas, *Social Action and Human Nature*, p. 61.

32 Honneth & Joas, *Social Action and Human Nature*, p. 61.

33 See especially Andy Clark, *Being There: Putting Brain, Body, and World Together Again*, Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 1997, and Mark Rowlands, *Exernalism: Putting Mind and World Back Together Again*, Chesham, Acumen, 2003.

34 Too many references present themselves here. In yet a different discipline, we can note that in William James already, to quote a tradition that is dear to Honneth, the self 'extended' well beyond skin and skull and encompassed all personal objects constitutive of selfhood itself. See *Principles of Psychology*, New York, H. Holt and Company, 1890, vol. 1, pp. 291-293.

35 Honneth & Joas, *Social Action and Human Nature*, p. 17. See Feuerbach, *Principles of a Philosophy of the Future*, § 32. See also Schmidt, *Emanzipatorische Sinnlichkeit*, p. 44.

36 One thinks notably of the first section of Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason*.

37 See in particular Bernard Stiegler's reflections on the anthropogenic aspect of technologies, in *Technics and Time*, trans. R. Beardsworth & G. Collins, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1998. See also Bruno Latour's idea that action-networks encompass at the same level of processing, both human and non-human entities.

38 In the already quoted Honneth, "Work and Instrumental Action."

39 See the authoritative reflections by Manuel Castells in *The Rise of the Network Society*, vol. 1, Oxford, Blackwell, 2nd edition, 2000, especially for the purpose of this paper, chapter 4: "The Transformation of Work and Employment: Networkers, Jobless, and Flexi-Timers."

40 I am using the description of the service industry by Jean-Pierre Durand in *La Chaine Invisible. Travailler Aujourd'hui: Flux Tendu et Servitude Volontaire*, Paris, Seuil, pp. 207-227.

41 See Christophe Dejours, *Travail, Usure Mentale*, Paris, Bayard, 2000, especially the 1993 Addendum, pp. 201-249.

42 Dejours, *Travail, Usure Mentale*, p. 213. See also Christophe Dejours, *Le Facteur Humain*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1995, pp. 43-44.

Chapter Eight

Discourse Ethics and the Problem of Nature

Stéphane Haber

To what extent can Critical Theory and the discourse ethics, which claims to relay and reframe it, truly integrate an ecological problematic? The difficulty of such an endeavour is well apparent in the sharp criticisms made by Hans Jonas towards Marxism.[1] Jonas wanted to hammer in the truism that we should include prudential imperatives towards nature in our ethical behaviour and political strategies, which according to him, necessarily relativises the scope of Marxism that was said to remain naïve in this regard. However, he also intended to highlight the secondary, conditional, and indeed meaningless imperative of emancipation in the face of the necessity to preserve the environment. In this respect, the aim of liberation developed into an ethics of discursive reciprocity was good for a time, preoccupied as it was with the improvement of the life conditions of human beings. These were times when problems were only amongst beings of the same species, and when nature figured only in the background, or as a resource deemed inexhaustible. At a time when nature's reproduction has become problematic, however, this is no longer

the order of the day. More radically, it seems that Jonas' intention was, in the end, to denounce emancipation as an illusion, and almost as a danger. For Jonas, it was an illusion because it remained trapped in the false ontology of the not-yet, of the unfulfilment of being, an ontology which is no longer valid once, in crisis, we have come to realise the primacy of the self-assertion of life that carries us and is our enduring condition. Finally, it remained a danger for Jonas to the extent that the devastation of the environment appeared as the direct historical consequence of the modern promotion of the emancipatory project itself, in the sense that it entailed the domination of nature. In the face of a sense of contemporary emergency, the principle of responsibility and of the protection of nature at all costs appears to be incompatible with the principle of emancipation and must be substituted as a guide for action. Freedom, in whatever sense one might take it, has ceased to be the reference value of acting.

It is interesting to see how the two main theorists of discourse ethics have reacted to this provocative thesis, which asserts the non-assimilative character of any serious ecological stance into its position.

Apel's Position

Apel agrees with the relevance of a project of an ethics of responsibility oriented towards the future of humanity, in opposition to a traditional ethics obsessed with the present of the face-to-face and a restrictive definition of community.[2] He is close to Jonas' position in that he identifies as the critical anchoring point of that ethics, the will to limit instrumental rationality, which dominates modernity and underpins its modern scientific and technical project. However, Apel simultaneously refuses to ground ethics in an ontology of nature because for him it constitutes a regression into a naturalist paralogism. More importantly, he rejects Jonas' diagnosis by showing that Jonas can only disqualify reason and the emancipatory project because he identifies the latter with the modern trajectories of capitalism or socialism, that is to say, using post-war terminology, with societies whose centre of gravity is situated in the practical domination of nature destined to feed constant population growth and self-sustaining economic development. According to Apel, though, it is clear that we must link emancipation, if this concept has any sense, not to instrumental action, but to communicative action, that is,

if we want to remain with the two purest ideal types with which to conceive of action and its rationality. Emancipation relates to the rationalisation of the forms of intersubjective interaction and aims to promote the concrete universal as the reciprocal mediation of singularities, instead of the vertical increase of our technical power over the environment. In this sense, the will to promote the progress of reason is not discredited by the admittedly suicidal character of that specific form of domination of nature that the West has practised.

Apel's aim is to show that discourse ethics can be integrated with a conservationist imperative as it is dramatically presented in the principle of responsibility, but without the same costs. It can also avoid Jonas' critique of a pre-ecologist ethics that brackets the long-term effects of action, and is founded on an unlimited anthropocentrism and an implicit principle of irresponsibility. For Apel, the transcendental foundation of the categorical imperative must be completed, not so much by a reflection on the conditions of application of duty, but by a theory of duties aimed at the necessity of putting in place the conditions for the realisation of first-level duties. Practically, this signifies that in an irrational world—which means a world characterised by instrumental-strategic instrumentality—it would be irrational, that is, naïve and counter-productive, to want discussion here and now. The true concrete imperative is not one that demands that we enter discussion, disregarding all other business, but rather one that demands that the world be transformed so that, over the long term, the chances increase for the norms regulating the lives of men and women to progressively take in elements belonging to the logic of discussion. In this sense, the maintenance of the conditions of existence in a preserved environment, which would make possible the flourishing of differentiated forms of life, appears to be one of the conditions for ensuring future discussions take place. The point is, therefore, not to renounce anthropocentrism, but to show that a well-understood anthropocentrism, that is, understood on the basis of a communicative definition of reason, implies a direct responsibility towards nature, and concretely, that it demands that our power of it be influenced by taking into account ethical and democratic imperatives within scientific-technical systems.

Apel's approach has the advantage, first of all, of firmly establishing that there is no reason, on normative or empirical grounds, to think in terms of an alternative, between emancipatory goals and the preservation of nature,

as Jonas does. Furthermore, it has the merit of replacing the utopian solution suggested by Jonas—the solution of a primitivist renunciation of instrumental rationality, of abandoning the project of the mastery of natural processes— with the more realistic project of its mediation by other kinds of imperatives, a mediation that ensures that this mastery does not turn into blind misuse or pillaging.

However and simultaneously, Apel's response to the ecological problematic falls short. It is true that the assertion of a right to a natural environment, which favours the maintenance and development of forms of life open to the progress of communicative reason, justifies the implementation of green exigencies. However, it does not by itself imply, for example, the preservation of species and existing habitats, since it is not unthinkable that like in science-fiction, such progress may in the future occur within environments that would have been profoundly depleted or even become entirely artificial. Similarly, the fact that living species and habitats around the planet must continue to provide economic resources for generations to come, as well be a source of aesthetic pleasure, as Apel wishes, does not presuppose that they possess an intrinsic value, nor, that a moral necessity to preserve them exists. In this sense, Apel seems to remain unfamiliar with ecological values.

Of course, even an eco-centred ethics does not easily escape anthropocentrism, especially not Jonas', since one of its central arguments is the instinctive interest of humanity for its own survival. However, it is true that nothing in Apel's thought enables us to really escape—as should surely be the case— the overly strict limits of transcendental philosophies where nature, by comparison with a reason judging from above, remains an inert object or mere context. Here, nature means nothing to the subject—he or she does not originate in it, nor recognises him or herself as part of it. Despite what he thinks, if indeed he does respond to the worry caused by the self-destructive, unmastered technical-economic development, Apel does not address that which Jonas, with good motives, attempted to give sense to—the ethical intuitions that are awakened at the sight of mistreated animals, of destroyed habitats and of exterminated species.

Habermas and the Ecological Problem

One can read the rare remarks by Habermas on the question of environmental ethics as the sketch of an alternative to the easy solution that would consist in saying that discourse ethics had already anticipated all this, and that there is nothing new under the sun. Habermas, though, has for a long time shown more reticence, and found it more difficult than Apel to integrate the environmental problematic.[3] This unease can still be seen in the kind of equivocation that characterises his position until 1991. Sometimes, Habermas seems to be supporting an externalist position by asserting that the convictions that incite us to a certain kind of respect towards nature are simply unjustifiable or inexplicable in the frame of discourse ethics. At other times, and equally unsatisfactorily, he has noted the subversive character of the pretensions of ecological ethics in comparison to his Kantian understanding of practical philosophy, without drawing the consequences that seem to follow on from that observation.[4]

Nonetheless, the few pages where Habermas discusses this question in relation to discourse ethics can be read as the attempt to engage with a third alternative, by showing that there exists neither a reciprocal indifference, nor an essential opposition between discourse ethics and the ecological problematic. Quite clearly, the bridge between the two positions consists in elevating the animal to the status of a possible partner in practical discussions, which might appear to be counter-intuitive at first sight. This approach shows that Habermas bids farewell to the Kantian notion of an *indirect duty* towards the animal, a notion that was still crucial for Apel. However, he does this without renouncing a practical rationality that, for him, is grounded in reciprocity and in identifying the practical-rational with the authentic form of conscious intersubjectivity, in contrast to what occurs in utilitarianism and in Jonas' work.

This results in an anthropomorphism rather than an anthropocentrism as in the work of Apel, to the extent that the rational *telos* which traverses the whole intersubjective sphere, the one that consists in the symmetries of recognition, is still posited as the determining logic in the relation to the animal, which is thought of as an *analogon*, as a quasi-co-subject.[5] "We must be able to ascribe characteristics of agents to animals, among others the ability to

initiate utterances and to address them to us."[6] At the same time, Habermas' radical treatment of the animal question comes out well in the rather unexpected position that he takes regarding the question of vegetarianism. He seems to be saying, in a flatly conservative manner, that the fact that we tolerate the consumption of animal flesh, or animal experimentation towards medical ends, seems to prove that obligations, for example, to abstain from unnecessary bad treatment towards beings that resemble us more or less, although they are *absolute*, are also less precise and less demanding in their concrete reach and application.[7] However, two pages later in the same text, he goes as far as saying that *it could be the case* that vegetarianism represents the next step leading from the obligation of protecting the animal to the prohibition of killing it, as far as is possible within the limits of the reasonable.[8] The extension of discourse ethics towards a kind of ecological perspective thus occurs mainly on the basis of the principle, according to which, one has to think twice before eating pieces of what could be—even virtually— partners of the universal community of discussion.

On what is such a surprising digression founded?

First of all, the notion of a quasi-partner in an asymmetrical interaction, which presents itself here, is not an *ad hoc* addition in the system of the ethics of discussion. As Habermas often suggests with good sense, the exigencies inherent in communicative action are only ever partially fulfilled because of pragmatic limitations and other kinds of interferences that prevent the processes of learning from occurring, and which are supposed to lead to impartiality. To say this, however, is to say that a structural gap remains between the partner of discourse in terms of how he or she is and how he or she ought to be. Of course, with discourse ethics, we are no longer in the classical world of Marxism (to which Habermas' early philosophy belongs from this point of view) where the thinker could always try to debunk 'ideology' or 'false consciousness'. However, something definitely remains of the difference between what people actually do or think, and what they could think or do in other (and better) circumstances.

Certainly, one must draw consequences from all of this, not only for practice but also for the conduct of discourse itself. One might think that representing the interests of the absent in tutelary fashion, or representing those who

are unable to articulate their own interests, or further still, unable to enter the game of the ideal role-exchange—what one might call the *advocatory attitude*—constitutes an important aspect of moral conduct. One catches a glimpse of that conclusion when, against all expectations, Habermas justifies the extreme case of internal deliberation where all the interests of others are represented only fictively.[9] From a sociological point of view, which has probably been the determining one here, one can add that the dynamics of integration which characterises a community in the process of rationalisation, demands extending the list of those who can have a say and must be part of public deliberations, even though there are chances that this might be translated into the multiplication and diversification of advocatory strategies that become more or less codified and institutionalised.[10]

However, who is concerned by this discursive tutelage? Confronted with the typical cases of the child, the sick, the handicapped, it is evident that within limits that are difficult to establish *a priori*, I will sometimes have to appoint myself as an interpreter of maturities that are yet to come, or that are indefinitely delayed, or definitively compromised. However, following from this, it is not obvious why we should close *a priori* the list of those who could need a spokes-person, unless we believe, as does W. Kuhlmann in a disarming way, that the ideal of the free, integrated, impartial subject is *already* realised by the class of "normal adults."[11] If the art of imagining proper discussions that remain improbable constitutes one of the moments of rational conduct, then nothing forbids one to proceed to an extension *from below* of the set of all concerned, and therefore to add the animal to it, as a being that is structurally incapable of participating in discussions in which it still deserves to be *represented*. However, this paternalistic argument is far from being self-sufficient.

There is indeed a second condition as to why Habermas' 'quasi-vegetarianism' appears as a credible consequence of discourse ethics (or is a doubt that he expresses in this regard). It can be understood as soon as one keeps his transcendental argument at a distance. Starting from the lived world, the first morally significant experience is that of dependence and vulnerability of oneself and of the other, through which we also experience the primacy of relationality over individuality as an affect. From an anthropological point of view, discourse ethics appears *post factum*, as a way of formulating a primordial solidarity and responsibility of all towards all, which has its roots in life itself,

and which is manifested concretely for us in the fact that we become individualised only through socialisation. The deontological position of discourse ethics appears functionally as a way of becoming conscious of, and of compensating for, the relative fragility of these links, however constitutive they are—to formulate them with the required degree of sobriety and rigour. The feeling of distress felt by a person who is despised, the aesthetic emotion in the face of threatened natural habitats, and the sympathy towards the mistreated animal, constitute three typical modes where, in periods of crisis, we simultaneously experience a primordial solidarity amongst beings and their fragility, and connect this experience to the idea of a moral obligation towards nature that can be justified.

However, are we not leaving an ethics of communication for a moral psychology underpinned by a monist and vitalist ontology?

Even if the boundaries tend to get a little blurred, the answer to this question is negative if we take into account, more clearly than in other contexts, the fact that communicative action is not constituted without a background normative charge, which partially determines it and to which it remains indebted. Indeed, what is designated as the field of discourse ethics is what Habermas calls here, in general fashion, *interaction*. However, for Habermas, interaction is clearly communication before and beneath communication, a kind of reciprocal understanding before language, or rather a recognition that asserts itself before the symmetries of recognition which properly belong to verbal expression. It seems as though Habermas here wants to retrieve themes that had been well explored by existentialist phenomenology—especially in the form portrayed by Merleau-Ponty—but which he only exploits in a narrow evolutionist perspective inspired by Mead. From this narrowed perspective, it is as though the life of the body was destined to be wholly absorbed in the tranquil sovereignty and distance of linguistic expression. However, in grasping gestures and postures, Habermas is forced to suppose that there is no intellectual reconstruction of a lived sense; still less, knowledge by analogy. Far from it. Intersubjectivity means that my presence in the world is modelled by the performances of my body, that the relation to an other must, therefore, be thought primarily in terms of symbiosis, sympathy, and the mutual resonance between bodies—all of which implies the divining of what occurs in the other from the implicit knowledge that the body has of itself.

To put interaction in the foreground is to give up, without saying so, the strategy of the systematic subordination of the pre-linguistic that charac-terised the philosophy of communication; it is to recall the fact that the rela-tion to the other is first of all a matter of inter-corporeality, of correspondence between organic movements that become entangled, that pull each other apart as well as mesh into each other.

It is in this sense that there is, indeed and primordially speaking, a possible interaction with the animal rather an action upon it, to the extent that human relations *with* the animal rely at least in part on an empathetic understand-ing. As living organisms, first and foremost, this empathetic understanding binds beings together and deploys ways of dealing with the world that echo one another. In my encounter with animals, I enter a space in which we both use ways of moving, of manifesting intentions and affects which have a family of resemblance amongst themselves, enough in any case to ensure a minimum of reciprocity. To put it another way, in the vocabulary of prag-matics: enough of a resemblance exists to link the tenuous threads of under-standing, approbation and agreement together. This is what enables Habermas to write, that "we communicate in a different way with animals as soon as we integrate them in our social interactions."[12]

Of course, the moral obligation cannot be founded philosophically before the appearance of language, but this does not mean that it only holds for beings gifted with speech, or that it is not empirically sensible for agents before the acquisition of speech. The doubt regarding vegetarianism refers neither to love for animals nor to a natural contract, but to the idea that discursive understanding and agreement are always both prefigured and carried by pre-reflexive understanding in the sense that there is a bodily intentionality in which linguistic expression later inserts itself without taking away the primary sense of embodiment. This is what Habermas formulates in a calm paradox when he writes that "we have duties (toward animals) that are analogous to our moral duties, because like the latter they are rooted in the presuppositions of communicative action."[13]

To put it differently, there are duties and a responsibility towards the animal because there is a quasi-normativity of interaction.[14] This does not destroy the principle of a rationalist and logocentric ethics, but it does shed new light on it by underlying the fact that, in our interactions with animals, we adopt

a performative attitude that is *similar* to the one that is articulated in the linguistic exchange with human beings.[15]

Critical Theory and the Question of Nature

This indeterminate formulation could lead to an intellectualist reduction in our relationships with animals, which would insist on phenomena that are analogous to agreement, or to the expression of interests. In brief, it would insist on the fact that the wordless agreement between beings can anticipate the game of discursive understanding. However, one might prefer to say that, even beforehand everything happens as though, in the pure self-assertion of organic life right there in front of us, there is the irrecusable expression of an interest in life from a vulnerable being, which forces itself upon us in non-argumentative ways. In this sense, there exists at least a kind of claim to pre-linguistic validity; concretely, a will-to-live in Jonas' terms, in which fact and value are united. The proceduralism of discourse ethics is relativised through this co-existence, as present life constitutes the example of a substantial value that imposes itself *outside of discussion* and which, moreover, makes the latter possible. Such are, in any case, the disturbing ideas at the border of which Habermas was forced to work.

This unexpected extension of discourse ethics, which, incidentally, is restricted to this particular part of Habermas' work, remains partial, if only because, as Habermas would acknowledge without a doubt, it is quite probable that it is difficult to speak of an ecological ethics in the strong sense without introducing, beyond the case of animals, considerations that are holistic in kind and centred around the preservation of ecosystems. One can say, again, that something of Jonas' critique resists an integration into discourse ethics.[16]

Nonetheless, one can read these zoocentric considerations as the attempt to confront a problem that has remained unresolved in the self-overcoming phase of first generation Critical Theory. I would like to finish by recalling briefly this historical background.

In the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno and Horkheimer, in giving up on the idea of Revolution, had, as it were, transferred the idea of an unconditional power of acting to Nature, conceived as a first term in relation to which thought can orient itself, a power which had been first attributed to social

subjects making history. Following on from this, they had defended the audacious idea that the domination of nature according to the core of reason has not only been a specific phenomenon, but also the crucible of all historical domination and alienation. From this perspective, the will to instrumental mastery of the world appeared as an unconscious attempt to compensate for the loss of a state of plenitude and original indistinction, an attempt, which in fact, deepened this separation by multiplying divisions amongst humans. This orientation led the authors of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* to propose a diagnosis that seemed out of place by comparison with the classical interests of Marxism. For them, alienation can be traced just as much in cultural practices and everyday sociality, as in the sphere of work. In other words, they were interested as much in the forms of domination characteristic of the everyday relations of the lifeworld, and in particular those affecting women and animals, as the subordination of the proletariat. For example, Adorno and Horkheimer explicitly count animals amongst the first victims of rationalisation and, for them, the advance of Western rationality is marked by the delegitimation of phenomena such as myth, the direct expression of solidarity between the human and the animal worlds, and solicitude towards the animal. In general terms, one can say that Horkheimer and Adorno were repeatedly able to exploit the inextinguishable anti-anthropocentric resources of Schopenhauer's theme of pity as the foundation of ethics.

In the nineteen-sixties, Habermas undoubtedly distanced himself from this program. At the time, returning to Marx against Adorno and Horkheimer, and, explicitly, against Marcuse, he seemed content with the idea that there was no sense in wanting to *overcome* the instrumental attitude towards nature.[17] In fact, the latter could *only* be properly grasped in the perspective of mastery, with the hermeneutic attitude and the emancipatory aim being reserved exclusively for the human world.[18] What Adorno and Horkheimer denounced under the name of the "systematic exploitation of the animal world,"[19] seemed to find little place in Habermas' interpretations of modernity.

As a matter of fact, the situation was a little more complicated. Obviously, as a reader of Schelling, Habermas never brushed aside the perspective of a pacified relationship to nature that would enable human beings to recognise themselves in it and thus would fulfil one of the conditions of their flourishing.

In the context of first generation Critical Theory's tendency towards naturalism, Habermas took care not to oppose the idealist view head-on. This idealist view could even be called 'pre-Hegelian', in the sense that even in Hegel's idealism, Spirit educates nature, transfiguring it in a second nature, according to which Spirit relies only on its norms and wrenches itself away from nature leaving behind neither traces nor debts. In comparison to Adorno and Horkheimer, Habermas reversed this direction, and however problematically, insisted on the fact that in the very act of its linguistic instauration, the world of spirit, (from which one must start), immediately provides the idea of what could be considered a non-distorted, or in other words, a symmetrical relationship to nature:

> Only if men could communicate without compulsion and each could recognise himself in the other, could mankind possibly recognise nature as another subject: not, as idealism would have it, as its Other, but as a subject of which mankind itself is the Other.[20]

It is difficult not to compare these words with the most radical and characteristic formulations by Ernst Bloch, even though, at first sight, he and Habermas' rationalism might seem to have a little in common:

> It is only when the subject of history, working man, will have grasped himself as producer of History, and when consequently he will have ended any intervention by destiny in History, that he will be able also to come nearer to the hearth of production at work in the natural world.[21]

More accurately, Habermas' idea was that, however rational and, in a sense, inescapable the technical subjugation of nature is, it in no way constitutes a *general* horizon of our relationship to it that could not be overstepped. As a consequence, even if he did not dwell on this extensively, the relativising of the instrumental moment rooted in work and prolonged in the objectifying knowledge of the natural sciences, could not only be carried out according to the other interests at work in knowledge—the practical and the emancipatory interests—but also according to the idea of another form of human relationship to nature. Unexpectedly, one could still hear in "Technology and Science as 'Ideology'" the echoes of the very first theories of alienation and its fate, those contained in *Hyperion* and *The Spirit of Christianity*, for whom the domination of nature represented precisely the surest sign of that alienation,

that is, false liberation.[22] However, as can be seen, beyond the fact that this theme was destined to be marginalised in a quasi-transcendental construction, at that time Habermas linked this perspective to a utopian horizon of total transparency of inter-human relations, and as such it exerted little constraint on his theory and its practical implications, either then or now.

It may be that discourse ethics is very close to retrieving certain repressed themes, or certain metaphysical resources upon which the philosophy of communication was reliant without actually saying so, especially when confronted by the question of the foundation of an environmental ethics, and when to this end, it re-establishes the idea of an always already existing quasi-communication with nature. Indeed, and to at least the same extent as the desire to clear the normative ground of first generation Critical Theory, we could now see discourse ethics as an attempt to approach a philosophy of life as non-separation, which at the outset the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* claimed in its affinity with the concern for the preservation of nature and in solidarity with the animal.

The merit of this retrieval is that it circumvents having to outbid Adorno's and Horkheimer's claims, for whom the idea of nature as a reciprocal and non-violent mediation of the singular and the universal immediately took the form of a lost origin or of the utopia of an ultimate reconciliation with nature. Besides, in general terms, one presupposes *too much* when one defines it in essentialist ways as a warm and peaceful unity. The critique of naturalism reminds us that it is vain to attempt to establish the fact that the peaceful, or even fusional-symbiotic, relationship to nature, or in nature, is more originary or true than struggle and the will to master, or the absurd desire to persevere in one's being.[23] One of the strengths of the critical position founded by universal pragmatics is revealed in this context: leaving, so to speak, nature and life to their ethical and ontological ambivalences, it claims that the promise of the concrete universal can be glimpsed only through the operations of language through which alone we can problematically posit nature as that which can be anticipated and promised ahead of itself and imitated later.

At the same time, this enlargement is not completely tied to the Kantian division of the Faculties, since it might enable us to overcome the limits of a narrowly logo-centric rationalistic ethics expressed in some of Habermas'

texts. Indeed, the problem with discourse ethics understood in this Kantian way, is that it leads one to incorrectly posit the hope of a non-repressive universal as *objectively founded* that could assert itself in the very midst of experience. This postulate puts too heavy a burden on the linguistic *medium* and anticipates too much, that the empirical capacities of the social world bend themselves to the realisation of the ideal promised in speech. This caution is what enables Adorno's vigilance towards the essential insufficiencies of historical progress and of the performances of language to be conserved intact, a vigilance which the nostalgia for nature ironically justifies. From this point of view, an ecological ethics with the idea of a kind of solidarity with the animal at its core might be the way forward. Such an ecological ethics begins with discourse ethics but also goes beyond it. It uses discourse ethics as a springboard, but somewhat modestly in a non-mythical and non-mystical fashion, and without the utopia of reconciliation or the pathos of absolute separation, to make the persistent and perhaps unavoidable themes of non-separation and nature as a value, operative and practicable once again. This ethics would, thereby, constitute an important contribution to the elaboration of a non-promethean concept of emancipation—far-removed from the forced antitheses instigated by Jonas. In contrast to what he has suggested, the exigency to preserve nature does not imply that we should relativise freedom as a value. It promotes a radicalisation of its content: to start again from that simple idea that an autonomy which would be acquired *at the cost of* another being—whether that other be a part of myself, an other human being or nature—would only be a hidden form of heteronomy. Put positively, this implies that the movement of liberating oneself must coincide with the movement that liberates the other and makes possible its flourishing.[24]

Translated by Jean-Philippe Deranty

Notes

[1] Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*, trans. Hans Jonas, with the collaboration of D. Herr, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1984.

[2] Haber cites the French translation of Apel's *Diskurs und Verantwortung*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1990 (3rd edition), in the French translation: *Discussion et Responsabilité II*, Paris, Cerf, 1998, pp. 9-38. Haber refers also to the following

chapter: "Die ökologische Krise als Herausforderung für die Diskursethik," in ed. D. Böhler, *Ethik für die Zukunft. Im Diskurs mith Hans Jonas*, Munich, Beck, 1994, pp. 369-405.

3   The only text on that question has for a long time been the brief section entitled "A Reply to my Critics" (Jürgen Habermas in *Habermas: Critical Debates*, eds. J. Thompson & D. Held, London, McMillan, 1982, pp. 238-250), in response to an article by H. Ottmann in the same volume and especially in response to an older text by Joel Whitebook who was the first to clearly raise the problem of Habermas' anthropocentrism. See Joel Whitebook, "The Problem of Nature in Habermas," *Telos*, no. 40, 1979, pp. 41-69. See also the synthesis by S. Vogel, which is however biased by a constructivist conception of nature, Stephan Vogel, *Against Nature. The Concept of Nature in Critical Theory*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996. In this passage, Habermas refuses in the end to grant ecological ethics an autonomy and he suggests that the socio-political redressing of the balance of modernity, which remains the only true stake of the present will be enough to respond to the ecological crisis as a secondary effect obtained in addition. The focus on Nature appears to him as unwarranted, a stance that entails inextricable philosophical difficulties.

4   Haber refers here to the first chapter of the original edition of *Erläuterungen zur Diskursethik*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1991, one that is not contained in the English translation, *Justification and Application. Remarks on Discourse Ethics*, trans. C. Cronin, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1993. The French text quoted here is: *De l'Ethique de la Discussion*, Paris, Cerf, 1992, p. 31.

5   In this sense, the Habermasian position is close to some of Husserl's analyses where the animal is conceived of, alongside the mad person, the alien and the child, as a case of an abnormal other—an other who carries a distorted intersubjectivity which simultaneously presupposes and mobilises still, whilst displacing some of its constitutive elements, the normal, foundational donation of an alter ego in whom I can fully and immediately recognise myself. See in particular the nice text entitled "Normality and Animal Species" in Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität*, Husserliana XIII, Den Haag, Martinus Nijhoff, 1973.

6   Jürgen Habermas, *Justification and Application*, p. 110.

7   *Ibid.*, p. 108.

8   *Ibid.*, p. 110. In "A Reply to my Critics" (in ed. J. Thompson and D. Held, *Habermas. Critical Debates*, London, MacMillan, 1982), the plausibility of the vegetarian position was already taken into account (after a hesitation where Habermas seemed to assimilate it with a mysticism or a way to generalise the anthropomorphic gaze that is cast upon pets! See pp. 244-245. At the time, however, he hurried to show that this position could not be founded upon either on scientific arguments with

a teleological tinge (life as an end in itself demanding inconditional respect), or on a moral argument in the strong sense: it just appeared as a possible extension of the limit-decision through which we counter-factually integrate in our practical discussions the members of future generations and compensate their absence through the feelings of compassion and solidarity.

9 Habermas, "A Reply to my Critics," p. 108.

10 B. Latour demonstrates perfectly that the efficacious treatment of environmental questions demands the institutionalisation of democratic mechanisms by which the advocatory interests of non-human beings and habitats can be taken into account, see Bruno Latour, *The Politics of Nature. How to bring the Sciences into Democracy*, Cambridge, Mass, Harvard University Press, 2004.

11 W. Kuhlmann, "Prinzip Verantwortung versus Diskursethik" in *Ethik für die Zukunft*, pp. 277-302.

12 Habermas, *Justification and Application*, p. 109.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 110. The theme of the duty towards the animal was absent from the 1982 text.

14 "We have a sense of being under categorical obligations towards animals" (*Justification and Application*, p. 107).

15 *Ibid*. Such valorisation of sight of the reciprocal gaze within a thought that remains dominated by the communicative motive would without a doubt weaken the opposition drawn by Theunissen between subjectivistic philosophies which focus on the unilateral perception of the other by *ego*, and the philosophies of dialogue which start from the *act of communicative language* as the place par excellence where *ego* and *alter* are symmetrical and co-originary. See Michael Theunissen, *The Other. Studies in the Social Ontology of Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, and Buber*, trans. C. Macann, Cambridge, Mass, MIT Press, 1984.

16 On the problems posed by zoocentrism in ecological ethics, see Stéphane Haber, "Les Apories de la Libération Animale. Peter Singer et ses Critiques," *Philosophique*, 2001.

17 J. Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. J. Shapiro, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1987, pp. 32-33.

18 This distancing finds its culmination in a passage of *The Theory of Communicative Action* where Habermas asserts strongly that he is "sceptical towards the possibility of rationally establishing a brotherly relationship with a non objectivated nature," *The Theory of Communicative Action*, trans. T. McCarthy, Boston, Beacon Press, 1985, p. 249. Is this satisfactory? Bernard Waldenfels notes on this that the theory of the three claims to validity inherent in non-strategic enunciation (objective truth, normative validity, subjective sincerity), claims, which, according to Habermas, are at the origin of the constitution of the three worlds of reference

(objective reality, the social-moral universe, subjectivity), risks undermining not only the idea of a moral solidarity with nature, but also the possibility of thinking the function that the affect can play, of revealing and unlocking, for example the aesthetic feeling in front of nature. In short, delivered over to a too narrowly rationalistic understanding, the pragmatic argumentation could regress below the level attained by the *Critique of Judgement*, see Bernard Waldenfels, *In den Netzen der Lebenswelt*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1994, pp. 101-107.

[19] Theodor Adorno & Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. E. Jephcott, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2002, pp. 203-204.

[20] Jürgen Habermas, "Technology and Science as 'Ideology'" in *Toward a Rational Society*, trans. J. Shapiro, London, Heinemann, 1971, p. 88. These words, by the way, enable us to catch a glimpse of the often unrecognised complexity of the general frame in which Habermas' early analyses took place. On the one hand, Habermas does operate a drastic separation between the sphere of work and the sphere of interaction, and he regards as a typically Hegelian idealist perversion the tendency to reduce it in such a way that nature is only considered then as a partner (*Gegenspieler*) and as a reflection of spirit, which subordinates the logic of appropriation to that of alienation (Habermas, "Labour and Interaction: Remarks on Hegel's Jena Philosophy of Mind," in *Theory and Practice*, trans. J. Viertel, London, Heinemann, 1974, pp. 163-164.) On the other hand, though, he states that nature cannot be reduced to the status of a pure object of work; indeed its alterity takes sense within a kind of intersubjectivity marked by the symmetries of dialogue and recognition, which does reinstall it in the position of partner, but in a different sense (Habermas, "Labour and Interaction," p. 164). The brutality of the primary opposition between work and interaction, asserted in the book as a kind of *a priori*, is therefore softened to a certain extent.

[21] Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, Vol. 2, trans. N. Plaice, S. Plaice, P. Knight, Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 1995, p. 695.

[22] Christoph Jamme is one of the few authors to have been attentive to the fact that it is right at the outset that the critique of alienation was articulated to a denunciation of the domination of nature, in a fashion that stands in sharp contrast to the position of the mature Hegelian idealism and even the ambiguities of Marx. See Christoph Jamme, "'Jedes lieblose ist Gewalt'. Der Junge Hegel, Hölderlin und die Dialektik der Aufklärung," in eds. C. Jamme and H. Schneider, *Der Weg zum System*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1990, pp. 130-170.

[23] To be fair, Vogel has underlined the fact that, on the one hand, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* does not entirely fail to acknowledge the part of violence in nature, and on the other hand, Adorno, after the war, took care to take his distance from any romanticism and dogmatic naturalism: for a thinking concerned with breaking

up with the quest for a principle, whether in the form of a foundation or an origin, Nature constitutes *at best* the *symbol* of a preserved immediacy. See Stephan Vogel, *Against Nature*, pp. 82-87.

24 Recently, Habermas has reminded us in clear terms that this was one of the (more Fichtean, Schillerian and finally Hegelian, than Kantian, one might add) intuitions underpinning the ethics of discussion, see Jürgen Habermas, *Zeit der Übergänge*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 2001.

Chapter Nine

Biopolitics and Social Pathologies

Emmanuel Renault

As one can see in the recently published lectures at the Collège de France, Foucault's theory of biopolitics has undergone a number of transformations. His theory originally emerged in the analysis of 'discipline societies' (in *Society Must Be Defended*, 1976), and was substantially modified in the lectures that were supposed to develop this theory. A first shift occurred when Foucault introduced the opposition between 'discipline societies' and 'security societies': instead of being conceived of as a disciplinary technique turned upon the population, biopolitics became a technique of power defined by the regulation of its natural and artificial environment (*Security, Territory and Population*, 1977-1978). A second shift occurred with the project of a history of governmentality (*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 1978-1979): instead of being conceived of as a technique of power common to both the 'State of police' ("*Etat de police*") and liberalism, it appeared that liberalism had to be conceived as "the general framework of biopolitics."[1]

At the end of *Society Must Be Defended*, as well as in the conclusion of the first part of *The Will to Knowledge*, biopolitics is defined as a new technique of power complementing discipline. Whereas the latter is centred on the control of bodies, biopolitics designates the regulation of a new political object: the population. These two procedures belong to what Foucault calls biopower since they are both applied to human bodies; but they are not dealing with the same bodies and therefore are not taking life in charge in the same sense. Since the "anatomo-politics of individuals" is "centred on the body as a machine," as "capacities and forces," it is applied to an economical body rather than a biological one. By contrast, since 'biopolitics' is "focused on the species body, the body imbued with mechanism of life," it takes the biological body in charge.[2] But in biopolitics itself, the notion of 'life' remains ambiguous since it is not in the same sense that insurance techniques and health policies (the two aspects of biopolitics)[3] strive to regulate populations. Since the article entitled "The Birth of Social Medicine" (1976) is the only developed account of biopolitics that Foucault ever offered, it deserves special attention in order to clarify the very notion of biopolitics.[4] Even if this article pre-dates biopolitics (since it is written within the framework of the history of discipline and before the opposition between liberalism and the 'State of police'), it is possible to ask how this history of social medicine fits with the definition of liberalism as 'the general framework of biopolitics'.

This paper discusses neither the Foucauldian theory of biopower nor his theory of liberal governmentality as a whole. Instead, it focuses on the role played by the issue of public health within liberal governmentality. First, I give a presentation of what is, according to Foucault, the relationship between liberalism and medicine as a biopower. Second, in opposition to Foucault, I attempt to show that issues of social medicine cannot be reduced to issues of social control and regulation by medicalisation. Third, I suggest that, understood in a non-Foucauldian way, the idea of biopolitics could help define a principle that would guide the critique of what could be called 'social pathologies'.

I. Biopolitics and Foucault's Theory of Liberalism

According to Foucault, biopower and biopolitics are older than liberalism. Even if biopolitics came after anatomo-politics, social medicine was already

a tool of the 'State of police' of the eighteenth century. In his article "The Birth of Social Medicine," Foucault explains that the first stage of medicine as biopower belongs to the age of the 'State of police'. In Germany especially, a 'State medicine' developed in which the health of the population was a means to increase the economical and military power of the State. The second stage, according to Foucault, corresponds to the economical and geographical transformations that led to the growth and unification of cities at the end of the eighteenth century. Cities at that time became the main site of social and political disturbances as well as the subject of numerous fears linked with the possibility of epidemics, diseases, and life degradation. This is the context of the birth of 'urban medicine' and of the attempts at controlling the health of the population through 'public hygiene', especially in France. Typical of this process is the attempt to regulate life in controlling its natural and artificial conditions such that the 'environment' ('*milieu ambiant*') becomes a key notion. The third stage is the medicine of labour that develops in the nineteenth century. In brief, the development of social medicine in the nineteenth century is conceived by Foucault as the authoritarian submission of the population to medical control, as a strategy aimed at the maximal use of the labour force, and as the attempt to control the effects of poverty. This strategy thus aimed to achieve three separate ends: a) the medicalisation of the assistance to the poor was intended to make it more rational and more efficient, in discriminating between the good and the bad poor, the real disabled and those who could go back to work and so on; b) public hygiene and compulsory medical control worked towards the development of labour capacities; c) they also intended to prevent the development of the epidemics that spread in the poor parts of cities but could also infect the rich.

Foucault emphasises the continuity between these stages. He points out that it is in the *Medizinische Polizei* that social medicine found its principles and that no major changes really took place later on.[5] From the point of view of the opposition of the 'State of police' and 'liberalism', as it was sketched between 1977 and 1979, such a continuistic reading is hardly tenable. 'Medical police' appears as a form of biopower that is submitted to the logic of the 'State of police' and to its motto: one never governs enough. The logic of the liberal State, on the contrary, is encapsulated in the following motto: one always governs too much.[6] As a matter of fact, the article on social medicine

seems to oscillate between continuity and discontinuity. On the one hand, the principles of this social medicine are located in the medical police, but on the other, social medicine is conceived of as a capitalist technique of power:

> . . . capitalism, which developed from the end of the eighteenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth century, started by socialising a first object, the body, as a factor of productive force, of labour power. Society's control over individuals was accomplished not only through consciousness or ideology but also in the body and with the body. For capitalist society, it was biopolitics, the biological, the somatic, and the corporal, that mattered more than anything else. The body is the biopolitical reality; medicine is a biopolitical strategy.[7]

According to Foucault, liberalism cannot be reduced to a mere ideology, that is, a theory of law and society that justifies the interests of the bourgeoisie. Nor is it merely understood as a political attempt to limit the power of the State by recourse to individual rights. Instead, it is defined as a new way of governing that tries to develop, discipline and control individual liberties.[8] First, it has to be conceived as a new relationship between power and truth in which government takes 'naturality' into account in order to increase its efficiency. Inspired by political economy, it assumes that social life (or civil society) has its own laws and that they can develop only through the play of individual freedoms. In order to adjust to these laws, government then has to promote individual freedom. However, it also has to control the risks inherent in individual freedoms by regulating human bodies and by controlling the natural and artificial conditions of life. In Foucault's view, liberalism in itself is not primarily an attempt to limit government from outside (that is, from the point of view of the natural rights of individual freedom) but a limitation from inside (that is, from the point of view of the 'naturality' of social life). He thus suggests that the fact that governmentality promotes liberty gives a new meaning to the restriction of State power by individual rights, and furthermore, that the rights become part of an institutional setting devoted to social control and regulation by individual liberty.[9]

II. Are All Public Health Issues in the Nineteenth Century Part of a Liberal Strategy of Social Control and Regulation?

This view of liberalism emphasises that it cannot be reduced to a political theory or to a critical model (as our contemporaries say), but is also a set of monitoring techniques directed at individuals and populations. Applied to the analysis of the birth of biopolitics, this view suggests that the emergence of public health issues as political problems was made possible by the new power relations where naturality and sciences played a central role. The development of medicine would then have been deeply influenced by these power relations.[10] But two questions remain, the first being that of the possibility of reducing social medicine to a control and regulation technique. The second question is whether or not the introduction of public health in the political sphere is reducible to a liberal strategy. In order to simplify the discussion, let us focus on the relationship of liberal governmentality and the development of the so-called sanitary reform movement in the first part of nineteenth century; that is, the various attempts to describe, and propose solutions to, health problems linked to poverty and industrial work.

The Historical Meaning of Public Hygiene and Social Medicine

In Foucault's view, the very idea of social medicine is the result of a two-fold illegitimate shift: first, a move from medicine as a response to the demands of the patient to medicine as a compulsory exercise; and second, a substitution in the definition of the subject of medicine, from disease to the social conditions of health.[11] As part of an administrative medicine, social medicine is therefore alleged to be linked intimately with the political use of medical discourse in the monitoring of individuals and populations. As a theory of health, it is alleged to be part of the shift from a society of law to a society of norms.[12] As a sociological approach to norms, it would give incentives to an 'unlimited medicalisation' of society.[13]

This reading, however, rests upon three false premises. In fact, in its principle, the sanitary reform movement is reducible neither to an administrative medicine, nor to a branch of medicine, nor to a sociological approach of health. These false premises are interconnected with an overly continuistic interpretation of history which betrays a form of teleological illusion. Foucault seems

to read the development of public hygiene and social medicine from the point of view of our contemporary public health, that is, as a preventive medicine which is both a sociological and prescriptive part of medicine, and as an administrative technique. However, it is only at the end of the nineteenth century that this conception of public health emerged and found its medical and administrative institutionalisation.[14]

Foucault's account of social medicine also seems to rest upon a serious under-estimation of the heterogeneity of the French, English and German versions of the sanitary reform movement of the mid-nineteenth century. Neither the forms of institutionalisation of public hygiene and social medicine, nor their political goals were similar.

According to Foucault, there is no break between the medical police of the eighteenth century and the social medicine of the nineteenth century. The latter is seen as only making the administrative control and the regulation of the population's health more efficient and the only discontinuity taken into account relates to the history of governmentality (that is, the shift from 'State of police' to liberalism). Against this, it can be remarked that, according to several historians of medicine, the emergence of public hygiene in the nineteenth century is a response to the development of new health inequalities due to new conditions of housing and work. Public hygiene emerged because the techniques of the medical police were not able to create solutions to these new problems.[15] The sanitary reform movement focused on the effects of industrial work on health and the diseases of child and adult workers, as well as on the effects of bad living conditions in the slums of industrial cities. Members of this movement viewed poverty and disease as forming a reciprocal cycle responsible for the dysfunction of urban, industrial society. Some saw moral reform (of workers' lives) as the solution, but others thought that these health problems justified a broad social reform. In this context, the movement of sanitary reform cannot be equated with a compulsory medicine. On the contrary, since it appears as an answer to social problems suffered by given individuals, social medicine can be conceived of as an answer to their muted demand.[16] In Germany 1848, Rudolf Virschow explained, in *Die Medizinische Reform*, that medicine is politics because it deals with the social question, and he defined the physician as "the natural attorney of the poor."[17]

The idea that social medicine is both medical and prescriptive is no more adequate to characterise the sanitary reform movement. For example, in France this movement was led by physicians and found an institutionalisation in medical institutions such as the journal *Annales d'Hygiène Publique et de Médecine Légale*. When Villermé completed his inquiries on the living conditions of workers, he became convinced that the physician should describe health problems rather than try to promote solutions. Even if a moral reform could provide a remedy, in so far as the absence of morality in the poor was part of the problem, he was convinced that health problems also had broader social causes. Basically, he considered that it was Political Economy (the only truly social science, according to French hygienists), and not Medicine, that had to define which social transformations could be relevant to alleviate social suffering. Villermé and most of the supporters of the *Parti d'Hygiène Publique* in France thought that it was only economic laws that could bring improvements in the health situation, rather than broad social transformations.[18] In other words, the French version of sanitary reform is medical but not prescriptive, and it gives arguments that call for adjustments rather than radical social transformation, without defining these adjustments.

Conversely, the English version is prescriptive but not medical. In England, the leader of the sanitary reform movement, Chadwick,[19] was not a physician, but a civil servant, a member of the Poor Law Commission. The health inquiries he conducted were part of a project of social engineering inspired by Bentham. Chadwick's project was to try and control the negative effects of industrial society, to set up the institutional conditions that would make its functioning more efficient. At first sight, this project seems to fit perfectly with Foucault's account of social medicine, but this prescriptive version of the sanitary reform is not a medical one. In the end, Chadwick was not able to overcome the opposition stemming from the industrials (who refused the regulation of working conditions by the administration) and from the physicians (whose social function was completed by a pragmatic social engineering).[20]

It is really only in this English version that the sanitary reform could be conceived of as a biopolitical strategy of risk monitoring, as a liberal strategy of social control and regulation. It has already been said that this version is irreducible both to medical police and to French public hygiene. It is worth noting that the very notion of social medicine relies on a virulent critique of

these various projects. In its historical meaning, 'social medicine' means almost the contrary of what Foucault associates with this notion. It is in the context of the revolutions of 1848 that Jules Guérin, who outlined the political role of medicine in *La Gazette Médicale*, coined the term '*médecine sociale*'. In his mind, the term was synonymous with a critique of the methods and political aims of public hygiene. At a time when the social revolution was competing with the political one, medicine could no longer restrict itself to giving advice to government. Instead, it had to describe health problems as one of the main aspects of the social question.[21] In this respect, medicine had to give up the merely statistical description of classical medical problems in order to analyse causes and remedies of 'social pathologies'.[22] In 1848 also, and before using the notion of social medicine, the German Virschow coined another term, 'public medicine', which had the same critical meaning.[23]

The critique of the social question played a decisive role in transforming the approach to medical reform. It is only when medical reform understood itself as a critical intervention inspired by the social question that it began to define itself as a social science. Whereas Foucault defines liberal governmentality with reference to Political Economy, at the core of the project of social medicine one finds the polemical claim that Political Economy can no longer be the only scientific approach to the social. An alternative, polemical recourse to scientific inquiry is now proposed, one that replaces Political Economy with Medical Science. It means that there is not one but at least two conflicting references to science in politics, to political economy or to medical science. However, for Guérin and Virschow, 'social' always means less and more than 'sociological': less, because the social causes of death and disease are not really expounded; more, because 'social' means 'humanitarian'. Social medicine is 'humanitarian medicine', that is, medicine working toward the critique of social injustice in a 'socialist' mood.

Social Medicine and Liberalism

Let us now consider the link between social medicine and liberalism. In so far as social medicine in the historical meaning of the term was explicitly developed in opposition to attempts to use inquiries into health only as means of social control and regulation, the limits of the Foucauldian approach should become evident. They are perfectly illustrated by his account of the case,

which he deems crucial, of the medicine of the labour force. It is a fact that, throughout the nineteenth century, public health inquiries dealt with working conditions themselves. These inquiries sometimes led to sharp criticisms of industrialisation and employment legislation. As is well known, in *Das Kapital*, Marx used extensively the results of such inquiries initiated by the English Parliament (by the Poor Law Commission that led to the Public Health Act of 1848, and to the creation of a system of local inspection by 'medical officers of health').[24] The concern of such inquiries was to address the new social problems whose impacts on health were dramatic. Instead of propounding a theory of social normality or of enforcing the regulation of freedom, the social medicine of the time was occupied with raising the issue of social pathologies. This is precisely the sense in which Marx understood these phenomena when he described what he called "industrial pathology":

> Some crippling of body and mind is inseparable even from the division of labour in society as a whole. However since manufacture carries this social separation of branches of labour much further, and also, by this peculiar division, attacks the individual at the very roots of his life, it is the first system to provide the materials and the impetus for industrial pathology.[25]

Surprisingly, when he retraces the history of labour medicine, Foucault seems to pay attention only to the medical strategy of controlling the health of workers by medicalising their living conditions and their access to work.

The Foucauldian interpretation of social medicine as liberal strategy can be submitted to a two-fold critique. First, it is an historical fact that social medicine, as a critique of the social question, led to the critique of the capitalist society that liberal governmentality was organising. Foucault might be right when he states that capitalism and liberalism are the conditions for a politicisation of life, but he is surely wrong when he characterises social medicine as a capitalist or as a liberal politicisation of life. For instance, one could consider that, as the 'natural attorney of the poor', social medicine offers a political response to the social demands of those who suffer from the liberal power techniques related to work in capitalist society.[26]

Second, the critique of the regulation thesis can be conducted from a normative point of view. Even if liberalism is primarily a set of power techniques, it is

also a normative theory of the social. Foucault might be right when he tends to reduce the liberal reference to individual rights to a subordinate aspect of these techniques. But it would be wrong to underestimate the influence of the liberal theory of rights on the logic of political debates and on the dynamics of social conflicts. If it seems difficult to reduce social medicine to a liberal technique of social control, it is also because it has been involved in a critique of the principles of liberal definitions of social justice, and in the attendant conflict between liberal rights and social rights. Foucault states that the aim of liberal governmentality is to foster freedom and to control what could destroy it. It is precisely because liberalism is essentially a technology of risk control that it tries to politicise continually the life, wealth and well-being of individuals and populations. However, it is only from a descriptive (historical) point of view that liberalism can be understood as a politicisation of health. From a normative point of view, it seems more difficult to admit that the politicisation of life is the counterpart to the liberal valorisation of freedom. As a result of the liberal definition of justice as negative freedom, most of the problems linked with health and its social conditions are excluded from the sphere of what is politically significant. On the contrary, taking the issue of life conditions into account, a definition of social justice leads to a socialist critique of liberalism. A good illustration of this conflict is the denial by liberal theories that it is above all else a constrained body that is at work in labour, and not just a free will. According to historians of employment law and factory legislation, it is precisely the degradation of working bodies that led to the critique of the liberal definition of the employment contract as an agreement between two free wills.[27] More generally, the compatibility between respect for the principles of political liberalism and this degradation of living bodies convinced many that the liberal definition of justice was wrong. The discovery of such degradations is part of what was called the 'social question' in the mid-nineteenth century, the same 'social question' which was at the heart of the opposition between liberalism and socialism. The history of employment law and factory legislation gives an example of a political struggle against the normative principles of liberalism on the basis of the practical consequences of these principles on living bodies. Social medicine itself has played a role in this political struggle: rather than being a means for the capitalistic strategy of controlling the labour force, it has exposed capitalism as a destruction of life.

The fact that the normative logic of social medicine (understood in its historical meaning) belongs to socialism rather than to liberalism can also be illustrated with various 'social rights' that are nothing other than claims for a better life (working rights, housing rights, and so on). From a normative point of view, liberalism does not require but rather excludes taking life conditions into account; far from being superficial, this issue defines one of the main political conflicts since the mid-nineteenth century. Political debates do not only deal with criteria of justice but also with the definition of the problems that deserve public consideration.[28] One of the main tasks of socialist critique is to foreground problems that are excluded from political attention by liberalism. However, many of those problems cannot be described in any other way but in terms of social pathology,[29] and it seems that public health has a right to intervene in such descriptions. On that basis, we can now try to define what kind of biopolitics is able to take such a description into account.

III. Biopolitics as Social Criticism

Foucault's theory of biopower retraces the development of the political control over life. Foucault explains that liberalism leads to a politicisation of life in which given political conflicts take place,[30] conflicts between various ways of associating freedom and risk as defined by social-democratic and neoliberal approaches.[31] He also interprets the forms of popular resistance to medicine as various attempts to fight against political control: he evokes, for instance, religious resistance to medicine at the end of the nineteenth century.[32] In between, however, he leaves no room for a social criticism grounded in a way of politicising life that would conflict with the logic of liberalism. He certainly points out that life is capable of resisting biopower, and that in the nineteenth century, life "became the issue of social struggle." Foucault highlights the fact that life itself is at stake in the struggles for "basic needs" and "a plenitude of the possible," even if they formulate their objectives "through affirmation concerning rights."[33] More generally, he highlights the fact that the suffering of individuals grounds an "absolute right" to resist[34] and he evokes a "right to health."[35] But it remains unclear whether these struggles should be understood as biopolitical struggles (struggles of and for another biopolitics) or as struggles against the biopolitical conception of power and politics.

It is in Negri's work that the resistance to biopower is clearly understood as a new biopolitics. However, this biopolitics rests on an ontological conception of social life as 'constituting power' that undercuts all the issues considered by public health, as well as the medical and biological meanings of the term 'biopower'.[36] This shift compounds the ambiguity of the notion of life that was characteristic of the Foucauldian theory of biopower and biopolitics. And it does not clarify the relevance of the biopolitical approach to social critique. For, if life is understood in an ontological sense, it becomes difficult to connect biopolitics with the empirical questions faced by public health.

Neither Foucault's nor Negri's approaches are able to integrate the kind of genuinely political problems that can be raised by social medicine. However, social critique should not avoid taking such problems into account. As with the sanitary reform movement of the nineteenth century, the public health approaches of today are heterogeneous, and some are capable of describing and criticising accurately the social problems of our present. Moreover, it seems that some of these problems cannot be understood correctly without referring to the social conditions of health. This is true, for instance, in the case of the psychological problems related to the new conditions of work and employment, and also in the case of the development of new psychological difficulties for the long-term unemployed and the homeless; it is the case with the development of new medical inequalities inside developed countries as a result of the restriction of welfare policies, and in developing countries because of AIDS and because of the partial social destruction brought about by globalisation.

In developed countries, the notions of social and psychic suffering provide an example of the possible critical use of public health, in so far as these notions denote social problems that have to be described in terms of social pathology.[37] But for many scholars inspired by Foucault, such a politicisation of life continues to belong to the logic of the medicalisation of the social. In France, Didier Fassin and Alain Ehrenberg have proposed this kind of Foucauldian argument. According to Fassin, a striking feature of public health is the lack of efficiency that characterises the expressed intention of controlling health. Public health policies are marked by their permanent failures more than their successes. Fassin, therefore, extends and realises the Foucauldian regulation thesis; he understands discourses dealing with the importance of

health as indicators of the emergence of a 'bio-legitimacy' (a form of legitimating public action, taking life as its principle) rather than as the emergence of a real control technology.[38] He understands the growing importance of references to suffering and mental health in the public sphere in the same way, namely, as a mere means of transforming political problems into moral and medical ones in order to produce legitimating effects.[39] According to Ehrenberg, the growing importance of such references to suffering and mental health in the public sphere must also be understood as a new kind of collective belief rather than as a control technology. It is understood precisely as the consequence of the emergence of a new social norm: the norm of autonomy that is reshaping psychiatric institutions (they now are supposed to help individuals to become autonomous citizens rather than treat illness), as well as social institutions such as (private) firms (where workers are supposed to be more and more autonomous). According to Ehrenberg, social suffering does not denote new social problems, but only a new form of the collective expression of feelings, and a description of social problems (from the point of view of the 'tensions' in the autonomy norm).[40]

In Fassin's and Ehrenberg's assessments of social suffering, we find the same limits as in Foucault's account of the history of social medicine: an overestimation of the social and cultural influence of power relations, and an underestimation of the political heterogeneity of the references to health. Their writings give the impression that our societies are driven only by the transformations of norms (the shift to the norm of autonomy, the shift to health as bio-legitimacy). But what about the various transformations affecting our societies? Is it so certain, for example, that the increasing rate of labour accidents, absenteeism, or psychological difficulties at work, are simply a result of the norms defining 'autonomous workers' combined with a new way of expressing feelings? And what about the conflicting references to health and suffering in our society? Does it really make sense to relate the Bourdieuian critique of "The Weight of the World"[41] or the complaints of the social workers, to a new bio-legitimacy? From the point of view of medical anthropology, these questions are less important than the question of the social construction of health; but when a sociologist adopts 'the view from afar' that defines the anthropological methodology, it is not surprising that he or she underestimates the social problems and the political conflicts linked with what he

or she identifies as a mere collective belief.[42] In Fassin's and Ehrenberg's writings, the influence of Foucault seems twofold: on the one hand, we find the same attempt at speaking about biopower as a macro-social entity, or as a general trend of social normalisation; on the other hand, we find the same suspicion towards the medicalisation of the social. However, the project of social medicine is not univocal; it cannot be excluded so readily that a reference to social and psychic suffering could provide the lever for the social critique of some of the social pathologies of our times.

Notes

[1]   M. Foucault, *Naissance de la Biopolitique. Cours au Collège de France. 1978-1979*, Paris, Gallimard/Seuil, 2004, p. 24. For the genealogy of biopolitics in Foucault, see M. Bertani, "Sur la Généalogie du Bio-pouvoir," in *Lectures de Foucault. A propos de "Il faut défendre la Société,"* ed. J.-C. Zancarini, ENS Editions, 2001; P. Artières & E. Da Silva, "Introduction," in *Michel Foucault et la Médecine*, Paris, Kimé, 2001; M. Sénellart, "Situation des Cours," in M. Foucault, *Sécurité, Territoire, Population*, Paris, Seuil/Gallimard, 2004.

[2]   M. Foucault, "Right of Death and Power over Life," in *The Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault's Thought*, ed. P. Rabinow, Penguin, London, 1991, (*The History of Sexuality*, end of part 1), p. 262.

[3]   See M. Foucault, "Eleven: 17 March 1976," in *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the College de France, 1975-1976*, New York, Picador, 2003.

[4]   M. Foucault, "The Birth of Social Medicine," in *Michel Foucault. Power* (*Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, vol. 3), ed. J. D. Faubion, trans. R. Hurley et al., Penguin Books, pp. 134-156. To quote the editors of this volume of *Essential Works of Foucault*: "This is the second of two lectures that Foucault delivered at the State University of Rio de Janeiro in October of 1974 . . . The first lecture, titled "Crisis of Medicine or Crisis of Anti-Medicine?" was published in a Portuguese translation in 1976. It is reprinted in French as "Crise de la Médecine ou Crise de l'Antimédecine" in *Dits et Ecrits III: 1976-1979*, Paris, Gallimard, 1994, pp. 40-58.

[5]   M. Foucault, "The Birth of Social Medicine," p. 142: "The other systems of social medicine in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were scaled-down variations of this state-dominated administrative model introduced in Germany."

[6]   M. Foucault, "The Birth of Bio-politics," in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. P. Rabinow, New York, The New Press, 1997, pp. 73-79.

[7]   Foucault, "The Birth of Social Medicine," p. 137. Compare with "Right of Death and Power over Life," p. 263: "[capitalism] would not have been possible without

the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes. But it was not all it required; it also needs the growth of both these factors, their reinforcement as well as their availability and docility; it had to have methods of power capable of optimising forces, aptitudes, and life in general without at the same time making them more difficult to govern."

8   M. Foucault, *Sécurité, Territoire, Population*, "18 janvier 1978," pp. 49-50.

9   See M. Foucault, *La Naissance de la Biopolitique*, "17 janvier 1979," "24 janvier 1979."

10 Foucault, "Crise de la Médecine ou Crise de l'Antimédecine," pp. 57-58: "One must point out that medicine is part of a historical system, that it is not a pure science, that it is part of an economical system and of a power system, that it is necessary to make explicit the relationships between medicine, economics, power and society, in order to determine to what extent it is possible to rectify or to apply the medical model"; see also *Society Must Be Defended*, "Eleven: 17 March 1976."

11 M. Foucault, "Crise de la Médecine ou Crise de l'Antimédecine," p. 49: "Medicine started to work out of its classical domain defined by disease and the demand of the patient."

12 *Ibid.*, p. 50: "Physicians of the 20th century are inventing a society of norms instead of a society of law."

13 *Ibid.*, p. 48. For a critique of the logic of the medicalisation critique, see D. Lupton, "Foucault and the Medicalisation Critique," in *Foucault, Health and Medicine*, eds. A. Petersen & R. Bunton, London & New York, Routledge, 1997.

14 E. Fee & D. Porter, "Public Health, Preventive Medicine and Professionalisation: England and America in the 19th century," in *Medicine in Society. Historical Essays*, ed. A. Wear, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992. Also see G. Rosen, *From Medical Police to Social Medicine*, New York, 1974.

15 W. Coleman, *Death is a Social Disease: Public Health and Political Economy in Early Industrial France*, Madison & London, University of Wisconsin Press, 1982, p. xviii: "It must not be thought that, like a cannon, hygienic inquiry was simply taken from the armoury and trained upon a new target. On the contrary, public health investigation as a distinct undertaking virtually created itself in the course of its inquiries into the manifold problems of the new industrial society." See also R.H. Shryock, *The Development of Modern Medicine. An Interpretation of the Social and Scientific Factors Involved*, New York, A.A. Knopf, 1936, pp. 221-223; G. Rosen, *A History of Public Health*, New York, MD Publications, 1958, p. 206 sq.

16 The fact that it is a 'muted' demand should not raise objections in so far as 'muted claims' might be typical of subalternity; see G. Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds. C. Nelson & L. Grossberg, London, Macmillan, 1988.

[17] R. Virschow, "Der Armenartz," in *Die Medizinische Reform*, 1848.

[18] Coleman, *Death is a Social Disease*.

[19] See Rosen, *A History of Public Health*, p. 195 sq.

[20] Illustrating the reason why the hostility of parliament, industrialists, and physicians has led to the suppression of the National Board of Health, founded by Chadwick, Rosen quotes Lord Shaftesbury, member of the board: "The parliamentary agents are our sworn enemies because we have reduced expenses, and, consequently, their fees, within reasonable limits. The civil engineers also, because we have selected able men, who have carried into effect new principles, and at a lesser salary. The college of physicians, and all its dependencies, because of our independent action and singular success in dealing with Cholera, when we maintained and proved that many a Poor Law medical officer knew more than all the flash and fashionable doctors of London. All the Boards of Guardians, for we exposed their selfishness, their cruelty, their reluctance to meet and relieve the suffering poor, in the age of epidemics . . . Then came the water company, whom we laid bare and devised a method of supply, which altogether superseded them. The Commissioners of Sewer, for our plans and principles were the reverse of theirs; they hated us with a perfect hatred." (Rosen, *A History of Public Health*, p. 223).

[21] See J. Guérin, "Au Corps Médical Français," *Gazette Médicale de Paris*, no. 11, 11 March 1848: "Instead of the indecisive and separate interventions which have come to be associated with the names of medical police, public hygiene and legal medicine, it is now time to gather all these scattered facts, to bring them together into some regulated order and to elevate them to their highest significance under the term that is more appropriate to its aim, namely that of social medicine . . . With this term, we are not pretending to reveal to our colleagues something they as yet wouldn't know; but it is a formulation which the importance of our circumstances commands that we suggest to them, as one that enlightens with a clear and just light the nature all of the services that they are called to render to public life. ("*Au lieu d'applications indécises et séparées que l'on avait comprises sous les noms de police médicale, d'hygiène publique, de médecine légale, le moment est venu de rassembler tous les faits épars, de les régulariser dans un ensemble, et de les élever à leur plus haute signification sous la dénomination sous la dénomination mieux appropriée à son but, de médecine sociale . . . Ce n'est pas une révélation que nous avons la prétention de faire à nos confrères, mais c'est une formule que la grandeur des circonstances nous commande de leur proposer comme éclairant clairement et justement la nature de l'ensemble des services qu'ils sont appelés à rendre à la chose publique*"). See also "La Médecine Sociale et la Médecine Politique," in *Gazette Médicale de Paris*, no. 13 b, 25 March 1848: "A social revolution is one that goes deep into the entrails of society,

one that displaces its most intimate parts, brings them into new relationships . . . Social medicine encompasses all the viewpoints, all the relations that can exist between medicine and society, whereas political medicine is restricted to the relations of medicine with the governmental, political interest" ("*Une Révolution sociale est celle qui pénètre dans les entrailles de la société, qui en déplace les éléments les plus intimes, qui les place dans des rapports nouveaux . . . La médecine sociale comprend tous les points de vue, tous les rapports qui peuvent exister entre médecine et société, tandis que la médecine politique est restreinte aux rapports de la médecine avec l'intérêt gouvernemental, l'intérêt politique*").

22 J. Guérin, "La Médecine Sociale et la Médecine Socialiste," *Gazette Médicale de Paris*, no. 12, 15 March 1848.

23 R. Virchow, "Die Öffentliche Gesundheitspflege," *Die Medezinische Reform*, 5, 1848: "The term 'public health' indicates to those who are able to think clearly the full, radical transformation that occurs in our relationship between the State and medicine . . . We have a sanitary police in some big cities, but even there, it is more a treatment of the poor than proper medical care for the poor" ("*Das Wort "öffentliche Gesundheitspflege" sagt dem, welcher mit Bewusstsein zu denken versteht, die ganze und radikale Veränderung in unserem Verhältnis zwischen Staat und Medizin . . . Wir haben eine Sanitätpolizei . . . in einigen grossen Städten, und auch da mehr als Armenkranken-behandlung denn als Armenkrankenpflege*").

24 K. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, London, Penguin Books, 1990, pp. 344-415, 517-543, 610-639.
    * Ramazzini, professor of practical medicine at Padua, published in 1713 his work *De Morbis Artificum*, which was translated into French in 1777, and reprinted in 1841 in the *Encyclopédie des Sciences Médicales. 7eme Div. Auteurs Classiques*. The period of large-scale industry has of course very much added to this catalogue of diseases of workers. See, amongst others, Dr A.L. Fonteret, *Hygiène Physique et Morale de l'Ouvrier dans les Grandes Villes en général, et dans la Ville de Lyon en particulier*, Paris, 1858, and *Die Krankheiten, welche Verschiedenen Staenden, Altern, und Geschlechtern Eigenthuemlich sind*, 6 vol., Ulm, 1860. In 1854, the Society of Arts appointed a Commission of Inquiry into industrial pathology. The list of documents collected by this commission is to be seen in the catalogue of the Twickelman Economic Museum. Very important are the official *Reports on Public Health*. See also E. Reich, M.D., *Ueber die Entartung des Menschen*, Erlangen, 1868.

25 Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 484.

26 This critique of the Foucauldian approach could be related to Honneth's statement: "Although his whole critique of modernity seems to focus on the suffering of individuals because of discipline effects of modern technologies of power, nothing

in his theory deals with this suffering *as* suffering" ("Foucault und Adorno. Zwei Kritik der Moderne," in *Die Zerrissene Welt des Sozialen*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 1999, p. 92).

[27] See A. Supiot, *Critique du Droit du Travail*, Paris, PUF, 1994, ch. 1.

[28] See E. Renault, *L'Expérience de l'Injustice. Reconnaissance et Clinique de l'Injustice*, Paris, La Découverte, 2004, ch. 2.

[29] A. Honneth, "Pathologien des Sozialen," in *Das Andere der Gerechtigkeit*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 2001.

[30] M. Foucault, "Crise de la Médecine ou Crise de l'Antimédecine," p. 42: "Health is becoming the subject of a real political struggle. Since the end of World War Two and the electoral triumph of the English Labour party in 1945, there is neither a single party, nor a single electoral campaign . . . that escapes the issue of health and of the possibility of its state funding."

[31] Foucault, *La Naissance de la Biopolitique*, "24 janvier 1979."

[32] Foucault, "Crise de la Médecine ou Crise de l'Antimédecine," p. 53; "The Birth of Social Medicine," pp. 226-227. B. Traimond gives an excellent illustration of the post-revolutionary political struggle against medical power in the restoration period in France (Landes); see his *Le Pouvoir de la Maladie. Magie et Politique dans les Landes de Gascogne, 1750-1826*, Bordeaux, Publications de l'Université de Bordeaux II, 1986.

[33] Foucault, "Right of Death and Power over Life," pp. 266-267.

[34] M. Foucault, "Face aux Gouvernements, les Droits de l'Homme," in *Dits et Ecrits*, vol. IV, 1980-1988, p. 708: "The suffering of human beings must not be a mute remainder of politics. It founds an absolute right to stand up and address those who detain power" ("*Le malheur des hommes ne doit pas être un reste muet de la politique. Il fonde un droit absolu à se lever et à s'adresser à ceux qui détiennent le pouvoir*").

[35] Foucault, "Un Système Fini Face à une Demande Infinie," in *Dits et Ecrits*, vol. IV, pp. 376-377.

[36] See M. Hardt & A. Negri, *Empire*, Cambridge Mass., Harvard University Press, 2000, ch. 1.

[37] See C. Laval & E. Renault, "La Santé Mentale: Une Préoccupation Partagée, des Enjeux Controversés," in *La Santé Mentale en Actes. De la Clinique à la Politique*, eds. J. Furtos & C. Laval, Toulouse, Eres, 2005.

[38] See J.-P. Donzon & D. Fassin, "Entre Culture et Politique. L'Espace Problématique d'une Anthropologie de la Santé," in *Critique de la Santé Publique*, eds. J.-P. Donzon, D. Fassin, Paris, Bayard, 2001.

[39] D. Fassin, *Des Maux Indicibles. Sociologie des Lieux d'Ecoute*, Paris, La Découverte, 2004.

[40] A. Ehrenberg, "Les Changements de la Relation Normal-Pathologique," in *Esprit*, no. 304, 2004; "La Question Mentale," in *La Santé Mentale en Actes*.

41 P. Bourdieu, *The Weight of the World. Social Suffering in Comtemporary Society*, Polity Press, 1999. Indeed, the French title, *La Misère du Monde*, as well as the book itself do not seem to give as much importance to social suffering. They refer nevertheless to suffering.

42 For a critique of the "view from afar," see for example P. Bourdieu, *Esquisse pour une Auto-Analyse*, Paris, Raisons d'Agir Editions, 2004, p. 59 sq.

Chapter Ten

Durkheim and the Reflexive Condition of Modernity

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I. Durkheim: Representation, Reflexivity and Political Modernity

The current conjunction of rapidly changing historical events, and the creation of relatively new political and cultural forces provides an opportunity to revisit classical social theory from a vantage point of post-classical *attitudes*, which include among other things, a scepticism towards the unity of an *oeuvre*. What is taken as post-classical sociology is not only an emancipation of critical theories from the spirit of Marxism, but also from the burden of prejudicial receptions and even the self-(mis) understandings of authors, which took on the legacy of orthodoxy. One can, then, revisit the sociological classics in order to extend and generalise their perspectives to other problems, theoretical traditions and trajectories.

In this essay, Durkheim's work is approached from a double vantage point. Durkheim's work is looked at from one vantage point of a post-classical attitude that, in this reading, intersects the ontological recasting of the social

in the work of Castoriadis.[1] Even though Castoriadis rarely refers to Durkheim, and his work stems from an interrogation of the categories of historical materialism, he takes an explicit 'imaginary turn' in order to more fully address similar questions and issues that remained central yet unresolved and open to question in Durkheim's work. In other words, it can be argued that Castoriadis' work also stands in the wake of Durkheim's central notion of collective representations, and the way it has continued to cast its long shadow over the French intellectual tradition.[2] In a similar way that Durkheim posits his notion of collective representations, Castoriadis also posits that social imaginary significations *are*, in the ontological sense, the glue that binds society together, and as such possess positive validity. For Castoriadis, the status of the constitution of socially produced meaning creations—or imaginary significations—can only be addressed by invoking the idea of the excess or surplus of meaning that cannot be 'soaked up' entirely in its linguistic or symbolic form.[3] At this level, they are incontestable and contain the truth content of a society that is irreducible to its logical content. Truth, in Castoriadis' view and similarly to Durkheim's view, constitutes the dimension of social closure at the level of the sacred. In other words, the binding, meaningfully rich collective representation places its own truth outside the possibility that it might be questioned or contested.

Moreover, it is at this point that the other part of Castoriadis' project enters. The value horizon to which his work is oriented is the horizon of autonomy, which indicates reflexivity, social openness and the creation of democracy, and it is against this that Castoriadis judges and constructs social types. Its opposite is the heteronomous social type, which for him represents most of the history of human societies. Whilst autonomy, for Castoriadis, occurs through a social opening begun as a question, and is, thus, a position through which the subject, as well as social imaginaries are de-centred, nonetheless, his privileging of it as a political condition entails that reflexivity itself only occurs in those periods that are constituted through this particular type of opening.

It is in this context of social opening that I will concentrate on Durkheim's work, rather than Castoriadis', to explore this issue of reflexivity and openness. This is done in the context of Durkheim's notion of collective representations and the long dureé of the modern period in order to establish another point of contact and comparison with Castoriadis' work. Durkheim's

model of reflexivity opens onto another vantage point from which his work is approached in this essay, that of political modernity. Here political modernity is viewed as a particular constellation of the circulation of power, especially in nation-states, open forms of reflexivity, and democracy, in contrast to another political modernity that revolves around totalitarianism, terrorism and the closed reflexive form of the redemptive paradigm.[4] Durkheim's work can be a fruitful point of departure for an analysis and critique of political modernity because his theorisation occurs in a way that opens onto its forms of political representation, its historical development, and its mode of reflexivity, especially. By so approaching his work in this way, light can be further thrown onto the images of political modernity that Durkheim himself constructs, as well as the often-incomplete insights that emerge from it which equally provide insight into the nature of political modernity itself. This is especially so if his lesser-known work is taken as a point of departure. This work includes *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals*, (a series of lectures written between 1890 and 1900, of which only the first three lectures on professional ethics was initially published posthumously in 1937, and finally as a whole in 1950), *The Evolution of Educational Thought*, (a book misleadingly titled and thus studiously ignored by general sociology, which began life as a series of lectures originally delivered in 1904, first published in French in 1938 and English in 1977), and his important 1898 essay in defence of Dreyfus, "Individualism and the Intellectuals," all of which are interpreted against the background of *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, published in 1912, and *Pragmatism and Sociology*.

Thus, the logic of the following discussion is not to impute to Durkheim a model of political modernity that is extraneous to his own sociological project with its own nuances and shifts. Rather, as indicated above it is argued that there are three interconnected strands that constitute an image—a theory would be altogether too strong—of political modernity within his work, which, to be sure, entails that some aspects are emphasised at the expense of others. From this vantage point the strands are: an ideal of social reflexivity that is internal to the construction of his notion of collective representation; a civilisational image of the occident, which is deployed especially in *The Evolution of Educational Thought* and alluded to in *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals*; and his commitment to civic republicanism and his deployment of the professional associations.

Before we can discuss Durkheim's images of political modernity, we must begin from this basic insight of collective representation before turning to the issues of civilisation and open reflexivity, where his study of the medieval university plays a crucial role. It will be argued that Durkheim views the medieval university as not only a source for a publicly located reflexivity that is required for political modernity. He views it as a *model*.

II. Collective Representations as Cultures of Reflexivity

Durkheim's concern with reflexivity emerges from his pre-occupation with the relation between the representative forms of civic sovereignty, its public nature, principles and ethos. In this first instance, reflexivity is located in his notion of representation. Whilst in his political writings, Durkheim's reference point is the modern post-Absolutist French civic republic, the notion of representation that he develops carries three meanings, two of which belong to the heritage of republican meaning and a third one which is internal to his conceptual vocabulary. First, representation refers to the question of democratic political representation. Second, it refers to the idea of politics as public and rational deliberation. Thirdly, it refers to the specific focus and form of consciousness that is articulated in the context of political deliberations, or works in the background as a collective representation in the way that he deploys this term in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Durkheim deploys this third notion of representation in a triple sense as a human self-image, a self-representation of society, and a media of creativity and self-expression. In this context, politics functions in the same homologous way that religion does, for Durkheim. If religion, or religious beliefs are separate from everyday concrete reality, and construct a social ideal through which a societal membership coheres, then, politics, for him, is not only an organizational phenomenon. It is one of social-collective ideals and belongs as much to the world of sacred belief as religion does.[5]

Whilst this homologous relation between religion and politics is part of a well-established interpretation of Durkheim's work, what stands behind this third notion of representation is a complex formulation through which Durkheim presents not only his social ontology, but also his philosophical anthropology through which his notion of politics is grounded.[6] Thus, whilst much of this commentary concentrates on the sacred dimension of politics

and the political, much of it overlooks the centrality of the aspect of reflexivity. To establish the nature of this aspect of Durkheim's work, we now turn to this third meaning of representation, leaving to one side, momentarily, the former two reference points.

Whilst all societies, for Durkheim, are collective representations, not all create principles of reflexivity to simultaneously reflect on the nature of the representations *and* facilitate this process of reflexivity. It appears that Durkheim approaches the issue of reflexivity on primarily epistemological grounds, especially if this problem is read from the vantage point of his later 1914 lectures, published under the title of *Pragmatism and Sociology* in which he continues to interrogate the notion of collective representations. In his own discussion of Durkheim's encounter with pragmatism Lukes correctly argues that Durkheim conflates two issues together: the philosophical problem of what truth is, and the appropriate method to establish this; and a sociological one concerning the social contexts of knowledge. Leaving aside the former for the moment, Lukes indicates four aspects of the sociology of collective representations that Durkheim establishes through this sympathetic, but nonetheless critical, encounter.

> [F]irst that such beliefs (including scientific ones) have a social origin; second that their *authority* comes from society ('*truth is a norm for thought as the moral ideal is a norm for conduct*'); third, that they have a social function, ('reinforcing the social conscience' . . .); and fourth that they are in 'no way arbitrary: they are modelled on realities, and in particular on the realities of social life.[7]

Lukes' remarks point to the way in which Durkheim argues that all collective representations originate from social activity, and as such their truth content is relative to this activity and, thus are historically and culturally specific.[8] In other words, Durkheim argues that it is the collective representations *themselves* that instil the nature of truth. However, Durkheim re-castes this relativism in terms of a commitment to the value of reflexivity. If the 'philosophical' issue of truth is read from the vantage point of his "Determination of Moral Facts"(1906) and "Value Judgements and Judgements of Reality"(1911), as well as *Pragmatism and Sociology* the epistemological dimension is once again subsumed under a more anthropological one that links it to his concern with the moral-political concern with (modern) society.

Durkheim's commitment to the idea of reflexivity comes to the fore in an anthropological register in the distinction he makes between mythological and scientific collective representations. In Durkheim's view, mythological collective representations are those that stem from the collective creativity of social life, which is then imposed on the collective membership in an obligatory way. In mythological collective representations, so he argues, "it is our ideas and beliefs which give the objects of thought their vitality . . . an idea is true not because it conforms to reality, but by virtue of its creative power."[9] In *Pragmatism and Sociology*, Durkheim argues that a double fusion occurs in mythological collective representations; on the one hand, between individual and society in a way that implies intellectual unanimity, and on the other, a fusion between nature and collective representation—a personification of nature—which implies their congruence. As he says, "such representations are false with respect to things, but true with respect to the subjects who think them."[10] In both cases, the reality that the mythological collective representation constitutes is *wholly* social, with space for neither a de-socialisation of individuality, nor a depersonalisation of nature.

The capacity for a separation between individual and society, and society and nature is what Durkheim views as the basis for a reflexive collective representation, an opening in what might be termed 'the circles of collective representations'. For Durkheim, reflexivity is the capacity of a society to become conscious of itself in a way that admits objective or secondary criteria.[11] Furthermore, for Durkheim, reflexivity presupposes the existence of gaps or spaces within 'circles of collective representations,' for it is only through these that society can become aware of itself and something new can occur.[12] In other words, a reflexive culture is one that can systematically reflect upon the nature, illogicalities and inconsistencies of its own collective representations and thus provide a space in which new and alternate ones may develop. Durkheim, misleadingly and in the positivist spirit of the nineteenth century, terms this type of reflexivity a scientific one, and he equates modern reflexive culture with the Cartesian method. Although this method, which Durkheim also equates with science, is rooted deeply in a religious pre-history, because each translates reality into an intelligible language, it is best equipped to purge cognitive collective representations "of all accidental elements" and bring "a spirit of criticism into all its doings which religion ignores." It can,

so he continues, following Descartes rather than Kant in this instance, "'escape precipitation and bias' and [ ] hold aside the passions, prejudices and all subjective affinities."[13]

In other words, what might be termed 'the circle of social values' is a basic dimension of individual and collective life. It is also dualistic in that it is constituted from two different aspects—the profane or everyday, and the sacred or collective. According to Durkheim, the moral perspective of the profane world is particularistic, whilst the sacred's moral perspective is universalistic.[14] This results in "an enormous gap between the way values are, in fact, estimated by the ordinary individual and the objective scale of human values which should in principle govern our judgements."[15] As Durkheim points out, this 'gap' can be experienced in two ways; either one that is closed dogmatically (or doxically) in the manner of a mythology of the religious type, or one that can be opened, and in which new collective representations can be created through the ferment that occurs as a result of the intersection between diverse, individual perspectives and collective ones.[16] Moreover, values themselves are different and refer to different qualities that are often irreducible to one another. In other words, as Durkheim acknowledges, values themselves, such as economic, religious or aesthetic ones, are perspectives that will appear to be rational from one vantage point but irrational from the other.[17] As he has already made it clear that the *origin* of these values is a social one, his argument here concerns the diversity of values, and a diversity that occurs within a social space that does not close over.

On one level, Durkheim's response to the individualisation and diversity of values is that value judgements are judgements that refer to collective ideals that are concretised in objects and collectively understood.[18] In contrast to the Kantian strategy Durkheim argues that the condition of understanding is established by collective representations, which are, themselves, historically and culturally specific. The ideals that a society refers to are embedded in these collective representations. Hence, in Durkheim's view, all societies have an idealised view of themselves.[19] A reflexive dimension comes to the fore when this universality is challenged by different and competing ideals.[20] Moreover, according to him, this challenge is most intense during periods of ferment that bring people together, not only for ritual re-creation, but also

for reflexive activity. Furthermore, to effectively create new collective representations, the reflexive ferment should, in Durkheim's view, undergo forms of institutionalisation that provide a conduit and form for the cultural surplus that is produced. As he says, "the periods of creation and renewal occur when men [and women] for various reasons are led into a closer relationship with each other, when reunions and assemblies are most frequent, relationships better maintained and the exchange of ideas most active."[21]

In Durkheim's view the new collective representations are not only new social creations, but also new mythologies. Neither reason nor science can explain nor validate the existence of new mythologies. Nor can science take the role that mythologies fulfil, that is, giving substance to social and collective life. As he says in his confrontation with pragmatism

> [in the social and human world] we have to act and live; and in order to live we do something other than doubt. Society cannot wait for its problems to be solved scientifically. It has to make decisions about what action to take, and in order to make these decisions it has to have an idea of what it is . . . If there is no objective knowledge, society can only know itself from within, attempt to express this sense of itself, and to use that as a guide. In other words, it must conduct itself with reference to a representation of the same kind as those which constitute mythological truths.[22]

Durkheim is conveying two ideas and problems simultaneously here. On the one hand, and sociologically, he is saying that the new mythologies, which reconceptualise social principles, originate in, and belong to, collective representations. On the other hand, and as his remarks in not only *Pragmatism and Sociology* but also "The Determination of Moral Facts" makes clear a form of depersonalisation or detachment is required so that social reflexivity occurs. In this latter sense, Durkheim appeals to science to provide the method for this detachment:

> society arrives at this fuller consciousness only by science; and science is not an individual; it is a social thing pre-eminently impersonal . . . The reason to which I make my appeal is reason applying itself to a given matter in a methodological manner in order to understand the nature of past and present morality, and which draws from this theoretical study its practical consequences.[23]

Notwithstanding Durkheim's appeal to science as the only method appropriate for the task of social reflexivity, nonetheless a number of different dimensions emerge from his incomplete image of it. First, social reflexivity refers to a process of social creativity that requires, second, an institutional setting, together with, thirdly, a mode of, and social space for, reflexivity. Furthermore, and as other parts of Durkheim's *oeuvre* indicate, social reflexivity can be explored historically.

III. The Open Reflexive Condition of Modernity

Durkheim's argument concerning the nature of reflexive cultures is not only one that concerns their general formation; it is simultaneously an argument concerning the formation of the political culture of western modernity. In his view, there are three crucial and paradigmatic breakthroughs that signal, for him, its formation—the development of the medieval university, the formation of medieval guilds, and the French Revolution. Briefly, they are paradigmatic, for Durkheim, because they introduce into the cultural and political topography of the occident new dimensions that not only become part of its landscape, but also a point from which critical reflection about its modernity occurs. The medieval university, in particular, for Durkheim, becomes the paradigmatic institutional representation for both public space and public reflexive activity (an enlightened proto-public sphere). The other, not unrelated, innovation that contributed to this early modern reflexive culture is the reconstitution of the European guilds, centred in the cities, which became the basis of a new type of social and individual identity separable from the two predominant types of patrimonial power in the domestic sphere and the medieval state. In Durkheim's view, the medieval guilds typified by the guilds of university teachers, represented the first breakthrough to a form of autonomously structured political association.[24] The French Revolution is the paradigmatic representation of modernity's political culture that combines civic sovereignty and democratic representation in a language of universal, individual rights, although in Durkheim's view it is also represented by Kant's practical philosophy.

However, in the light of the formation of reflexive culture referred to above, the medieval universities have central place, for Durkheim, and it is these that the following discussion will focus on. Notwithstanding his appeal to science as the reflexive mode of the modern period, the medieval universities

are important for Durkheim, and for this reading of his work, because they refer to the formation of a mode of, and space for, reflexivity, which is relevant to his reflections on political modernity. This is especially the case when its long history is taken into account. Whilst it is beyond the scope of this paper to detail his complex and exhaustive reconstruction of their formation and development, they are the primary representatives and proto-modern originators of cultures of critique. In Durkheim's analysis of the development of French educational thought and practices, in the long overlooked *The Evolution of Educational Thought* the Medieval university is presented as an idealised point of reference. For Durkheim, the medieval universities encompass the periods from the early Renaissance to the Reformation. Specifically, Durkheim has in mind the eleventh and twelfth centuries which, contrary to those who have

> portrayed [them] as slumbering in a kind of intellectual torpor they knew no peace of mind. They were divided amongst themselves, pulled in two opposite directions; it is [so he states] one of the periods of greatest effervescence of the human mind in which innovations are fathered. The harvest was to be gathered in subsequent ages, but it was then that the seeds were sown.[25]

In other words, he sees them as embodying a period of intense creativity that revolved around the development of a specific reflexive culture that has left its mark on the formation of political modernity. In Durkheim's view, the Medieval universities are important not only because they develop a proto-public sphere, but also and as importantly, they develop a mode of reflexivity that specialises in forms of detachment, which he terms 'triadic culture'.

Contrary to Durkheim's own appeal to Cartesianism, *The Evolution of Educational Thought* presents a more complex formulation of reflexive culture. Triadic culture is constituted not only through science, but also the study of history and historical consciousness, and linguistics.[26] Together, they provide the means through which to challenge and overcome both current utilitarian culture, which views everything as a technical vocation, and the older religiously based reflexive cultures. These older religiously bases reflexive cultures assimilate everything to their own way of thinking,[27] retreat from the world in a state of enclosed and scholastic contemplation in which a formal method of thought overshadows a creative one,[28] and ill-prepare social individuals for

a life in society who must "either get to grips with real objects or else lose [ ] [themselves] in the void."[29] In other words, they are reflexive cultures in which the 'gap' for social questioning closes over. In contrast, a triadic culture is a culture of detachment in which it is "a matter of acting and behaving in such a way that one externalises some inner part of oneself."[30] In it history and the study of language, and not only science, function together in a complementary way to enable this to occur in a manner that also creates new patterns of meaning and cultural surpluses. Given the centrality and importance attributed to the dimension of triadic cultures for Durkheim's notion of reflexivity, it is useful to discuss each in turn, beginning with historical consciousness.

Durkheim's commitment to historical knowledge is fuelled by his image of the *homo duplex*, but in a more complex way than the moral functionalism of his earlier work. In Durkheim's view, historical knowledge should begin with the complexity of human nature, and in the light of such complexity, an historical perspective teaches about "the infinite variety of [its] potentialities."[31] In other words, an historical perspective relativises one's own perspective and becomes the basis for a critique of philosophies of history. In this context, Durkheim, momentarily, steps outside his own social evolutionism; from the perspective of historical consciousness, all societies and all histories are worthy topics because they also "constitute manifestations of the human spirit," in and of themselves.[32] It, thus, decentres the perception of the present.

As a complement to this, *scientific culture*—the second aspect of triadic culture—generates a perspective that moves humankind beyond itself, but in a different way from historical knowledge. According to Durkheim, science deals with things. In this context, though, it is not the scientific objectivism that is of interest, for Durkheim. Rather, for him, the 'thingness' of the world, or the recognition of a world apart from the human one "causes [humankind] to take cognisance of his/her dependent position in relation to the world which surrounds him [or her]."[33] Thus, this time it is the human perception of the world that is de-centred. Moreover, as a mode of thought, science, for Durkheim, is reasoning in action. Whilst Durkheim's model for this is a deductivism inherited from the experimental method,[34] his point is that it is

> logical thought . . . made up of specific conceptions capable of being for-
> mulated by definitions which map the boundaries separating them from
> related but different conceptions, and which, by means of such limitations,
> avoid the mix-ups, the interpenetrations, all the symptoms of contamination
> by illogicality whose consequence is confusion.[35]

In other words, for Durkheim, a scientific perspective is reality directed and
discriminating, notwithstanding the method that he prioritises for this. In a
similar way, a *linguistic perspective* is also 'outwardly' directed, for Durkheim.
And here, it is not so much that words are collective representations, although
they do not exhaust what collective representations may be constituted
through.[36] From the vantage point of his human self-image, Durkheim argues
that language gives shape to thinking by not only externalising and pre-
senting it for others, but also by disrupting a solipsism. In the spirit of his
qualified Cartesianism language assists in structuring ordered, logical thought
without which communication, and especially reflexive communication with
others is impossible.

Moreover, the medieval university was no secluded world but one in which
debate was a very public activity that was once again flourished after its
decline at the end of the Roman period. As he says, in this instance against
either Aristotle or an imaginary practitioner of Aristotelian dialectic, that is,
the dialectic of Greek antiquity:

> He often thinks up his own objections to his thesis. And he debates with
> imaginary adversaries. But would not such a confrontation yield better
> results if instead of being carried out in our own private speculations it took
> place outside in the open and in full view of the public; if instead of debat-
> ing within ourselves against theoretical adversaries who can, after all, only
> speak with the voice which we give them and consequently are only capa-
> ble of saying more or less what we want them to say according to our own
> enthusiasms and preferences, we set ourselves to argue resolutely against
> real flesh and blood adversaries; in other words, if in a public debate, we
> came forward to champion our own view by crossing swords with the
> defenders of a different opinion? Such a real life debate, does it not consti-
> tute a much more appropriate method of revealing the true power of
> resistance of opinions under discussion, and consequently their relative

value? . . . [D]ialectic is precisely the art of arguing cogently for plausible
propositions; and since debate forms an essential procedure in the practice
of this art it is essentially the art of debate. This view of dialectic and debate
was also the view that was held in the Middle Ages.[37]

The medieval university, then, provided the institutional setting for the devel-
opment and practice of a specific culture of reflexive detachment.

Durkheim's model of triadic reflexive culture has been abstracted from his
historical study of medieval education and presented in formalistic terms in
order to highlight a particular model of reflexivity present in his work, and
one, so it is argued, that is implicitly present in his version of political moder-
nity. Nonetheless, Durkheim does locate the model of triadic culture in the
context of medieval educational thought from which the culture of moder-
nity with its scientism is demarcated from an older religiously reflexive world.

However, is the triadic culture only a product of, and thus only relevant to
a study and appreciation of medieval life, or does it have a continuing and
broader relevance for our topic at hand? Can it be drawn on as a point of
reference?

IV. Durkheim's Political Modernity

There are some indications that Durkheim does draw on the image and period
of medieval triadic culture as a point of reference that indirectly throws
into relief his own portrait of political modernity. In other words, medieval
triadic culture, and the complexity of social and institutional life located
around the medieval universities that is indicated by it, becomes a filter
through which he addresses the more modern problems of the relations
between the nation, the citizen, public, reflexive culture and representative
democracy. In other words, and in the context of *The Evolution of Educational
Thought*, it is not so much that the rise of a particular form of educational
practice causes democracy, but that the universities provided a cultural-
institutional model for the nature and structure of reflective thinking, which,
so Durkheim argues in *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals*, was constitutive
of the practice of politics, and which established a pre-condition for political
modernity. In other words, the medieval university with its triadic reflexive

culture and the practice of public debate was the model from which Durkheim deployed his image of political modernity. By implication, Durkheim makes both a historical connection and a homologous relation between the universities and representative democracy. Over and above the much commented-on guild and corporatist political structure that Durkheim develops,[38] the democratic institutions of the republican form of political modernity are as important to representative democracy as the universities were to the reflexive culture of the Middle Ages. They both promote detached and deliberative thinking and transform a passive relation to the world into an active one. As he states in *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals* "reflection alone makes possible the discovery of new and effective practices, for it is only by reflection that the future can be anticipated. This is why deliberative assemblies are becoming ever more widely accepted as an institution."[39] Durkheim's work on democracy does not emerge as a theory of procedural democracy; it emerges instead as an unfinished theoretical reflection concerning the self-reflexivity of society upon itself, which also moves it outside the industrial frame of reference.

This central insight concerning the self-reflexivity of society upon itself fuels this interpretation, and, as such, it plays the key interpretive role. Moreover, its political frame of reference, for Durkheim, is the complex relation between the rights of the individual—more the collective representation of the individual—and his or her relation to the state, that is, its institutional expression. The additional filter apart from the medieval university through which Durkheim investigates the development of modern political collective representations and their institutionalisation is a non-teleological image of civilisation, which becomes the way, for Durkheim, of bringing political forms and reflexivity together in terms of their historical development. In other words, by drawing on an image of the civilisational history of the occident, Durkheim is able to present an analysis of the formation of a reflexive culture of civic sovereignty.[40]

Durkheim points to three traditions to which medieval and modern civic sovereignty and their organizational forms are indebted—the Greek, Roman and the Christian. This enables him to reconstruct the history of political modernity in a way that demarcates a more ancient history from the medieval ones. For Durkheim, the first historical period of civic sovereignty was constituted

through a pre-modern fusion of public religion, political community and civic morals. In this pre-modern context, the identity of the social actor and the identity and life of the political community, which in this instance was also a sacred community, was invariably and internally related. As he says in *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals*, "the destiny of the state was closely bound up with the fate of the gods worshipped at its alters . . . To bring glory to the City was the same as enhancing the glory of the gods of the City."[41] Hence, private concerns were relatively unimportant; rather what was important was the identification of the social individual with the beliefs held in common. "Absorbed in the mass of society, he [or she] meekly [gave] way to its pressures and subordinated his [or her] lot to the destinies of collective existence without any sense of sacrifice."[42]

However, Durkheim's reading of political modernity is typified by an increased detachment rather than fusion between the political community and the social actor. To be sure, for him, this detachment *should* not result in either the *political* anomie of the social actor from his/her political community, or his/her domination by the political community in the form of the state. In other words, for Durkheim, political modernity should not result in an unmediated articulation of a more primary anthropological dualism. Rather, in his optimistic view, political modernity is normatively constituted by a political heritage in which two tendencies of fused subordination and anomic detachment has been successfully addressed and overcome in ways that complement both social connectedness and individual detachment. On the one side, the state (rather than the political community as a *polis*) accumulates more and more areas of 'responsibility' under its jurisdiction, whilst, simultaneously, the individual, as Durkheim notes in an apt formulation, "comes to acquire even wider rights over his person and over the possessions to which he has title."[43] Durkheim argues that there is a historical convergence and affinity between these two processes: "the stronger the state, the more the individual is respected."[44]

Durkheim reconstructs this aspect of political modernity—its normative horizon—most clearly in his intervention in the Dreyfus affair entitled "Individualism and the Intellectuals". The crucial issue that Durkheim confronts through his reconstruction is not individualism *per se*, but an active rather than a passive or quietistically reflexive relation to the world. To be

active, according to Durkheim, the social individual must be seen as a bearer of rights. Individualism, for Durkheim and in opposition to its utilitarian and individualistic understanding, is this common ethos, constituted as a collective representation, and historically tied to the development of the western political form. Durkheim's idea of individualism is actually a cluster of operative ideals, moral beliefs and practices, or as he says, "a system of collective beliefs and practices that have a special authority" which function and are constituted in an homologous way to that of religion.[45] Thus, individualism is not a modern religion, for Durkheim; but it follows the same structural principles of any form of the sacred. Politically, this is translated into establishing the moral basis of individual rights, the limits of political obligation, the legitimacy of authority and the expansion of liberties beyond the negative rights to include economic and political justice. And so, for Durkheim, the modern democratic state is a collective representation of rights. Moreover, these collective representations of rights organise and make them a reality, thus giving them a lasting moral and institutional existence. In this sense, the idea of individualism functions as a beacon or sign-post beyond the idea of justice itself. It is a collective belief that informs the modern understanding and practice of 'doing justice.' Rights are, for Durkheim, inseparable from the understanding of what politics is.

However, Durkheim argues against the idea that right is a universal condition of human existence or derives from "the moral nature that the social individual is endowed with and thus determined by and is inviolable."[46] He argues that this formulation of universal, natural right inherited from Kant not only simplifies the issue but also inverts it. According to Durkheim, "what lies at the base of individual right is not the notion of the individual as he is, but the way in which society puts right into practice, looks upon it and appraises it."[47] Whilst rights emerge from a social context, their universal horizon occurs in a context in which the person has been universalised as a socially created horizon. Thus, to irrationalise this universalistic horizon is simultaneously to irrationalise the constitution of political modernity itself. In this sense, the sovereign rights of the individual as well as forms of political representation are values, that is, collective representational ideals. Moreover, as ideals they are also historically created and as such are sedimented as cultures or collective representations.

In the case of the latter, the ideals of modern democracy are, for him, modern mythologies that have a similar structure to those of religious origin. They constitute and orientate the self-understanding and self-representation of the political culture of the modern West. If Durkheim's references to Kant, especially in "The Determination of Moral Facts" and "Value Judgements and Judgements of Reality," are taken as attempts by him to work through the issue of the practico-political, then two aspects of this come to the fore, which, for Durkheim are constitutive to the condition of political modernity. These are the normative horizon of political modernity, articulated by Durkheim, at least through the idea of individualism, and its (political modernity's) space for reflexivity and its type of practice.

In more concrete terms, Durkheim's analysis of political modernity can be seen in terms of the institutionalisation of both the culture of reflexivity and the collective representation of rights. To be sure, Durkheim's conceptual strategy can also be seen in the context of his ongoing critiques of the malaise, crisis, and, for him, catastrophe of modern society, that is, its anomic condition.[48] Nonetheless, he addresses this anomic condition, *politically*. As Luke's observes "Durkheim took democracy to be the ideal, and normal, form of the state within a modern industrial society—that is, the form normally most appropriate to its collective beliefs and sentiments."[49] In *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals* Durkheim gives an initial definition of political society as one in which rulership is constituted from within. As he says, it is "one formed by the coming together of a large number of secondary social groups subject to the same authority which is not itself subject to any superior authority."[50] In other words, and restating Montesquieu's model of democracy in *The Spirit of Laws*, political society is that in which the principle of domination from without has been replaced by the principle of the self-constitution of the community.

Whilst the notion of a territorially bound unit—a nation-state rather than a patrimonial state or empire—is included in this very basic definition, it remains provisional. Durkheim is more interested in positing a counter-model to liberal democracy, which he sees as based on a principle of amorphous and anomic individualism. Moreover, this counter-model, in his view, can no longer rely on a model of negative freedoms that belong to the liberal one.[51] Rather, the model of political modernity that Durkheim has in mind, and

which we have seen in "Individualism and the Intellectuals" but more fully spelt out in *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals*, is one that embraces the dimension of reflexivity. For, him, a condition of reflexivity is important because it is through this that any society, and especially a democratised political society, can achieve increasing degrees of both self-transparency and self-consciousness.[52]

He joins this concern with three others concerning politics—the relation between civic sovereignty and the nation-state, the status of professional associations as key institutions of civic sovereignty, and rulership. In other words, for Durkheim, the relation between civic sovereignty and the nation-state constitutes the field in which modern political intercourse is readily entered into, and deliberation and a critical spirit are part of this intercourse. The result of this relation and critical deliberations should be a harmonisation of competing interests and the possibility of social co-ordination. In this context, Durkheim argues that it is the professional associations, rather than individuals, that should be the point where mediation, harmonisation and social co-ordination and integration occur.[53]

He can, thus, turn to a third concern—the question of rulership. What Lukes terms Durkheim's liberalism is better viewed under the umbrella term 'civic republicanism.'[54] Civic republicanism brings together the political currents mentioned above with the specifically Durkheimian formulation of collective representations. It refers to the idea of civic sovereignty, which includes positive and negative rights and liberties (a version of political liberalism), and democratic and representative forms of politics in which the state, as a power institution, is subordinated to this form of politics. The state, in this sense, is not a power centre, but the locus of rational reflection over political and social issues through institutional forms, which have been created to facilitate this. Durkheim further argues, "the state is a special organ whose responsibility it is to work out certain representations which hold good for the collectivity. These representations are distinguished from other collective representations by their higher degree of consciousness and reflection."[55] It is an 'organ of social thought' (like all other states), but one in which the social thought is constituted through a notion of rights, which is meant, by him, as an overriding principle of respect for persons through which 'the human person in

general' can be considered as sacred in the meaning described above. In this way, the individual accrues the historically cumulated status of a moral, even a religious absolute. Civic republicanism, thus, must have an internal relation to the practice of publicity, for Durkheim.

From this perspective, the state is civilised in that it becomes more aware and conscious of its own decisions in the process of having to debate them. In this sense, Durkheim takes the existence of parliamentary democracy seriously. It is in the assemblies, councils, and parliaments that deliberation and reflection occur.[56] As he says in a way that is notably similar to his remarks on the medieval university,

> deliberation and reflection . . . are [ ] all that goes on in the organ of government . . . The debates in the assemblies [which he sees as a process analogous to thought in the individual] have the precise object of keeping minds very clear and forcing them to become aware of their motives that sway them this way or that and to account for what they are doing . . . They are the sole instruments that the collective has to prevent any action that is unconsidered or automatic or blind.[57]

The assemblies are a vehicle, as well as a venue, for social communication by a society about itself.[58] And because of its communicative dimension, this form of reflexivity must be open and public, that is, it must not be constituted through segmental criteria. Secrecy and the activity of politics through either deals or fiat is the enemy of republican democracy, for Durkheim. For him, the deliberations should be done

> in the full light of day and that the debates there may be so conducted as to be heard by all . . . In this [way] the ideas, sentiments, decisions worked out within the governmental organs do not remain locked away there; this whole psychic life, so long as it frees itself, has a chain of reactions throughout the country. Everyone is thus able to share in this consciousness [ ] and thus asks himself the questions those governing ask themselves; everyone ponders them, or is able to.[59]

A deliberative, reflexive mode is more that simply a *procedural* one, and indicates a society geared to critical and creative reflection. Institutionally it encompasses parliaments, town hall and public meetings, as well as journals,

magazines, and newspapers, which constitute the literary organs of and for social thought. The literary public sphere, as part of the political public sphere generally, for Durkheim, is an indicator of not only a pluralised society, but also a reflexive one. Or to put it the other way round, the state is formed through, and out of the arguments of civic sovereigns who embody and have a reflexive relation to, rather than simply 'represent' the modern collective representation of rights. In this sense, these modern political collective representations are embodied, value-orientated arguments, the ground for which is ultimately a social ontology.

Durkheim's image of a reflexively open political modernity, where civic republicanism subordinates the executive-administrative dimensions of the modern state may appear to fly in the face of contemporary reality, and even the reality of the history of political modernity itself. To be sure, his corporatistic option was a response to the political anomie that he witnessed in the formation of both the executive-administrative dimensions and the electoral politics of liberal democracy. These same phenomenon were commented on by Hegel in his *Philosophy of Right* one hundred years earlier, and both Marx and Castoriadis were also profoundly critical of them. In fact, if we were to take Hegel and Castoriadis, rather than Durkheim (or Marx) at their word, in this instance, then we would be witnessing the 'end of history', not really as the triumph of liberal democracy with its free markets and free elections, but rather as the flight of the republican owl of Minerva at the end of the long day of political modernity. The short day, it has been argued, is now one where the executive-dimensions of the modern state assert themselves in the form of increasing governance and surveillance, or where non-political, and hence non-contestable acts of violence occur in both national and international arenas. Castoriadis would, in his own way, simply call this flight "the retreat from autonomy."[60]

Yet, perhaps these optimistic or pessimistic portrayals of 'the end of history' construct overly one-sided pictures. As Durkheim noted in his own assessment of the formation of modern reflexive cultures, what we need to understand is not the experience, but the complexity of the experience, not the moment, but its history—or in his terms its social evolution.[61] However, and in the wake of Castoriadis' work, which, as mentioned at the beginning of this essay, is an implicit point of contact with that of Durkheim's, we have

had enough of evolution. Instead, we are located in neither a negative nor positive series of historical developments, but rather in their indeterminations and contingencies—not only in terms of their creations as social forms, but also in terms of their directions and possibilities.[62] In this sense, and notwithstanding Castoriadis' own pessimism, civic republicanism remains a continuing possibility for political modernity, just as the executive-administrative power of the modern state, or totalitarianism and terror do. In the context of this complex contingency its loss is both possible *and* tragic. Everything else is either hubris or barbarism.

Notes

[1] This is in contrast to those approaches that assume that Durkheim's project was a unified one, a view shared not only by Durkheim and Parsons, but also by many interpreters after Parsons. See Talcott Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action*, Vol. 1. New York, The Free Press, 1968; R.A. Nisbet, *The Sociological Tradition*, London, Heinemann, 1976.

[2] Castoriadis implicitly alludes to an affinity between his own project and Durkheim's. See his "Institution of Society and Religion" in *The World in Fragments*, edited and translated by David Ames Curtis, Stanford, Stanford University Press, p. 318. See also the discussion between Dick Howard and Diane Pacom, "Autonomy—The Legacy of The Enlightenment: A Dialogue with Castoriadis," *Thesis Eleven*, no. 52, February, 1998, pp. 83-101. See Dick Howard "Castoriadis, Marx and Marxism," *Critical Horizons*, Vol. 7, 2006, and John Rundell "Imaginary Turns in Critical Theory," in *Critical Theory After Habermas*, eds. Dieter Freundlieb, Wayne Hudson, and John Rundell, Leiden, Brill, 2004, pp. 307-343.

To be sure, if Durkheim fights a battle on two fronts against empirical monism and idealist monism, then Castoriadis also wages his own contemporary war on two other fronts apart from Marxism—one against hermeneutics and another against structuralism. For him, hermeneutics, with its privileging of interpretation, circumscribes the issue of the origin of interpretations through its historicist and genealogical emphasis. Structuralism, especially if Lévi-Strauss's work in this context is taken as the benchmark, is criticised by Castoriadis, for its reduction of human life to a logical-mathematical set of sequences in which "all human societies are only different combinations of a small number of invariable elements." In *The Scope of Anthropology*, Lévi-Strauss argues that these invariable elements are themselves biological products of the function of the human brain. In an ironic twist, and through Lévi-Strauss's implicit claim to be Durkheim's (self-appointed)

heir in "French Sociology," structuralism retreats from a theory of culture (as a defining characteristic of the human animal) to a biologism that also carries many of the hallmarks of Kant's transcendental philosophy. Lévi-Strauss' study on Marcel Mauss is an exception here and indicated that the problem of what Castoriadis terms 'the immanent unperceivable' (see note 4) was present for Lévi-Strauss also. See Cornelius Castoriadis, "The Greek and the Modern Political Imaginary," *World in Fragments*, 1997, p. 102; *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, trans. Kathleen Blamey, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1987; John Rundell, "From the Shores of Reason to the Shores of Meaning: Some Remarks on Habermas' and Castoriadis' Theories of Culture," *Thesis Eleven*, no. 22, 1989, pp. 5-24. See also Claude Lévi-Strauss, "French Sociology," in *Twentieth Century Sociology*, eds. George Gurvitch and Wilbert E. Moore, New York, The Philosophical Library, 1945; and *An Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss*, trans. Felicity Baker, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987.

3   This excess, which is also a topic for Heidegger and post-structuralism, points to the concealed constitutive internality of socially produced meaning itself, and indicates the difference, in ontological terms, between Durkheim's project and Castoriadis'. Castoriadis terms this concealed constitutive internality "the immanent unperceivable" (Castoriadis, "The Greek and the Modern Political Imaginary," p. 102). The 'immanent unperceivable', or what he terms social imaginary significations, refers to the creation and condition of meaning that certainly cannot be reduced to a biological substrate, and is also irreducible to history and figurations of power, notwithstanding their genealogical or stratifying importance. For him, 'the immanent unperceivable' element created by society does not exist in those other regions of being that are derived from logic, interpretation or production/fabrication, that is, what he terms the ensemblist-logical aspects of the human being with its dimensions of *legein* (saying) and *teukhein* (doing). Rather, 'the immanent unperceivable' is an *ideality*, which indicates that the signification is not rigidly attached to a material support, but that it goes beyond it without ever being able to do without it. It is this dimension of the immanent unperceived or social imaginary significations that create language and institutions, and without which the social human being cannot do without. See also, "The Imaginary: Creation in the Social Historical Domain" in *The World in Fragmants*, pp. 3-18, and *The Imaginary Institution of Society*.

4   This in contrast to another political modernity that involves totalitarianism and terrorism. See Ferenc Feher, "Redemptive and Democratic Paradigms in Modern Politics," and Agnes Heller "An Imaginary Preface to the 1984 Edition of Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism*," both in *Eastern Left, Western Left*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1986, pp. 61-76, 243-259 respectively.

5   Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Joseph Ward Swain, Introduction by Robert Nisbet, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1976, p. 428; 1953, pp. 63-77; "Durkheim's 'Individualism and The Intellectuals,'" trans. And introduced by Steven Lukes, *Political Studies*, Vol. XVII, 1969, pp. 14-30.

6   For these interpretations see, for example, Dominick La Capra, *Emile Durkheim: Sociologist and Philosopher*, Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 1972; Mark S. Cladis, *A Communitarian Defence of Liberalism: Emile Durkheim and Contemporary Social Theory*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1992.

7   Steven Lukes, *Emile Durkheim His Life and Work: A Historical and Critical Study*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1987, pp. 495-96. The third aspect that Lukes identifies is already present in Durkheim's *The Rules or Sociological Method* where social facts are such because of their generalisability and capacity to act as social constraints. See Durkheim, *The Rules or Sociological Method*, eighth edition, trans. Sarah A. Solovay and John H. Mueller and Edited by George E.G. Catlin, London, The Free Press, 1966, p. 13.

8   Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, pp. 2-3; 1983, pp. 69-72.

9   Durkheim, *Pragmatism and Sociology*, translated by J.C. Whitehouse, edited and Introduced by John B. Allcock with a preface by Amand Cuvillier, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 84.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 87.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 89.

12 *Ibid.*, pp. 82-3.

13 Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, p. 429.

14 Emile Durkheim, *Sociology and Philosophy*, translated by D.F. Pocock, with an Introduction by J.G. Peristiany, Glencoe, Ill., Free Press, 1953, p. 40.

15 Durkheim, *Sociology and Philosophy*, p. 83.

16 *Ibid.*, pp. 91-92; *Pragmatism and Sociology*, p. 92.

17 Durkheim, *Sociology and Philosophy*, p. 85.

18 *Ibid.*, pp. 80-87.

19 Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, pp. 422-3.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 423.

21 Durkheim, *Sociology and Philosophy*, p. 91.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 90.

23 *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.

24 Cf. E. Durkheim, *The Evolution of Educational Thought*, trans. by Peter Collins, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977, especially chaps. 7-10; *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals*, trans. by Cornelia Brookfield with a new preface by Bryan S. Turner, London, Routledge, 1992, especially chaps. 2-3; Mike Gane, "Institutional

Socialism and the Sociological Critique of Communism (Introduction to Durkheim and Mauss);" *Emile Durkheim Critical Assessments*, ed. Peter Hamilton, 1990, London, Routledge, Vol. 4, pp. 226-251.

[25] Durkheim, *The Evolution of Educational Thought*, p. 73.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 348.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 208.

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 206.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 207.

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 208.

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 335.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 335.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 213.

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 342.

[35] *Ibid.*, pp. 343-344.

[36] According to Durkheim, collective representations can be constituted through non-verbal forms of social action—song, music, dance that take the form of ceremonies. The important point, though, is that these occur within the framework of sacred life. At a more abstract level of theorising, Durkheim is grappling with what might be termed following Castoriadis' work, the imaginary horizon of social and collective life. See his *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, and C. Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, and "The Institution of Religion."

[37] Durkheim, *The Evolution of Educational Thought*, pp. 146-147.

[38] See note 48 below. See Durkheim's Preface to the second edition of *The Division of Labour in Society*, with an Introduction by Lewis Coser, trans. W.D. Halls, London, Macmillan, pp. xxxi-lix, and *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals*.

[39] Durkheim, *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals*, p. 90; see also p. 80.

[40] As has been noted elsewhere, although Durkheim's work contains only fragmentary comments on the topic of civilisation, nonetheless, it emerges as a sub-theme in his work, both in, and subsequent to, *The Division of Labour in Society*. In *The Evolution of Educational Thought*, especially, civilisation emerges as a way of more self-consciously reflecting on the relation between past and present in a manner that does two things. On the one hand, it challenges the evolutionist assumption of an underlying teleology or rationalisation by emphasising the dramatic re-figuration and re-orientation of pre-existing collective representations. Furthermore, in the context of his complex formulation of collective representations, civilisations acquire and create new representations as a result of interaction with a changing historical context. Thus, civilisation is a metaphor through which Durkheim reconstructs the history of the occident, in particular, in a way

that recognises that its history "is littered with a multitude of lamentable and unjustified triumphs, deaths and defeats" (Durkheim, *The Evolution of Educational Thought*, p. 13). If this is the case, for Durkheim, then it functions, on the other hand, as a determining hermeneutic perspective through which the occident's uneven history is reconstructed in a way that brings the past into a relation of interpretive tension with the present which throws into relief both his value orientation—autonomy in the context of national (French) republican identity— and his valued historical period. To cut a long and very complex story short, by the end of the nineteenth century, and within the new academic disciplines of sociology and anthropology, the concept of civilisation was utilised as a taxonomic category that referred to the evolutionary development of societies to more complex and differentiated ones. The works by Morgan, Engels and Spencer had laid much of the groundwork for a sociological taxonomy of civilisations. As an extended concept, civilisation came to refer to discrete social and territorial units that included differentiations between the spheres of production, consumption and exchange. Moreover, it also referred to the development of specialised institutions, such as states and bureaucracies for the specialisation of power, cities for the specialisation of trade and commerce, and temples for the specialisation of cultural activity, often undertaken in the form of writing, by a specialist priestly caste. Whilst Durkheim's *Division of Labour in Society* contributed to this taxonomic approach to civilisational analysis in terms of a combined theory of functional differentiation and societal evolution, a more nuanced image emerges in his later work. See also E. Durkheim and M. Mauss, "A Note on Civilisation (1913)," *Social Research*, vol. 38, no. 4, 1971, reprinted in *Classical Readings in Culture and Civilization*, edited by John Rundell and Stephen Mennell, Cambridge, Routledge, 1998; Johann P. Arnason, "Social Theory and the Concept of Civilisation" *Thesis Eleven*, no. 20, 1988. See also John Rundell and Stephen Mennell, "Introduction: Civilization and the Human Self-Image," in *Classical Readings in Culture and Civilization*, pp. 1-40.

[41] Durkheim, *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals*, p. 55.

[42] *Ibid.*, p. 56.

[43] *Ibid.*

[44] *Ibid.*, p. 57. Durkheim also singles out Rome as a paradigmatic case. The lively sense of respect due to the person, firstly, was expressed and recognised in terms affirming the dignity of the Roman citizen and, secondly, in the liberties that were its distinguishing juridical feature. In Athens, according to Durkheim, individualism was both dispersed and speculative, that is tied to philosophy, whilst in Christianity it was inward or other worldly and again speculative, that is, tied to a philosophically impregnated theology. Moreover, in Durkheim's view, the political

history of rights and individualism is a specific one that belongs only to the terrain of the West; in Ancient Egypt and in India individualism was almost completely absent. See also p. 58.

45 Durkheim, "Durkheim's 'Individualism and The Intellectuals,'" p. 25.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 67.

47 *Ibid.*

48 Durkheim's concern about the crisis of modern societies can be summed up in the following thesis: "the modern crisis is caused by the destruction in the eighteenth century of a complete layer of necessary solidarity." As Durkheim himself, states in the 1902 Preface to the second edition of *The Social Division of Labour*, and with his characteristic organicism still present, "the absence of the corporative institutions creates [ ] in the organization of a people like ours, a void whose importance it is difficult to exagerate. It is a whole system of organs necessary to the normal functioning of a common life which is wanting. Such a constitutive lack is evidently not a local evil, limited to a region of society; it is a malady *totius substantiae* reflecting all the organism." But, Durkheim's interest in the guilds is symptomatic of a broader and deeper set of problems. To put it slightly differently, the crisis of solidarity indicates a crisis at the *fault line* between individual and society. The cause of the crisis is a process of differentiation that simultaneously detaches and frees the social individual from the over-determining moral force and sanction of the group, *and* yet, provides no central moral and ethical core for normative co-ordination.

As Durkheim had spelled out earlier in *The Division of Labour in Society*, this general social crisis into which his model of politics itself is (re)-absorbed, as evidenced by the 1902 second preface to *The Division of Labour*, manifests itself as three distinct particularisms—the particularism of the contract, the particularism of corporative norms and ethics, and the particularism of economistically derived and interpreted individualism with its language and pattern of action of self-interest, which he views as the most pernicious. In the first instance, the nature of the contract itself becomes more specialised and relevent only to specific sections of, in this case, industrial life. In the second instance, under the conditions of specialisation each specialised area develops its own norms, rules and code of conduct, the result of which, in his own terms, is 'a moral polymorphism.' In the third instance, Durkheim argues that individualism becomes dysfunctional and makes social life impossible because there are no other integrative functions that replace the diminishing role of the conscience collective, the result of which is a constant war of competing interests. Durkheim responds to this sense of crisis by arguing that the professional associations offer the most appropriate bulwark against utilitarian individualism. The occupational groups remain the closest

institutional nexus that combine both a normative orientation and institutional setting for social individuals as they live heterogenous, profane and everyday lives. In this way, the professional associations become the second 'home' of sociability. It is this affective morality that grounds the corporations as collective, moral entities. The occupational groups or corporations provide a model of integration through a very specific form of sociability—what might be termed moral intimacy. In so positing the professional associations as a second 'home,' and whilst simultaneously acknowledging the inevitable and permanent nature of social conflict and the dynamics of, and need for collective action, Durkheim, argues that the *principle* aim of the professional groups is not to safeguard and defend collective interests. Rather, their emphasis is placed on *the moment of sociability*. Durkheim argues from the vantage point of his anthropological image of the human as *homo duplex*, that the actor is a *social* actor only in as much as he or she belongs to society. See especially, Durkheim's 1902 Preface to the Second Edition of *The Division of Labour in Society* and *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals*. See also Theodore M. Steeman "Durkheim's Professional Ethics," in Peter Hamilton, ed. *Emile Durkheim: Critical Assessments*; Mike Gane, "Institutional Socialism and the Sociological Critique of Communism," in his *The Radical Sociology of Durkheim and Mauss*, 1992, London Routledge, pp. 135-164.

[49] Lukes, *Emile Durkheim*, p. 272.

[50] Durkheim, *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals*, p. 45.

[51] Durkheim, "Durkheim's 'Individualism and The Intellectuals,'" p. 29.

[52] Durkheim, *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals*, p. 89.

[53] See Durkheim, Preface to the Second Edition of *The Social Division of Labour*.

[54] Lukes, *Emile Durkheim*, p. 338. Durkheim's relation to socialism is also filtered through what can be termed his 'civic republicanism.'

[55] Durkheim, *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals*, p. 80.

[56] *Ibid.*, p. 80.

[57] *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80.

[58] Durkheim argues that the professional associations are the electorates through which civic republicanism represents itself. For him, the public sphere should not be peopled by an amorphous mass who either pursue their own interests in a quasi-commercial way. Nor should they express unclear, diffuse and vague sentiments and ideas. The public sphere is constituted through reflexive thinking, not opinion and prejudice. Yet, Durkheim fears that the public sphere only devolves and degenerates into a war zone of competing interests where individuals and classes will articulate only particularistic interests from particularistic perspectives that are unable to be breached and opened out. In his view the professional associations should be the 'true electoral units' because through them the amorphous

mass can be represented as an established group that has cohesion, permanence and a clear identity. They choose the most competent and proficient person to mediate and solve problems within and between the corporations, as well as within the wider region of the state. The assemblies or parliaments, then are made up of delegates of the corporations who represent the functional and specialised interests of their corporation. In other words, in this form, in Durkheim's view the political community is not anomic and without identity. However, it should be noted that my essay should not be read as a defence of Durkheim's corporatism. Rather this essay is an attempt to draw out the reflexive nature of political modernity as its central and radicalisable dimension.

[59] *Ibid.*, p. 81.

[60] See Francis Fukyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, New York, The Free Press, 1992; Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Cambridge, Mass, Harvard University Press, 2000; Castoriadis "The Retreat from Autonomy: Postmodernism as Generalized Conformism," and "The Imaginary: Creation in the Social-Historical Domain" in *World in Fragments*.

[61] Durkheim, *The Evolution of Educational Thought*, p. 12.

[62] Castoriadis, "The Greek and the Modern Political Imaginary," in *The World in Fragments*, p. 102.

Chapter Eleven

The Sacred, Social Creativity and the State

Natalie Doyle

This article aims to demonstrate the contribution of a strand of contemporary French socio-political theory to the understanding of the political dimension of modernity. This strand of thought (whose founders are Cornelius Castoriadis and Claude Lefort, its most recent representative Marcel Gauchet) interprets the appearance of modernity in European culture as the birth of a new fully political expression of social power and a greater realisation of human sovereignty. The line of thinking inaugurated by Castoriadis and especially stressed by Lefort elaborates a socio-cultural conception of human power that provides valuable conceptual tools for the understanding of the fundamental ambivalence of modern power.

Central to its interpretation of modern power is the contrast it establishes between modern autonomy and the heteronomous mode of self-institution of pre-modern societies and their different relationship to the fundamental indeterminacy of human self-creation. As Castoriadis and Lefort stress, heteronomous societies are structured around the denial of

the conflictual nature of social life, denial which involves the concealment of the human origin of all social creativity and the establishment of heteronomous rules of order, that is of strict social determination. Autonomous societies, on the other hand, break this closure of human social creativity and open up the possibility of questioning the cultural visions that underpin social structures, visions that Castoriadis designates as 'social imaginaries.' The social reflexivity they allow is taken by Castoriadis to reach its most potent form in democracy, understood as the principle acceptance of the indeterminacy of human social existence.

The theme of heteronomy central to the work of both authors raises the question of the role played by the sacred in the self-institution of human societies, and by extension religion but Castoriadis' work tends to establish a stark and uncompromising dichotomy between autonomy and heteronomy, which leads him to dismiss any role religion may have played in the genesis of the modern conception of human power. Lefort's work, on the other hand, is more nuanced and highlights the theologico-political nature of early modern power in its exploration of the genesis of modern ideology. Part two will thus show how it deals with a question neglected by Castoriadis, the role the sacred played in the self-representation of human societies and in the process, offers a more sophisticated account of the novelty of modern democratic autonomy, not only as social regime but more fundamentally as fully political mode of social self-representation.

In this respect, Lefort's work can be said to engage with the central *problématique* of Durkheim's work, even if mediated by the work of Durkheim's nephew and intellectual heir, Mauss: the role of the sacred in the self-institution/self-representation of society. Whilst particularly evident in the work of Lefort, the affinity with Durkheimian sociology can also be identified in Castoriadis' work despite its dismissive attitude towards religion. What Castoriadis and Durkheim's approach share most obviously is the emphasis on the fundamentally cultural nature of human societies. The affinity however extends into the understanding of the political and reciprocally, as part three will demonstrate, the confrontation of Durkheim's work with that of Castoriadis and Lefort reveals the unity of Durkheim's parallel reflection on the role played by religion in the self-institution of society and its lesser-known exploration of modern state sovereignty. To conclude, the paper will

show how an elaboration of this dual reflection can be found in the work of Gauchet and how it opens new lines of reflection on a dimension of modern European culture of concern to these three thinkers: individualism.

I. Castoriadis: The Cultural Power of the Social Imaginary; Modernity and Autonomy

For Castoriadis and Lefort, modernity involves the creation of a radically new type of society. It is new because for the first time in human history it attempts to formulate consciously its own laws and limits through collective deliberation, and without subordination to a non-human mythical or divine sphere. This anthropological discontinuity is explored by Castoriadis through a social theory that explores how societies are endeavours of self-creation.[1] This social theory stresses the way this process of self-creation in human history has always been mediated by heteronomy, that is, by the creation of a sacred whose human origin is not acknowledged. Castoriadis thus argues that social creation has always been accompanied by its self-denial, in other words by a denial of human power, which he unequivocally equates with religion.[2]

This problematic tendency to fuse the notions of religion and heteronomy aside, the strength of Castoriadis' social theory lies in the way it offers a new conception of human power as fundamentally social and imaginary. This conception of power clearly defines itself in opposition to rationalism for which the potential for autonomy was seen to originate in the rationality of the *individual* consciousness.[3] It constitutes an indictment of the way rationalism— in its idealistic or empiricist form—has prevented European culture from fully acknowledging the creativity of the human mind by stressing only the divinely inspired or nature-given power of reason, the power of the individual *intellect*. Human power, it asserts, is the imaginative power of the species as whole to create its own meanings, its own world, in juxtaposition to the natural world. It is fundamentally cultural and not rational or cognitive. It involves the creation of a coherent pattern of symbolical interpretations of the world.[4]

Human societies define and elaborate an image of the natural world they live in and these world images also become self-images, definitions of identity.[5] The webs of meaning thus constituted permeate the institutions of society

and also the very psyche of the biological individuals that constitute society. In this elaboration of a cultural understanding of human power, Castoriadis' social theory is indebted to the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty and its specific non-subjectivist understanding of the phenomenological notion of life-world, in whose constitution it highlights the central role played by imagination.[6] It thus argues that the origin of the social systems of meaning through which human power is fulfilled cannot be found in any given subject, in physical reality or in the realm of concepts as the creation of society is the work of what Castoriadis calls the radical social imaginary or the *instituting* society. The instituting society is a realm of freedom and creativity.[7] In opposition to this freedom is the *instituted* society, the social imaginary or the realm of social, imaginary significations that are the end product of the process of creation.[8] Human power is ultimately associated with the mental capacity of the human species to imagine what is not from what is and thereby construct its own world.[9]

This imaginary origin of the social imaginary underscores the fundamental difference of the human species from the natural world: the appearance of humans represents a discontinuity in biological evolution. What differentiates the human socio-historical world, despite its continuity with the natural world, is therefore the natural emergence of human cultural power, which Castoriadis defines as "a kind of autonomy."[10] This kind of autonomy from the natural world is the possibility of subjective reflection and it requires the social imaginary, because only imagination makes it possible to 'see double,' in other words to see oneself while seeing oneself also as an 'other.' Alterity is indeed a constitutive element of imagination and is crucial to the development of autonomy, both on an individual and social level. For the individual to become autonomous, there needs to be interaction with others and a resulting distancing from internalised social ways. In return, for social life to be possible, there needs to be the capacity to place oneself in the place of others, that is, to see oneself as other.[11]

For Castoriadis, the specificity of the human species is only of 'a kind of autonomy' because traditionally, humanity's cultural autonomy from nature has not been full autonomy but rather *heteronomy*, understood as the establishment of a rigid, closed cultural system of interpretation which remains unchallenged by alterity and as a result cannot be questioned or changed

openly.[12] Heteronomous culture is what traditionally characterises social co-existence and is associated with an unawareness of history that is most apparent in primitive societies. In other words, heteronomy is for Castoriadis synonymous with a denial of human power and of the historical change human socio-cultural power produces. It is a paradoxical denial in so far as the heteronomous denial of the human origin of power is itself also the product of humanity's social-cultural creativity. The paradox is merely stated by Castoriadis and not explored, possibly as a result of his rather dismissive attitude towards religion. As we shall see in Part Three, it is however the central concern of Durkheim's sociology of religion.

The cultural autonomy of the human species is only *potential* sovereignty and it is Castoriadis' thesis that human sovereignty can only be fulfilled through democracy, which for the first time allows the rules and principles of social interaction to be openly debated and questioned. Castoriadis makes of Greek democracy the first significant breakthrough to explicit autonomy. It is the first community to bring openly into question its own laws of existence, its own order.[13] The autonomy which first characterises the Greek polis thus refers to the possibility of reflecting upon, questioning and even changing not only the laws of social life but most importantly, the *imaginary significations* that underpin them, something which primitive, non-historical societies cannot do.

To define the uniqueness of Greek autonomy, Castoriadis introduces a distinction between the political (*le politique*) and politics (*la politique*). For Castoriadis, what characterises the Greek *polis* is the way the political, the implicit political framework of social life instituted by the social imaginary signification, becomes a matter open to debate, conflict and therefore reform, which leads to the creation of explicit, self-conscious power structures. At the same time though, the Greek breakthrough involves far more than the birth of the state. It is more than the birth of an external layer of power on top of the implicit power exercised by the imaginary significations through the constitution of individual.

This discovery of the political by Greek political culture is a cultural transformation that reduces the distance that has always existed in human societies between the instituted power structures and the self-instituting community. This transformation is the discovery of democratic sovereignty, that is of the

social nature of power, of its origin in the *demos*, whose rule in fact involves constant efforts to counter any tendencies which would separate politics from society, any tendency in other words for the state to split from society and rise above it, and therefore become heteronomous again. It is Castoriadis' thesis that such a transformation exercised influence long after the demise of Greek democracy and was reactivated in Western Europe in the urban culture of the High Middle Ages.[14]

According to Castoriadis, however, the enlargement of human sovereignty facilitated by this revival did not just serve human liberty. For Castoriadis, modern European culture is indeed underpinned by a profoundly ambivalent imaginary signification, that of rationality. The modern cultural investment in the power of reason did not only encourage autonomy. It also liberated economic and scientific practices, which encouraged by a phantasm of absolute rational mastery promoted the intensified exploitation of the resources of the natural world that culminated in the birth of capitalism, oblivious to the existence of finite limits.[15] Castoriadis explored at length the question of this ambivalence but not in great depths the implications of the modern imaginary for the question of the European state and its self-interpretation. This is where it is useful to turn to the work of Claude Lefort developed in a close but critical dialogue with Castoriadis' ideas, as its allows a fuller understanding of the way the project of autonomy not only survived but also deepened through liberal democracy, in competition with the imaginary of unlimited mastery.[16]

II. Lefort: The Modern Imaginary of Sovereignty

Lefort's work deepens and relativises Castoriadis' opposition between heteronomy and autonomy and suggests a way of understanding the way liberal democracy in fact contributed to a greater degree of social autonomy as defined by Castoriadis. It does so by engaging with anthropology and the question of stateless 'non-historical' societies in a way that leads Lefort to redefine heteronomy as denial of history and the denial of history as a way of countering alterity change. Heteronomy in other words is redefined as the means used by human societies to control the indeterminacy that is associated with the conflictuality engendered by human individual subjectivity.

Lefort's work stresses the fact that the apparent harmonious configuration of heteronomous societies must not be taken at face value. Non-historical societies are in fact not free from conflictual behaviour, or immune to change because difference and conflictuality are central to human identity. Lefort's stress on the central place of conflict in human life leads him to stress the political dimension of *all* human societies. As we shall see in Part Three below, the importance of the political for the understanding of human societies was also highlighted by Durkheim's sociology, something which Parsonian readings of Durkheim contributed to downplaying.[17] Whilst Lefort's work does not draw directly on Durkheim, it was influenced by that of Durkheim's nephew and intellectual heir Marcel Mauss, which in many ways could be said to extend some of the latent potentialities of Durkheim's social theory.

In particular, Lefort uses Mauss' analysis of gift customs to show how all human societies in fact seek to acknowledge subjective difference as the central feature of human identity but how at the same time it is to control it and channel it back into collective identity.[18] He argues that Mauss' study reveals the fact that customs of gift exchange are fundamentally complex systems of mutual *recognition*. Through the rules of the Potlach, an individual asserts his subjectivity by affirming his disregard for his material possessions, in a process of contest where the object is to outdo the other in generosity. Beyond this inter-subjective contest, however it is the whole social group that establishes its identity by asserting its radical difference from nature through its disregard for material possession, something predicated on the ritualised exchange of gifts. This assertion of identity is thus inextricably linked with the establishment of a fundamental reciprocity between the members of the community.

This process of mutual recognition however does not allow individual difference itself any expressive outlet: the assertion of a commonality is predicated on a common opposition to an external Other, the Other of the Natural World, of matter. The only difference that is recognised is the radical absolute alterity that is *outside*, not within, the community: the alterity of the natural world. Human difference—*subjectivity*—is then both recognised though the Potlach but also circumscribed and therefore refused any right to contest the

social order inherited from the past. The recognition of human subjectivity and by extension of human sovereignty as whole, remains constrained in heteronomous culture by the collective need for a common identity that realises itself through the creation of an inter-subjective space that forbids any unmediated, direct relationships of individuals to objects or activities.

This mediation of human subjectivity that characterises primitive societies renders them blind to the historical dimension of human life and makes them totally resistant to the idea of social change. Lefort's interpretation of Mauss' analysis of the Potlach, thus, re-contextualises Castoriadis' notion of auton- omy within a discussion of the contrast between historical and 'stagnant' societies that relativises Castoriadis' dichotomous opposition of autonomy and heteronomy.[19] The crucial difference of modern 'historical' societies from fully heteronomous tribal societies resides in the fact that they do not exhaust themselves in the assertion of human difference from the natural world but in fact loosen social bonds by allowing a direct relationship to the out- side world. What they thus establish is the distinction between *subjectivity* and *objectivity*. In the process, they create the cultural circumstances in which human activity can become work, action upon objects with a view to satisfying needs. As human activity is freed from the primary need to relate to others, human sovereignty is allowed to unfold as sovereignty over the natural world. This potentially allows sovereignty to turn inwards and be exercised within the social space. Lefort's work thus draws attention to the question of the cultural transformation that involves both the birth of political sovereignty and that of a new economic relationship to the natural world.

Leaving aside the question of the economic that remains secondary in Lefort's work but is central to Castoriadis' reflection, it is important to highlight the way Lefort's analysis opens a discussion of the birth of *modern* political sov- ereignty. Whilst Castoriadis' social theory highlights the human democratic origin of all social power by stressing the role played by the radical social imaginary in the self-institution of social life, Lefort's work contributes to the exploration of the novelty of modern democratic power by stressing its symbolically representative function. Political power gives human commu- nities symbolic representations of themselves, in other words, identities that allow them to subsume their inner divisions. It is by looking at the French revolution that Lefort came to the realisation that this role traditionally played

by religion came to be replaced in European modernity by the political. The regicide indeed signals the birth of a radically new *disincarnated* conception of power.[20] The quasi-divine authority of the king's body to represent the social community is replaced by that of the people, which transforms the notion of nation from organic entity to self-regulating, self-modifying historical phenomenon. The democratic revolution of the eighteenth century is thus a *social* revolution, underpinned by a profound transformation in the symbolisation of power, to which liberalism contributed: its emphasis on the law consecrates the autonomy of the principle of popular sovereignty from the institutions of political power.

Lefort's exploration of the contribution of liberal democracy to modern autonomy is focused on the contrast between religion and ideology. At the centre of this contrast is the problem of conflict, which Lefort argues is central to human identity and therefore to social life. Lefort argued that human societies are instituted through a symbolic logic that allows conflict to be controlled by producing an identity that unifies them. According to Lefort, unity is culturally produced through its representation, which involves the projection of an imaginary community that allows social distinctions to be portrayed as 'natural' as in the case of the pre-modern nation incarnated in the figure of the king. The act of society's self-institution stressed by Castoriadis, the creation of specific modes of collective being is thus always shadowed by another institution that conceals the conditions of society's self-institution, though a closed discourse that maintains the illusion of an essential social identity. In non-historical societies, this is done by religious discourse. In historical societies, this is the function of ideology, which does so without having to refer to another world besides the social world itself.[21]

The novelty of ideology resides in the way, unlike religion, it signals the existence of social division but at the same time conceals it through a discourse that is grounded in *the social space itself*: universality seems to be immanent to society and the conflicts engendered by differences to be contingent and alien to human identity. This discourse is the discourse of positive knowledge, which attacks religious transcendence but substitutes for it another kind of transcendence that refuses to see itself as such. This is the transcendence of Reason, Humanity, Science, and so on. This transcendence is essentially different from the transcendence of religious in so far as it never assumes

a coherent unified expression. Seen as immanent to the social space itself, it mirrors its differentiation and assumes a diversity of forms that prevents the complete assimilation of discourse to power that characterises the religious discourse of heteronomous societies. In this respect, Lefort argues that modern ideology—modern *liberal* ideology for this is what he referring to—is plagued by a fundamental contradiction. It is forced to appeal to a transcendence beyond the social realm to cover over the existence of social divisions. Yet its very existence is in fact grounded in the very rejection of all transcendence. In other words, modern ideology is in self-denial and fails to assume full human responsibility for social meaning, identity and the unity these produce.

This contradiction or self-denial is central to the genesis of totalitarianism and Lefort's analysis of totalitarianism as attempt to cover over the failings of ideology is central to his discussion of the significance of liberal democracy.[22] This aspect of Lefort's work however is not directly relevant to the objective of this paper and cannot be explored if the article's objective is to be met: to highlight the way Lefort adds to Castoriadis' understanding of human power as autonomy. Lefort's work indeed complements Castoriadis' social theory by exploring the symbolical representative function that emanates from the social imaginary. It deepens the exploration of the phenomenon of society's self-institution by revealing how society is the institution of a symbolical mode of interaction with the natural world that regulates human co-existence by establishing the parameters of the world's *intelligibility*. This establishment of society as space of shared meaning in fact presupposes that the space of unity/identity be visible to the individuals that compose the collectivity. In other words, human power, the power of society's self-institution, can only become effective if it is visibly *represented*. We shall see later on how this insight was already central to Durkheim's sociology.

Lefort accounts for this essential reflective dimension of the social through a word play in French that uses the nominalisation of the verb *mettre* (with its dual meaning of establishment/establishing) to account for the dynamic representative aspect of the process of society's self-institution: as Lefort puts it, a society's '*mise en sens*' (the creation and institutionalisation of the meaning by which it creates its identity) is both a *mise en forme* (the establishing/establishment of a specific form of human coexistence), and *a mise en scène*, a staging,

a performed representation.[23] This symbolic self-representative function—in other words the creation of a sacred—emanates from the social imaginary and is crucial to the establishment of a social space in which differences and conflicts can be absorbed in a common identity of meaning. In that respect, Lefort reveals, it is fundamentally political, whether it institutes society from outside of society—in which case the political function is performed by religion—or from within it, by ideology as self-denying 'immanent transcendence.'

Lefort's analysis of the fundamental political problem facing all societies and the role played by symbolic representation in its overcoming offers a new conception of what is political. It deepens the distinction made by Castoriadis between '*le politique*' and '*la politique*' by revealing how the emergence of a separate political sphere in modern society, or for that matter of other spheres, was in itself a political phenomenon but one that is not recognized as such by modern thought. What was involved is the emergence of autonomous sub-systems of social life (politics but also the economic, the legal, the religious) presumably unconnected with one another. This emergence, Lefort suggests, involved an epistemological shift, whose social meaning has been obfuscated by its interpretation by the Enlightenment, interpretation that accounts for this new social diversification as the triumph of science over superstition and tradition. As Castoriadis stressed in one of his articles published posthumously, this rationalism is in fact as essentially tautological as the religious systems that support traditional societies: the rationalisation of society is understood as a *sui-generis* phenomenon moved by the power of reason. In other words, rationalisation is supposed to explain itself. In fact, as Castoriadis stresses, no type of society can ever escape tautological self-justification as no society can escape from the circle of its own self-institution/creation to rely on a justification outside of itself.[24]

Lefort's exploration of modern ideology examines the implications of this circular process of self-creation as it is mediated by the symbolic. The implications are not only relevant for political philosophy but for general sociology as a whole, in other words for the understanding the way all human communities institute themselves, not only those having experienced the radical breakthrough to modernity. In this respect, it can be said that Lefort elaborates the project of a political anthropology. A society, Lefort suggests, can only be understood in the terms of its *own* definition of power, which implies

a specific symbolical response given by human beings to the problem of their coexistence. Lefort thus suggests a kind of anthropological continuity behind the discontinuity that separates traditional heteronomous societies—where symbolical representation is performed by a religious discourse that speaks from a locus *beyond* the social—from autonomous societies where the same role is performed by a political power instituted *within* the social.

Both religion and politics partake of the same symbolic logic that commands the relationship of humanity to the world outside itself and its social organisation. The symbolic representative function that emanates from the social imaginary—be it indirectly through a religious discourse or through a self-consciously political one—is fundamentally *political* in so far as it *institutes* society, be it from outside the social or from within. In this respect, even religion is an expression of human sovereignty, albeit a confused one. Lefort's' discussion of the theologico-political logic of societies raises the question of the survival of the sacred in modern secularisation: the fact that religion has been progressively relegated to the sphere of private beliefs must not be taken to mean that the religious impulse that has always been central to the establishment of a political order does not continue to exercise an influence. It may in fact simply be creating a new symbolic matrix of social interaction.[25]

III. Durkheim: The Symbolic Dimension of Power; The Role Performed by the Modern State

Lefort's analysis of the political role performed by ideology and religion alike brings us to the pioneering work of Durkheim. Its major insight was indeed the same realisation that the need of human societies for the symbolic identity provided by the sacred outlived modern secularisation and that the state had come to fulfil the function hitherto performed by religion. This insight emerged from Durkheim's parallel reflection on religion and politics. There are indeed two strands to Durkheim's sociology: on the one hand, the exploration of the political and religious dimension of all societies and of the role played by cultural representations in these two dimensions; on the other, the analysis of the specific significance of democratic politics in modern societies. However, although the two reflections were linked in Durkheim's thinking, they were never explicitly synthesized in his own writings. One can argue

that such a synthesis is not only possible but also highlights the way Durkheim's research was already close to the central concerns of Castoriadis and Lefort's social theory and political philosophy, if not at the beginning of his career, certainly in his mature works.

The fact that the political dimension of Durkheim's work received much less attention that this theory of the sacred can be attributed to the fact that his reflection on the modern state and democracy only came to light in the nineteen-fifties when a course of lectures was rescued from obscurity and published by a Turkish academic. It can be argued that the definition of democracy these lectures elaborated is in many ways convergent with Castoriadis' notion of autonomy.[26] In democracy, Durkheim indeed identified a fundamentally cultural phenomenon that involved a particular re-configuration of society that fulfilled potentialities inherent to a human capacity by creating social relationships that unlock the capacity for autonomous creation and at the same time extend human subjectivity. Durkheim discussed this capacity as that of 'the mental' but what he designated through this term can be seen to be very close to what Castoriadis has defined as the imaginary specificity of the human species.

It can thus be suggested that Castoriadis' notion of social imaginary is foreshadowed in Durkheim's notion of *conscience collective* or rather the way it evolved away from a moral definition towards a cultural one associated with the idea of collective representations.[27] There is of course no documented evidence that Castoriadis ever engaged in depth with the writings of Durkheim as he did with those of Weber and this suggestion must therefore invoke a kind of intellectual affinity that can only be explained in the terms of Castoriadis' own notion of imaginary.[28] It can be said that Durkheim's ideas so permeated the French intellectual imaginary that there is in fact no need to demonstrate a direct influence: in his critical engagement with structuralism, for example, Castoriadis could not have helped but be confronted with Durkheim's work, even if only to assess the extent to which structuralism selectively appropriated its legacy.[29]

The notion of collective consciousness has often been wrongly over-interpreted as the sign of a fundamental tendency to hypostasise society, criticism that was facilitated by Durkheim's tendency to use organic metaphors. Whilst

Durkheim's conception of the social certainly stresses the autonomy of the social from the individual, it is clear however that it sees that autonomy as an autonomy that is immanent, not transcendent, and therefore not radically separate from individual experience. In Durkheim's understanding of society, *conscience collective* does not hover above individual consciousness. In this respect, it is like the social imaginary of Castoriadis, a form of collective mental activity that exists not above the minds of individuals but *in* them and *through* them.

The collective consciousness of Durkheim constitutes a mental form of power that can only be known through its manifestations, products or effects. As such it has remained opaque to the human mind itself. As Castoriadis suggests in his own discussion of the social imaginary, it has traditionally been designated as the soul and its creative power attributed to a non-human force, that of the poetic spirit of the divine. Durkheim's analysis of this human power in his 1898 text "Représentations Individuelles et Representations Collectives" suggests that this alienation/externalisation is essential to the effectiveness of social life, in other words to the creation of social cohesion.[30] Social life indeed actively fosters the illusion of its own complete externality to the individual psyche because it is through the authority that it thus creates that it can enforce the attachment of individuals to objects that are outside earthly life and enlist the loyalty of individuals to values and meanings beyond their immediate needs. In this respect, Durkheim's concern with the phenomenon of social authority implies a social psychology, which however remained implicit in his writings.[31]

In Castoriadis' work, however, this social psychology is fully developed and takes the form of Freudian theory. Like Durkheim's writings, it stresses the positive role played by the power of social authority. Social authority is a form of violence but this violence—which Durkheim referred to as social despotism—breaks the closure of the human infant's psyche, its almost psychotic reduction of the world to itself and resulting sense of omnipotence. By imposing on it the social form of the individual and another source and modality of meaning—the social imaginary significations—society pushes the psyche towards an awareness of the difference between itself and others, towards a split between the world of subjective experience and the world of

common meanings, that is ultimately to an acceptance of the individual psyche's *limitations*.[32]

In that respect, Castoriadis' reflection on individual autonomy is inextricably bound with the critique of the individualistic fiction of modern thought pioneered by Durkheim in such texts as "L'Individualisme et les Intellectuels". Like Durkheim, Castoriadis stresses the way the free autonomous individual posited by European thought is a *social* construct, the end product of European culture even if European Culture has posited it as its absolute self-defined point of origin and fused it with the natural biological individual.[33] Individual subjectivity is in fact dependent on the social imaginary even if the social imaginary is born of the radical imaginary of the human psyche.[34]

The affinity between the understanding of the specificity of modern social creativity pioneered by Castoriadis and refined by Lefort's analysis of ideology with that first elaborated by Durkheim can be said to be most apparent in Durkheim's conception of the political which underpins his understanding of the new social role performed by the modern state. This conception of the political emerged from Durkheim's famous analysis of the role played by religion in the self-institution of human societies. The introduction of the religious *problématique* in Durkheim's reflection, which he himself dated back to 1895 indeed signals a clear move away from a traditional conception of the state as the organ through which social life expresses itself—in other words political power as delegation—and a deeper engagement with the way the political transcends the political institution of the state and is in fact central to all social life.[35] In this respect, Durkheim's reflection on religion can be said to reveal a first insight into the need to distinguish between what Castoriadis and Lefort both have called *le politique* and *la politique*, the political dimension of social life and the social specialised sphere of politics.

Durkheim's article "Sociologie et Sciences Sociales" published in 1907 was first to suggests that societies always implement complex mechanisms of domination/subordination as regards individuals and that therefore, all societies are political through and through.[36] The immediate impact of this discovery, however, was initially reduced by the little attention given by Durkheim to the reality of groups within society and the question of their antagonism.

The question of conflict re-emerged with the exploration of the specific nature of religious authority in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. In this book, Durkheim looked at the way social exchange finds an incarnation in 'vast' symbolic systems whose renewal it constantly feeds. Social communication is in fact instituted by these systems in so far as they render manifest and thereby create the cohesion and identity of society. As a result, the essence of social constraint does not reside in material sanctions but in the pre-existence of symbolic systems that are the incarnation of collective representations. Durkheim's notion of social authority here lost its initial idealistic connotations as it merged with the figure of anonymous public opinion.

The moral power of modern public opinion is in fact of the same nature as the sacred defined by religion. The sacred indeed confers on certain individuals a superiority that they do not possess of themselves but which emanates from the collective imagination of society. The influence of such individuals is derived from the aspirations of society itself, of which they become the voice. Through his analysis of the nature of authority, Durkheim reveals the fact that human power is always rooted in the obfuscation of its *social* origin. Or to put in a way that reveals more clearly the affinity of Durkheim's analysis of the role of religion with the theme of heteronomy present in the work of Castoriadis and Lefort's exploration of the symbolic logic of societies, Durkheim reveals the close connection between religion and the question of sovereignty: the sovereignty of humanity over its own destiny can only be made manifest through its very denial; like Lefort, Durkheim sees in the religious sacred both the fulfilment and negation of human power.

Durkheim's investigation of the function of the sacred reveals the way the sacred as foundation of human power operates according to a fundamental dualism. The force expressed by the sacred gives birth both to the idea of power and to that of causality, which thus become intertwined: humans do not see themselves as actors but identify in power the cause of all social change. In their antagonistic structure dividing the world between sacred and profane, pure and impure, religious beliefs contribute to the production of social morphology. The antagonistic social differentiation they produce, however, also constitute the only framework within which individuals can conceive of their identity. They give an expression to the creative freedom of humanity but in a way that binds individuals together through ties of obligation

and subordination. They create the only framework within which individuals can conceive of their own identity. They thus institute the unity, cohesion of the social whole through common obedience to heteronomous rules. Here Durkheim's discussion of the logic that governs the cultural construction of identity is close to Lefort's notion of its necessary 'staging' (*mise en forme/mise en scène/mise en sens*): human power can only realise itself by taking form in a cultural representation that, as it is governed by the sacred, paradoxically contributes to concealing human power at the same time as it expresses it.[37]

According to Durkheim, there are two fundamental categories of collective representations: those that are constituted by a binary logic of oppositions and those, like a clan's totem, that are unitary. Both are produced by the social environment. The unitary representation of society that the sacred produces in divine form elevates itself, so to speak, above the social realm that acquires consciousness of itself indirectly through its refracted image. The multiplicity of representations that is produced by sacred dualism then go back down into the social realm, providing its actors with the mental categories that enable them to decipher the world but only in subservience to the integrative representations. Social life is thus seen by Durkheim to oscillate between phases of centripetal concentration when creative collective effervescence in the form of religious ceremonies produces the symbols of unity and phases of centrifugal dispersion when the intensity of social activity is relaxed to allow engagement with more prosaic activities and the dispersion of groups.

This phenomenon is not only characteristic of tribal societies, it is also seen by Durkheim to explain the way during the French revolution, secular ideas such as reason, liberty or *patrie* were directly transformed by public opinion into sacred entities that became the basis of a new religion and how this constitution of secular cults was necessarily followed by a loss of concentration, that is also by an explosion of social conflicts. Durkheim's references to modern political experiences such as the French Revolution in the context of a discussion of pre-modern religion points to the homology that exists between the religious and the political as outlined by Lefort. Both are the product of the logic that allows human societies through the subjugation/enthrallment of the collective to the sacred—in other works, to heteronomy—to create their identities on the plane of cultural representations but also, at the same time,

at the level of social institutions, to allocate individuals and groups of individuals to the different functions that serve the culturally created collective body.

The sacred is essentially a cultural representation but with empirical consequences: it underpins the hierarchical relationships that structure human societies. The sacred simultaneously produces both social unity and social antagonisms but as a result of its constraining logic, antagonisms always remain contained by the definition of unity/identity on which the possibility of differentiation originally depends. There can be no antagonisms without unity, the two being mediated by social differentiation. In other words, the sacred produces difference and conflict at the same time as it produces unity. Although Durkheim, in response to what he saw as new divisions in modern European societies, was foremost concerned with the need to highlight the unity that exists behind the existence of social conflicts and thus did not discuss conflict as such, it is clear that Durkheim's understanding of the symbolic logic that dominates the cultural construction of social unity is not incompatible with the way Lefort puts the notion of conflict at the centre of social theory.

Far from being essentially conservative and dominated by moral definitions of social unity as many twentieth century commentators saw it, Durkheim's social theory gives a central place to the reality of social conflict, although mostly through the discussion of the possibility of social change that exists despite the inherent inertia fostered by the heteronomous logic of the sacred. In this respect, Durkheim's sociology of religion is fundamentally concerned with the question of human sovereignty and the social creativity that is the vehicle of human power. The sacred is a cultural phenomenon superimposed on the natural context of human existence. As such, it confers on humanity a certain degree of power over its own destiny even if in a first moment, it is through a denial of this power: human societies can only survive in subservience to their gods but the gods themselves, as cultural representations, cannot survive without human beings and their ritualistic practices, which they have given birth to and through which they maintain their authority. Durkheim's analysis of the cultural logic of human societies thus reveals the way the autonomy of cultural representations does not only serve the

reproduction of the same but also the production of the new with consequences at the level of the empirical institutional structures of societies.

Durkheim's social theory is thus fundamentally concerned with the self-transformative capacity of human communities, which according to Castoriadis and Lefort is only totally fulfilled in democratic sovereignty, understood not as a set of political institutions or procedures but as social regime, that is as mode of social organisation. Durkheim's specific reflection on the state contributes to this understanding of democracy as a social regime underpinned by specific cultural values. His reflection has not lost its relevance, particularly in our era dominated by the reduction of the self-transformative capacity of humanity to technological/scientific know-how.

This reflection was pursued in a course of lectures given at the beginning of Durkheim's career in Bordeaux, then again at the Sorbonne. Among those lectures, the lectures on morality attracted the most attention. The lectures on the relationship between social power and the state power are however crucial in the way they confirm the essentially political dimension of Durkheim's social theory as formulated through his sociology of religion as they show how in parallel with his work on primitive religion, Durkheim pursued a reflection on the specificity of modern political societies more or less explicitly contrasted with pre-modern heteronymous societies. In this reflection, Durkheim does not use the term political in the narrow sense of the activity specific to the state or to the sphere of beliefs and debates surrounding the question of the organisation of society. He uses it in a much more fundamental sense that evokes society as a whole, and especially its morphology and structure. In other words, the way Durkheim uses the word political evokes the distinction made by both Castoriadis and Lefort between *la politique* and *le politique*.

The Elementary Forms indeed led him to identify the significance of *le politique*. His discussion of *la politique*, of the institutions of deliberation and authority in the lectures collected in *Leçons de sociologie*, operates against an implicit awareness of the way *la politique* as autonomous sphere of human activity is only relevant only in so far as it is a manifestation of a specific form of society, political society. In his lectures, Durkheim devoted his attention to a definition of the specificity of political society and identified the existence of the state and its authority as a key-distinguishing element. For

him, however, the existence of government is in itself not enough to define political society as it is encountered in other societies, for example patriarchal ones. The notion of control over a territory is not a significant criterion either: Durkheim stresses its recent historical appearance in the European context as opposed to the importance of population control that preceded it. Here Durkheim notes in passing the value shift that marked the transition to a geographical notion of power and the way it entailed the abandonment of a traditional conception of society where social identity centred on religion was primary.

According to Durkheim, political societies are distinguished by their inner complexity, the way they incorporate a variety of different groups and the way these groups are kept in a secondary position through a common allegiance to an authority that is itself not subjected to any other superior authority. Durkheim rejects the idea that complex political societies evolved naturally from simpler patriarchal societies but posits a fundamental opposition between complex political societies and simple societies that do not know the authority of the state: these societies can be composed of a variety of sub-groups but these groups are not differentiated by their status; they are all on the same plane. Durkheim's discussion of the essential difference between stateless tribal societies and political societies evokes the political anthropology of Pierre Clastres influential for Lefort's and Gauchet's work, the way it stresses the link that exits between tribal societies' denial of historical change and their refusal to constitute an autonomous sphere of state power.[38] However, as we shall see, Durkheim's awareness of the specificity of political societies also leads him to contrast the social equality of stateless societies with the equality sought by modern democracy in the way that converges with the way Lefort's work relativised the radical opposition that Clastres drew between supposedly totally egalitarian and free societies 'against the state' and essentially oppressive societies subject to the state.

In this respect, like Castoriadis and Lefort, Durkheim offers a much more nuanced conception of modern state power than the one formulated by the influential strand of French thought exemplified in the work of Foucault, which also underpins Clastres' discussion of the state.[39] State power is not only repressive but also creative: it establishes a totally new relationship between society and individuals. As Durkheim suggests, political society

in fact distinguishes itself though the new type of morality it relies upon. This morality operates at the level of the relationship between the individual and the sovereign authority represented by a special group of functionaries that constitute the state. In modern European culture, the state has become confused with political society through the notion of nation but the two are not fused: the state is in fact a specific, privileged organ of political society.

The state as distinct from administrative sub-groupings alone possesses the power to think and act on behalf of society as a whole. This power of course partakes of collective mental life as it expresses itself through cultural representations. Collective representations give their impulsion to the state. The state, however, is the locus of a specific *autonomous* mental activity. Although this mental activity is collective in nature, it can in fact be in tension with the state of mind of the collectivity as a whole. The state is therefore not just an extension of social authority. It assumes its own organising function. It concentrates and processes all the ideas that circulate within the sub-groups of political society to arrive at its own conclusions. It formulates new representations that although they involve the collectivity are not its direct creation. In that respect, the state is not the incarnation of a collective mind. The collective consciousness, or to use Castoriadis' term the social imaginary, indeed possesses little self-awareness. In contrast, the representations produced by the state are much more reflective and self-aware.

Durkheim thus rejects the traditional definition of the state in terms of executive power as essentially misleading as the state's activity is fact purely deliberative, fully engaged in the production of mental representation, to which action is secondary. In Durkheim's functional organic imagery, the state is defined as the brain of society. It directs collective life but its activity is essentially mental, and most importantly, it pursues its own ends. Durkheim's definition of the state fully counters the liberal conception that considers that the state's role is purely defensive, restricted to the safeguarding of the natural autonomy of the individual. This conception sees the other ends pursued by modern states such as defence as only motivated by problems that will be superseded by a more efficient protection of natural rights. For liberal thought, the state's natural evolution is to become simpler in its sphere of activity. The state by definition is minimal. Durkheim however refutes this

reductive conception by invoking the empirical historical evolution of European states that has seen them assume more and more complex functions to argue that this growth of state has been motivated by its need to pursue other ends besides the sole defence of individual rights.[40]

In his discussion of the social role of the state, Durkheim's purpose is to reveal the appearance, with the birth of the democratic state, of a radically new category of ends, ends that do not define the collective good in opposition to the interests of individuals but also do not limit themselves to the notion of natural right. This is not to say that Durkheim subscribes to a Hegelian conception of the state as pursuing ends that transcend individuals. Durkheim in fact shows how the Hegelian definition of the state corresponds to a type of society where political ends are essentially religious and formulated through a rejection of the profane world in which individuals exist. He argues that history has in fact seen this subservient status of individuals overturned by a totally new form of religion for which the individual is the supreme good. In this new value system, the individual occupies the place erstwhile occupied by the gods and the state must work to reveal the individual' autonomy conceived as divine-like and intrinsic.

This new religion, the cult of individual autonomy, underpins the culture of modern societies and is irreversible but it engenders a fundamental contradiction. The expansion of the state that accompanies it shows that the governmental organs of society have to assume more and more responsibilities in the pursuit of the state's ends that are supposed to be defined by the natural autonomy of the individual. This suggests that the rights of the individual are in fact dependant on the state, not on a biological reality. In other words, the history of the modern state can only be understood if one rejects the liberal pos-tulate of natural right and acknowledges the fact that the institutionalisation of what liberal thought defined as natural was actually performed by the state.

There is thus no antinomy between the state and the individual. The state and the modern notion of the individual have developed in conjunction with one another and in some aspects, the modern individual is in fact the product of the modern state. The individual is produced by society at the time it asserts the cultural autonomy of the collectivity from nature, in a way that

gives birth to a more complex form of mental life that fosters subjectivity. A central function of the state is to liberate individual subjectivity which is limited by the despotic normative of the social collectivity.

Durkheim offers an individualistic conception of the state that asserts the central role it must play in the *creation* of rights, not only their defence. It must be stressed however that this creative role is only a deliberative self-reflective extension of the creativity of society itself: the state actualises the faith of the modern social imaginary, to refer back to Castoriadis, to the project of individual autonomy. In this respect, the democratic state appears radically different from other types. This difference is not accounted for in traditional political definitions that focus on the numbers involved in government. Historical evolution indeed reveals the inadequacy of such definitions as they will describe as democratic two fundamentally different types of society: tribal societies in which social authority emanates directly from the representations elaborated by the collective mass and modern political societies, where the state—no longer sacred and above society—becomes responsible for the elaboration of collective values in a deliberative process with the collective mass.

Durkheim thus argues that democracy is the term that best refers to a fully political society that can only exist though the state, not its abolition as suggested by the definition of democracy as self-government as it erases the difference between tribal societies and democratic society. Democracy considerably extends the sphere of public deliberation and therefore that of collective, state consciousness to the point where nothing cannot be questioned, establishing a totally new relationship to the past. Democratic society thus involves a fundamentally different notion of equality than that involved in tribal societies. This equality accompanies the birth of a new critical, self-transformative capacity as society reaches a fuller awareness of itself though governmental reflexivity, a self-transformative capacity totally absent from societies characterised by a simple social equality as regards the absence of autonomous power, that is essentially non-reflective.

Democracy is accompanied not only by the extension of governmental consciousness and the growth of state power but also by closer communication between governmental consciousness and the consciousness of the mass of

individuals. Democracy is the form of political organisation though which society becomes the most self-aware and one characterised by a considerable expansion of humanity's critical faculty:

> [D]emocracy thus seems to us as the political form through which society arrives at the purest consciousness of itself. The degree to which a people is democratic is a function of the degree to which deliberation, reflection, critical thought play a role in the conduct of public affairs.[41]

Modern liberal democracy is thus seen by Durkheim to fulfil a potentiality of human creativity. As a cultural process, its birth in Europe involved a long transformation unfolding over centuries, transformation that involved state development. Still attached to the functional interpretations of social change which informed his early work, Durkheim gives two interpretations of this slow process of social change, the first seeing the change as dictated by the functional needs of bigger and more complex societies. The other interpretation is the one that extends more fruitfully his exploration of the role of cultural representations in social life and points to Castoriadis' definition of democracy as project of autonomy. Durkheim suggests that democracy is the social form that best corresponds to the modern conception of the individual in terms of autonomy.

Like Castoriadis, Durkheim stresses the fact that autonomy is not pure rebellion against external constraints but is in fact a process of socialisation that involves the acceptance by the individual of the existence of limits and therefore an activity of self-limitation. Autonomy is thus for Durkheim as for Castoriadis the formulation by the collectivity of its own laws. Like Lefort's reflection, Durkheim's interpretation of democracy also engages closely with the question of political representation in a way that leads him to re-assess Rousseau's political philosophy to identify both its strength—the assertion of the democratic origin of all human sovereignty—and its weakness, the reduction of democracy to the expression of the general will that fuses society with the state.[42] Implicitly, though, Durkheim in fact re-asserts Rousseau's insight into the creative role of the state as fulfilment of human social power.

Durkheim defines the relationship between the modern state and individual as one of both mutual dependency and tension: the state and the individual

need to protect their autonomy from one another but that autonomy is itself dependant on their relationship. The state loosened social bonds in a way that allowed individuals to acquire critical autonomy. Reciprocally, the state's legitimacy relies on its capacity to foster individual autonomy, which paradoxically it can only do if it maintains its distance from individuals as a mass. Durkheim's discussion of the specificity of democratic culture and the deeper role it confers on the state thus leads him to identify the central problem of modernity. The democratic state is the creation of autonomous individuals but it must transcend the feelings and desires of individuals if it is to promote autonomy at the collective level. Durkheim identifies the law as the sphere in which this tension is resolved and in this, he again anticipates the work of Lefort and of Lefort's erstwhile student, Gauchet.[43]

This importance of the law is crucial to the understanding of modern autonomy. Autonomy, as Castoriadis, Lefort and Gauchet interpret it, does not involve the construction of values but of laws consciously put at the service of values. The values safeguarded by autonomous human law are not radically new: as Gauchet stresses, they are in fact in full continuity with the ground values of all human societies.[44] This continuity is also stressed by Durkheim's definition of democracy as a cultural phenomenon that involves a re-configuration of the way humans institute their societies but one that fulfils the potentialities inherent in the mental specificity of the human species. To this as we have seen in our discussion of Lefort, Mauss added the notion that all human societies are instituted around the recognition of individual subjectivity, which means that the modern individualism that Durkheim saw as underpinning the institutions of modern societies involves both a rupture and a continuity with the values of pre-modern societies.

This is where Gauchet's *The Disenchantment of the World* can be said to extend Durkheim's intuition into the religious dimension of the modern re-configuration.[45] Combining Durkheim's evolutionary conception of religion with Max Weber's insights into the political implications of Christianity's other-worldly model of salvation, it offers an interpretation of the role played by religion in the 'sacral transformation' that allowed the transition of some human societies to autonomy. Monotheism is shown to have created a religious transcendence that provided the model for the transformation of the

earthly world in the name of otherworldly values. Where Gauchet's work fundamentally departs from an original Durkheimian inspiration however is the way it rejects Durkheim's assertion that the sacred is essential to the social.[46] It argues indeed that modern societies have been disengaging from the sacred as mode of self-institution, and that the secular religions to which Durkheim attributed so much importance were in fact essentially transitional phenomena. His work thus elaborates a theory of modernity that stresses it de-sacralisation of human power.

Gauchet's theory of the paradoxical role played by Christianity in this de-sacralisation, it must be said, overemphasises the particular role played by Western Christianity in the birth of modern political sovereignty in a way that is rather dismissive of other forms of monotheism.[47] This emphasis on Christianity is however tempered by an insistence on the contingency of the circumstances that in Europe allowed human sovereignty to emancipate itself from religion and the heteronomous logic religion game form to: this contingency involves the encounter, following the demise of empire, between Christianity and an imaginary inherited from Germanic tribes, that of the traditional nation which saw in the figure of the king the embodiment of an enduring collective.[48] As a result of the tension between feudalism and the imperial aspirations of the Church, the monarch of divine right acquired a direct political legitimacy as intermediary between the earthly and transcendental realms. The problematic dimension of Gauchet's theory of modern disenchantment thus need not detract from the recognition of the way it contributes to the understanding of the radical change brought about by the emergence of the state and more importantly to the conceptualisation of early state formation. In addition, its analysis of the logic of state reconstruction in Western Europe opens an exploration of the genesis of the modern imaginary of sovereignty.

Building on Lefort's contrast between historical societies in and primitive societies where power is contained and history rejected, Gauchet reveals the way the creation of the state transforms not only the interpretation of anthropologically durable values such as the value of individual life but the modality of their practical implementation. It suggests how sacred kingship opens a way out of religiously conditioned cultural definitions of power, that is, out of the primitive complete fusion of religion and social life. The appearance

of the state as a separate centre of power is shown to free human action from the stasis of primitive societies.

Gauchet's discussion of the birth of the state has profound implications for the understanding of the birth of civilisations. It also has much to contribute to the analysis of the specificity of West European civilisation, in its intensified pursuit of human sovereignty politically and economically. In this respect also, it extends what Durkheim first noted on the wide implications of the cultural transformation associated with the appearance in Western Europe of the modern nation-state: the reconfiguration of West European societies, in particular, is seen to involve a radically new cultural interpretation of time that consecrates the autonomy of the individual. This birth of individualism is shown to involve the absolutist evolution of the European monarchical state. Gauchet's work highlights the paradoxical logic through which absolutism, by intensifying subservience to political authority, facilitated the emancipation of individual subjectivity from its traditional containment by tradition.[49]

Gauchet's analysis of the birth of modern subjectivity is almost exclusively focused on the question of the formation of political modernity and democracy. As part of this, its major focus is the birth of political individualism.[50] As a result, it rather neglects the other aspect of modernity that Castoriadis showed to be in competition with the project of autonomy: the project of rational mastery. In a recent publication, however, Gauchet has come back to his theory of modern disenchantment and clarified the way his theory highlights the appearance with modernity of a radically new, *transformative* conception of power. This power, Gauchet argues, was and still is essentially religious in inspiration, motivated by a vision of otherness but modern power turned this vision inwards in a way that gave birth to a new quest, the quest for the transformation of the empirical world. This, it is clear, has implications for the understanding of the other dimension of modern power which Castoriadis saw as permanently rivalling with the democratic project of autonomy: the quest for a limitless expansion of rational mastery, which reached its apex with the birth of capitalism.

Gauchet's work suggests ways of overcoming the stark and unsustainable dichotomy, which Castoriadis established in his early work between democracy and capitalism or between the political and economic dimensions of modernity.

As Arnason and Wagner have argued, these two facets of modernity were bound by more than historical coincidence and Gauchet's theory of the dual genesis of the modern state and individualism potentially sheds lights on the central role played by the state in the growth of another form of modern individualism, which first appeared in the English context.[51] Economic, possessive individualism did not only feed the growth of capitalism but also established the market as ideal model of autonomy. Such an investigation might thus in turn shed light on the circumstances behind the constitutive weakness of British liberal thought, as first noted by Durkheim: its inability to recognise its own debt to the development of the modern state. These questions however exceed the objective of this article. For now, they shall therefore have to remain unexplored.

Notes

[1]   Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1987.

[2]   Cornelius Castoriadis, "Institution of Society and Religion" in *World in Fragments*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1997, pp. 311-330.

[3]   Cornelius Castoriadis, "The Imaginary in the Modern World," *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, pp. 156-159.

[4]   Cornelius Castoriadis, "The Imaginary: Creation in the Socio-Historical Domain" in *World in Fragments*, pp. 3-18.

[5]   "[. . . E]very society defines and develops an image of the natural world, of the universe in which it lives, attempting in every instance to make of it a signifying whole in which a place has to be made not only for the natural objects and beings important for the life of the collectivity, but also for the collectivity itself, establishing finally, a certain world-order," *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, p. 149.

[6]   For Castoriadis' commentary on Merleau-Ponty, see "Merleau-Ponty and the Weight of Ontological Tradition" in *World in Fragments*, pp. 273-310. For a discussion of the relationship of Castoriadis' social theory to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, see Arnason, *Civilizations in Dispute*, Leiden, Brill, 2003, pp. 228-229.

[7]   The freedom of the instituting imaginary is however not absolute as it can only realise itself on the basis of what has already been historically instituted.

[8]   Castoriadis, "Radical Imaginary, Instituting Society, Instituted Society," *Imaginary Institution of Society*, pp. 369-373.

[9]   Cornelius Castoriadis, "Radical Imagination and the Social Instituting Imaginary" in *The Castoriadis Reader*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, pp. 319-337. See also "Imagination,

Imaginaire, Reflexion" in *Fait et à Faire*, Paris, Seuil, 1997, as this text expands on the other text first published in English in *Rethinking Imagination: Culture and Creativity*, eds. Gillian Robinson and John Rundell, London and New York, Routedge.

10 Castoriadis, "Imaginary Creation in the Socio-Historical Domain" in *World in Fragments*, p. 17.

11 Castoriadis, "The State of the Subject Today" in *World in Fragments*, p. 159.

12 Castoriadis, "Instituted Heteronomy: Alienation as Social Phenomenon," *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, pp. 108-110.

13 Castoriadis, "The Greek Polis and the Creation of Democracy" in *The Castoriadis Reader*, pp. 267-289.

14 Cornelius Castoriadis, "Complexité, Magmas, Histoire" in *Fait et à Faire*, Paris, Seuil, pp. 216-225.

15 For Castoriadis, the pursuit of rational mastery was not only made to bear on the natural world but also on the social world, a central feature of totalitarianism: "The Social Regime in Russia" in *The Castoriadis Reader*, pp. 218-238.

16 Lefort's discussion of the significance of the imaginary of sovereignty that underpins liberal democratic institutions puts him at odds with Castoriadis' definition of democracy modelled on the Greek experience which stresses that democratic sovereignty can only be direct democracy. For Castoriadis, liberal democracy is merely another form of elective oligarchy. See "Does the Idea of Revolution Still Make Sense?" trans. David Ames Curtis, in *Thesis Eleven*, no. 26, 1990, pp. 123-138.

17 The case for the essentially political dimension of Durkheim's sociologically is made by Lacroix's book, *Durkheim et le Politique*, Montréal, Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Nationales, 1981.

18 Claude Lefort, "L'Échange et la Lutte des Hommes" in *Les Formes de l'Histoire*, Paris, Gallimard, 1978, pp. 21-77.

19 Lefort, "Société sans Histoire et Historicité" in *Formes de l'Histoire*, pp. 46-77.

20 Claude Lefort, "The Question of Democracy" in *The Political Forms of Modern Society*, Cambridge, Polity, 1988, pp. 17-18.

21 Claude Lefort, "Outline of the Genesis of Ideology in Modern Societies" in *The Political Forms of Modern Society*, pp. 139-180.

22 Claude Lefort, "The Logic of Totalitarianism" in *The Political Forms of Modern Society*, pp. 273-291.

23 Claude Lefort, "The Permanence of the Theologico-Political?" in *Democracy and Political Theory*, Cambridge, Polity, 1988, pp. 216-217.

24 Cornelius Castoriadis, "La 'Rationalité' du Capitalisme" in *Figures du Pensable*, Paris, Seuil, 1999, pp. 67-68.

25 This question of the fate of the sacred in modernity has been pursued by Lefort's erstwhile student and collaborator, Marcel Gauchet (*La Religion dans la Démocratie*,

Paris, Gallimard, 1998). Gauchet argues that as religion has become a purely individual experience, there is no longer a sacred. Luc Ferry, on the other hand, whilst subscribing to Gauchet's account of modern disenchantment, argues that new forms of the sacred are taking form in modernity *L'Homme-dieu ou le Sens de la Vie*, Paris, Grasset, 1996. On their debate, see Luc Ferry and Marcel Gauchet, *La Religion après le Religieux*, Paris, Grasset, 2004. See part 3 below for a discussion of Gauchet's analysis of the desacralisation of modern societies.

26 Emile Durkheim, *Leçons de Sociologie*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1950. This book was translated into English under the rather uninspiring title of *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957.

27 Durkheim's use of the term 'representation' must not be taken as evidence of what post-structuralist writers have described as the idealistic myth of presence. The way Durkheim uses the term is in itself an attack on another type of 'myth of presence'. Durkheim's discussion of the specificity of human mental representations counters the materialistic myth of reductionist biologism and the way it makes of mental phenomena mere shadows, representations of the only presence it can recognise, the material presence of the physiological substratum, that of the brain and its chemical processes. Emile Durkheim, "Représentation Individuelles et Representations Collectives" in *Sociologie et Philosophie*, Paris, PUF, 1967, pp. 1-38. An English translation can be found in *Sociology and Philosophy*, New York, Free Press, 1974, pp. 1-34.

28 In my reading of Castoriadis, I have only encountered one cursory reference to Durkheim in "Religion and the Institution of Society" in *World in Fragments*, p. 318.

29 Castoriadis' critique of anthropological structuralism is formulated in the first part of *The Imaginary Institution*, "Social Imaginary Significations," pp. 135-145.

30 Durkheim, "Représentation Individuelles et Représentations Collectives."

31 Durkheim's sociology is in many ways directed against the introspective method of his day. It calls for a new type of psychology that presents many affinities with Freud's thinking in the way it points to the existence of something like the unconscious: the 'conscience collective' is not fully 'conscious'. Whether Durkheim came into contact with Freud's ideas or not, it is clear that early developments in German experimental psychology which revealed the limited role of consciousness in the functions of the psyche were known to him from the beginning of his career and played a big role in the direction taken by his thought. On Durkheim's awareness of German psychology, see Lacroix, Bernard, *Durkheim et le Politique*, pp. 50-62.

32 Castoriadis, "From the Monad to Autonomy" in *World in Fragments*, pp. 172-195.

33 Durkheim, "L'Individualisme et les Intellectuels" in *La Science Sociale et l'Action*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1970, pp. 261-278. An English translation

can be found in ed. R.N. Bellah, *Emile Durkheim on Morality and Society*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1973.

34 Castoriadis' treatment of the question of human imagination draws on the themes of Romanticism. However, the term 'radical imaginary' is used to free the notion of imagination from its involvement with the notion of Subject. Imagination is not the activity of a subject, although it contributes to the constitution of subjectivity.

35 In a letter reflecting on his intellectual evolution, Durkheim referred to the revelation in 1895 of the central role of religion and the way it had radically altered the direction of his research. This letter is quoted in Lacroix, *Durkheim et le Politique*, p. 131.

36 Durkheim, "Sociologie et Sciences Sociales" in *La Science Sociale et l'Action*, p. 137. An English translation can be found in Traugott, Mark, *Emile Durkheim on Institutional Analysis*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1978.

37 For a more detailed exploration of the meaning of this wordplay central to Lefort's theory of political representation, see my "Democracy as Project of Individual and Collective Sovereignty" in *Thesis Eleven*, no. 75, 2003, pp. 71-97.

38 Pierre Clastres, *Society Against The State*, New York, Unizen books, 1977.

39 This conception of power is expressed in the first volume of the *History of Sexuality*. It constitutes a de-subjectivised extension of Machiavelli's political philosophy. As Foucault puts it the introduction, "[. . .] it is in the nature of power—particularly the kind of power that operates in our society—to be repressive [. . .]" Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, London, Penguin, 1984, p. 9.

40 There is no need to point out the pertinence of Durkheim's critique of the liberal conception of the state to the situation prevailing today in many Anglo-Saxon countries, where a rejection of state power on an ideological level goes hand in hand with a *de facto* expansion of state power.

41 Durkheim, *Lecons de Sociologie*, p. 123, my translation.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 132.

43 Within the scope of this article, it is not possible to examine Lefort's discussion of the place of law in modernity as the locus of a sovereignty that is external to political power and resists all attempts to give it a determinate, specific fixed incarnation. Nor the way Gauchet's work deepens this analysis to highlight the way the modern notion of the sovereignty of the law consecrates a *de jure* recognition of human power as universal power of ideational representation. I refer the reader to my article "Democracy as Project of Individual and Collective Sovereignty."

44 Luc Ferry and Marcel Gauchet, *La Religion après le Religieux*, pp. 105-106.

45 Marcel Gauchet, *The Disenchantment of the World*, Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997.

[46] Marcel Gauchet, *Un Monde Désenchanté*? Paris, Editions de l'Atelier, 2004, p. 107.

[47] There is no denying that Gauchet's overemphasis of the specificity of Christianity is an obstacle to the full understanding of the significance of the advent of monotheism in the "axial age" and needs to be balanced by Eisenstadt's analysis as first elaborated in "The Axial Age: The Emergence of Transcendental Visions and the Rise of the Clerics," *European Journal of Sociology*, vol. 23, no. 2, pp. 294-314.

[48] See Gauchet, *The Disenchantment of the World*, p. 151, where he states, "The tensions contained in the Christian instauration were not spontaneously self-initiated. They developed under the influence of external circumstances, with the help of a historically given configuration and according to parameters completely foreign to the inner logic of religious schemas."

[49] See Gauchet, Chapter 5 "Figures of the Human Subject," *The Disenchantment of the World*, pp. 162-190.

[50] Gauchet, *La Révolution des Droits de l'Homme*, Paris, Gallimard, 1989.

[51] See the two articles by Johann Arnason and Peter Wagner in the August 2001 issue of *Thesis Eleven* devoted to the question of capitalism. It must be noted that towards the end of his life, Castoriadis himself came to relativise the opposition he had established between democracy and capitalism and established a program of research into the role of the absolutist state, and specifically of the fiscal-military state in "La 'Rationalité' du Capitalisme" in Castoriadis, *Figures du Pensable*. Paris, Seuil, 1999, pp. 65-92.

Chapter Twelve

Cosmopolitanism as a Matter of Domestic Policy

Gérard Raulet

In his essay "Perpetual Peace" Kant qualified so-called cosmopolitan right not only as a dream but also satirically as the cemetery of all political dreams. In his view, it is a mere political utopia that has no reality outside of the legislations of the law-based States (*Rechststaaten*). Indeed, the decisive and perhaps disturbing idea which I will try to demonstrate here against all innocent dreams of a brave globalised world is that in Kant's *modern* political thought there is *no contradiction between nationalism and cosmopolitanism*, but that the constitutional level of the national state, which is for Kant a State of mature citizens (and which only as such overcomes the state of nature), is the very level on which the possibility of cosmopolitanism can be grounded. Any interpretation of Kant's thought that neglects this point leads to a misunderstanding of his philosophical revolution and falls back into the political as well as the metaphysical *Old Regime*.

The Kantian Reasons Why We Have to Deal with Cosmopolitanism Within

I am of course aware that this thesis can shock because of its appeal to the national state, so overwhelmed are we by nationalisms. Let me therefore first recall the reasons why we must, according to Kant, deal with cosmopolitanism *within* the national states and why we shall avoid any abstract moral projection beyond the real state of affairs. *The first reason is the modern momentum of citizenship*. Even the 'post-national state', as Habermas calls it, that is, a state which no longer draws its legitimacy from national history, from race, blood or soil, cannot skip the stage of the nation-state because the nation-state is the very condition of citizenship and 'constitutional patriotism' (*Verfassungspatriotismus*). The freely-chosen adhesion by the responsible subject can only be assured through the nation-state. Moreover, Habermas himself reminds us that "the nationalism which has developed in Europe since the end of the eigtheenth century is a specifically modern form of collective identity." In the context of the breakdown of the *Old Regime*, "it is that nationalism which provided an answer to the need for new identifications."[1] In 1789, and above all in 1848, nationalities were associated with the awakening of political public opinion—of the 'public sphere' (*Öffentlichkeit*).

The second reason results from the first but it considers the same problem—the problem of right and citizenship—from a teleological point of view.[2] Kant explicitly rejects a 'philanthropic' cosmopolitanism which does not take into account anthropological and historical differences, the very different rhythms of evolution, and therefore ignores what is actually in question: *Right*! He emphasises the *national state* as the level and space where the two approaches, which constitute his project of perpetual peace—the moral approach and the teleological approach—converge and have to be united. The point to which they tend is that of decision itself, for freedom cannot be imposed upon the free individual, and this principle of the republic is equally valid for 'citizen-states'. The republican nation-states alone can guarantee the transition from the subject to the free human being, and from the *Old Regime* to a new international order. This is also the reason why only a 'federation of free states' is possible and not a worldwide republic. Any attempt to realise the world republic prematurely would degenerate and regress to the claim of a universal monarchy that characterised the *Old Regime*.

This particular way of thinking the articulation of the particular and the universal determines the structure of Kant's project of "Perpetual Peace" itself. The three principles of citizenship affirmed by Kant seem to answer all questions about *modern* nationality and allow it to proceed to a higher level for humankind and for cosmopolitanism: the republican constitution presupposes *free* subjects who are only dependent on the common law they have all *freely* accepted. Everybody is free as a human being, subjected to the law as an empirical individual, and therefore equal to all others as a citizen. However, as soon as we proceed to the second level, that of the people's right (*Völkerrecht*), differences have to be taken into account, and the aim of a world republic must be reduced to the 'positive surrogate' of a federation of states, each of which is at a very different stage of its evolution towards a real 'citizen-state'.

These difficulties converge at the third level—the 'cosmopolitanism' of the third definitive article of Kant's treatise—and in the following question: how can a republican constitution deal with otherness within the republican state itself? Kant answers that "the cosmopolitan right must be reduced to the conditions of universal hospitality." This hospitality includes a right to visit other states, that is, a free circulation of persons and ideas—*Besuchsrecht*—but not the right to establish oneself as a citizen in another country. The reason is obvious: residing long-term in a state with all the rights of a citizen implies the unrestricted adhesion to the citizenship of this state and is not compatible with the importation of a difference.

Such a re-reading of Kant obviously involves a reconsideration of the French model of 'integration'. Within its teleological conception, differences are only tolerated until they dissolve themselves into the republican identity of citizenship which, in a particular state, is the symbol of universal citizenship and cosmopolitanism. Against this model and in my *Apology for Citizenship*[3] and in *Critical Cosmology*,[4] I have argued that we should, instead, recall the *Conflict of the Faculties*, which reinterprets the 'publicity of the maxims' in the following way: the public sphere is a 'civilised state of war' between critique and obscurantism. Consequently, the genesis of the Republic requires the respect of differences, that is, their public identification; it excludes their 'tolerant' camouflage. This is the condition for a revival of a real public debate, of a real political *Öffentlichkeit*. However, for the same reason, an insuperable conflict can of course endure between the rational identity of citizenship

and 'natural' identities. The discrepancy, which characterises the relation of every state to the cosmopolitan republic, recurs in every republican state as a discrepancy between racial or national identities and republican identity. This is the price that we have to pay and that we should accept to pay for 'multiculturalism'.[5]

The Proof of the Facts. The Actuality of Kant's Position

My thesis is therefore that the Kantian idea of cosmopolitanism is in the best case a mere maxim of practical reason and that it is important to re-read its *problematics* as a critical model that puts forward *dissent* before everything else. It is the *inverse* of the *pax economica* announced by globalisation—in other words it is its *reality*—which should first and foremost hold our attention, that which the spectacle of the world effectively has to offer us.

The generalised interdependence between societies enforced by globalisation does not, in any way, create more society because, in the first place, it is accomplished at a level and in a register which is no longer that of society but rather that of a 'deterritorialisation' induced by material and immaterial flux. This flux replaces interdependence by networks and destroys social structures, as well as community identities. In order to affirm that the modernity represented by globalisation creates something more social, we should be able to demonstrate that it institutes certain social logics that are potentially universal. In *Critical Cosmology*, I consider this optimistic hypothesis as the *thesis* of a socio-political cosmology.

One must oppose an *antithesis* to this thesis: the world is *not* a society. And if one postulates that it is in the process of becoming one, one must certainly transpose onto it the analysis of civil society as a space of conflict. The distance between societies has not only failed to disappear, but the gaps between cultural fields are also deepening. It is no longer possible to conceive of them as disjunctures in time; in fact we are witnessing *cultural detachments*, which is to say that the global logic of modernisation not only runs up against delays but also engenders neo-traditional wrinkles in the developed countries themselves and disconnects the economic, social and cultural modernisation in those third-world countries that are most threatened by the process of globalisation. Pockets of spatiality are created in a process that is conceived as

that of History nearing completion. While the ideology of globalisation proclaims the end of History and the emergence of an unlimited global space, one can see cultural exteriorities multiplied inside this World order. This is the assessment that underlies the ideology of the 'clash of civilisations'. World economy has, by now, imposed its logic and its scale on the nations and, at the same time, imposes on itself a societal unification, but we are witnessing the divorce of the social and the societal. One can quite easily have a mobile phone and radically change one's societal behaviours yet still not escape the heavy logic of social transformation (or as it happens, its regression)—this is what the occident discovered with stupefaction: terrorists communicate with each other via the Internet.

However, the exteriorities in question seem proportionately less re-absorbable because they no longer result from an incomplete modernisation process (which we know has borrowed, and still borrows from nationalism). Rather, they result from the birth of frontiers that are entirely different to national ones. The disquieting phenomenon of fundamentalist Islam is a manifestation of this fact. An analysis in geopolitical terms seems to my mind completely to miss the boat. Rogue states must certainly be condemned and combated, but they are only the spokespeople of an exploding global society, and the essential point is that the exteriorisation they support induces the affirmation of a cultural or civilisational identity. This phenomenon is reproduced elsewhere on the *infra*-national scale—that is, to be quite clear, in big-city suburbs.

Another example that proves the inadequacy of the geopolitical approach, and which stems from the very logic of globalisation, is that of the de-localisation of certain products by national firms, and above all, by the exploitation of a non-national manual labour in the national territory itself, and which benefits from hardly any temporary or permanent status. Underground sweatshops are only the visible elements of these practices, which are, at the very heart of the national state and are the reality of globalisation. They reveal its very essence: globalisation is a logic of the *institutionalisation of exclusion*—economic first and foremost, but quite evidently political as well. To this day whatever official sanctions have been put in place against such practices exist only on paper and have not made any progress toward eradicating them. One wonders if the objective is indeed to eradicate them, or if they constitute

a component of the globalised capitalist economy within limits that are judged 'tolerable', and that it is better not to pull them out at the roots. The nation-state regulates this domain, as it does all laws concerning the conditions of production and social relations. The systematic search for less onerous places of production makes the threat of 'de-localised' production weigh on any vague attempt at regulation and control; the threat of a loss of capital dissuades anti-fraud organisations from acting with any vigour.[6] Under these conditions certain pockets exist at the core of the French production system, for example, based on the 'rules' of the Chinese or Pakistani economic systems. Borders move to the interior of the nation-state, and businesses of global dimensions have the power to decide where the borders will be, according to what national states grant them, in the way of levied taxes—or even more simply, in laxness towards inspections.

Beyond the Abstract Glorification of Cosmopolitanism. A Discussion of Habermas' Position

Most interpretations take the easy way of a quite abstract glorification of 'cosmopolitanism' as if it were the remedy for every evil—as if one could oppose the moral universalism of universal citizenship, or cosmopolitan society against the spectre of techno-economic rationality's domination of the planet, and the threat of neo-nationalisms which have to be seen as a consequence of globalisation. Habermas' commitment to cosmopolitanism cannot be exempted from this type of interpretation, although it is not without contradiction and can very often be read in a teleological rather than moral sense. This is what I want to show in a third step.

In my reflections on citizenship I have juxtaposed as systematically and explicitly as possible the competition between the moral and the teleological and *suspended the postulate of their convergence—which is what Habermas does not do*. This suspension should be applied to globalisation and should even be radicalised. If Habermas' reflections on globalisation and perpetual peace can be useful, then we have to distinguish between the postulate of cosmopolitanism and dealing with the facts. In the contemporary ideological and political context I even consider that reflection in moral terms (in which I *do not see* the quintessence of Kant's political thought) is not only inadequate but also is suspicious. It is important to resist the powerful current represented

by the triumphant return of moral philosophy in place of political philosophy. In this resides the challenge that globalisation constitutes for political philosophy—as *philosophy*.

Habermas' interpretation of the treaty *On Perpetual Peace* rests on a misunderstanding and on the non-recognition of its modernity. This can be observed at the very beginning of Habermas' essay.[7] Habermas' interpretation seems to me to be twisted by a false premise from the outset according to which Kant had in mind only "wars between cabinets and states," in a context wherein the existence of republican States "was yet the exception and not the rule" and "the system of powers functioned on the condition that only sovereign states had the faculty to be subjects of international law."[8] I have tried to show, on the contrary, that Kant's angle of attack resolutely breaks with those archaic *Old Regime* premises.[9] Habermas brings to bear the *aporias*, or contradictions, of the Kantian conception of cosmopolitanism with the fact that "as long as this classico-modern universe of states constitutes the impassable conceptual horizon, any perspective of a cosmopolitan constitution, regardless of states' sovereignty, must seem unrealistic."[10] I believe, on the contrary, that Kant *freed* himself from this universe of thought and proposed a theoretical model on the scale of the radical transformation of political paradigms, at once resolutely republican and yet of a nature to take reality into account, which is to say, to take into account the fact that far from a majority of states had a republican constitution or were even disposed to adapt one. The current situation, which Habermas considers (and justly so) as a handicap, in which "the worldwide organisation [the United Nations] brings nations together today, whether or not they already have a republican constitution and respect human rights,"[11] does not at all contradict Kant's premises, but rather corresponds quite neatly to the realistic scenario Kant envisions. *Including* the passages Habermas cites to support his interpretation, Kant's 'teleological' style of argumentation confirms my own:

> The links [. . .] which were established between the peoples of the entire world having developed to the point at which a violation of rights committed in one place is felt everywhere, the idea of a cosmopolitan right can no longer be considered as a fantastical exaggeration of the law; it is the last degree of perfection necessary to the tacit code of civil and public law; for these systems must finally conduct to a public right of men in general,

> toward which one can only flatter oneself that one is ceaselessly advancing
> by means of the conditions indicated [and which are those of a public space
> that functions on the global scale].[12]

For my part, I read this passage through a teleological lens: it is the fact that
rights violations can be felt everywhere that founds the plausibility of a cos-
mopolitan right, and surely not the ('fantastical') existence of a public space
that functions on a world scale.

Habermas instead insists on detecting the beginnings of not only such a pub-
lic space but also a veritable jurisdictional world order. Wanting absolutely
to found one in the other, he evokes conferences organised 'in rapid succes-
sion' by the United Nations on planetary questions such as ecology (in Rio),
demography (in Cairo), poverty (in Copenhagen), and climate (in Berlin). It
harbours no doubt, as he says, that these conferences must have "exercised
a certain political pressure on governments."[13] But this same hope itself rises
more from a teleological attitude than from one that could provide political
philosophy with a theoretical basis. Furthermore, Habermas confesses this
on the following page, admitting "as yet there exists no planetary public
space, not even a European public space."[14] The invocation, in the same pas-
sage, of the "central role played by a new type of non-governmental organ-
isation, such as Green Peace or Amnesty International" is a sort of wildcard
whose status is far from clear in the very measure—and this is the essential
point—that there exists no international cosmopolitan right. The same con-
tradiction can be noted in regards to international tribunals and 'police' oper-
ations of the international community in Iraq, in the former Yugoslavia, and
now (an extremely grave offshoot) against 'international terrorism' under the
leadership of the United States. Habermas argues that it is a dangerous devi-
ation to give a moral quality to international police operations, and that it
does not advance the cause of cosmopolitan law one inch. Since September
11, to emphasise this serious point, the 'fight against the axis of Evil' (G.W.
Bush), if it is to be carried out in the spirit of establishing cosmopolitan law,
cannot do so in the name of moral criteria but "in the framework of a state
juridical order, according to institutionalised judicial procedures, just as [in
the case of] criminal actions."[15]

At this point in his argument, Habermas notes that we are heading toward a
conflict between morality and legality. In my opinion, this acknowledgement

is, nonetheless, insufficient, for Habermas wrongly speaks of morality when he himself insists next on demonstrating that it is less a question of morals than of laws, since the rights of humankind, taken as constitutional norms, "are constituents of the juridical order as such and, from that point of view, define a framework inside of which normal legislation should evolve."[16]

> The 'Rights of Man' have by nature a juridical character. What confers upon them the appearance of moral rights is not their content, nor, for even stronger reasons, their structure, but rather the meaning of their validity, which surpasses the juridical order of nation-States.[17]

Moreover, when he draws the provisional conclusion that "the Kantian idea of the cosmopolitan state begs to be reformulated"[18] one could wish that he had taken into account the lesson of this imperative, because quite obviously he has tangled himself up in the opposition of facts and morals, while Kant did everything possible to put in place a *critical* teleology. Habermas' assertion—that Kant "has been, in the meantime, left behind by the evolution of things," notably by the 'Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man' of December 1948—has argumentative value only if we confer a veritable juridical status on this Declaration. Here is, indeed, the heart of the problem. For, as Habermas himself emphasises, "the rights of men have no effect except in the framework of national jurisdiction."[19] For Kant, human rights have their place moreover in the 'Doctrine of Law', not in a distinct section that would give shape to a 'cosmopolitan law.'

So that 'cosmopolitan law' might take shape, the 'Rights of Man' must nevertheless be codifiable as *rights*, along the same lines as the rights of states (or, if such is the case, be able to oppose these): "Cosmopolitan law must be institutionalised in such a manner that it engages different governments. The community of peoples must at the very least be capable of bringing its members, under threat of sanctions, to respect the law."[20] Habermas manifestly perceives the problem that this 'must' poses, for he deplores "the absence of an executive force that would be, in case of need, capable of ensuring the respect of the 'Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man', intervening in the sovereignty of national states."[21] He is then forced to show these 'Rights of Man' as not in fact purely *moral* 'rights' but rather as possessing an objective, positive juridical reality, stemming from the fact that they found the constitutions of lawful States (they are '*rechtsbegründend*').

This demonstration should be opposable to the so-called 'transitional' management installed by the 'Charter' of the United Nations, which maintains respect for the sovereignty of individual nations while attempting to give value to those principles that transcend it. In the end, Habermas finds himself allied to a strictly Kantian teleological reading which nonetheless refuses to be identified as such: "In the best of cases, one can understand the world's current situation as a transition between international and cosmopolitan law. [. . .] Its appreciation depends first of all on the way in which we evaluate the dynamics of these 'favourable' tendencies."[22]

The question is whether we can share Kant's 'optimism'—in fact a very relative optimism we can readily qualify as 'counterfactual'—that is, if we can hope that the narrow circle (even in the 'first world') of states, whose constitutions and, to a certain degree, interests are in agreement with the cosmopolitan demands incarnated in the United Nations, carries sufficient weight to swing the balance of international law closer to the side of cosmopolitanism—so that, in terms of Kantian teleology, the result of the forces of division and the forces of socialisation consecrate the dynamic advantage of these latter—while yet the logic of globalisation is rather translated, as we have seen already, by phenomena of fragmentation, of the multiplication of national and sub-national aspirations. The United Nations is able to resist this logic through its own constitution, at the very least, because, in principle, the 'Charter' allows for these aspirations, allows for the right of peoples to decide for themselves. In its current form the United Nations is condemned to hold the line between the General Assembly, the forum for all divisions and aspirations, and the Security Council, which—much more rooted in a kind of *Old Regime* logic than in a cosmopolitan one—maintains a concerted balance between the powers. The very concept of the United Nations is, in this regard, closer to the project of the Abbé de Saint-Pierre than to Kantian cosmopolitanism.[23] To escape this logic, many things would be necessary that we hesitate to evoke: the Security Council should emanate from the Assembly, but then the Assembly should have a republican majority. We understand from the outset that this cannot happen immediately since globalisation, while perversely favouring the emergence of national and sub-national divisions, does not favour the 'global' emergence of republican states, in the least. It would also be necessary for the United Nations to have the means to intervene in economic disequilibria; this task, though, has devolved onto organisations

like the IMF, which only envisage this question in the spirit of worldwide neo-liberalism, whose responsibility for the aggravated national and social divisions is obvious.[24] Close to three hundred and fifty intergovernmental organisations, Habermas remarks, assume economic and social functions as well as those of maintaining or re-establishing the peace, but none among them has regulatory power in the redistribution areas of economic or social politics or in the domain of work.[25] In these areas we can observe the same 'localisation' of problems, devolved onto nation-states just as they devolve more and more of these problems to levels of local democracy.

Europe obviously constitutes a space of privileged experimentation for the resolution of the antinomy between division and socialisation, and, if it succeeds, this experimentation can represent an exemplary resolution of the conflict between globalisation and national sovereignty. However, it is equally obvious that the challenge of the Euro has, in the best case, only posed the problem: what Europe is meant to install is not only an economic but also a social space capable of taking charge of the problems of socio-economic politics resulting from the de-legitimisation of national welfare states. We cannot accomplish Europe, nor *a fortiori* a worldwide society, by skipping the frame of socialisation and socio-economic integration that the republican nation-states represent.

An Interior Politics on the Global Scale

Habermas seems to defend, in his most recent essays, the opposite thesis. However, the originality of his position lies in the fact that he lays bets at once on the emergence of a civil international society and on a mutation of interior politics. This mutation is in his eyes inevitable. Taking the case of the nation-state's expiration, he believes that salvation will come through moving beyond "international relations" in order to "put in place an interior politics on the global scale."[26] In other words Habermas proposes nothing less than to revise the passage from the second Kantian level, the *Völkerrecht*, to the third level, which is that of cosmopolitanism. He pleads for:

> a strategy capable of responding to a perspectiveless adaptation of the imperatives of competition in those sectors where it is the most profitable; and opposing to that idea the project of a transnational politics forced to take

itself to the height of global networks and to confine them. [. . .] Such a project paradoxically demands of the participants that are nation-states to be engaged, from now on, within the limits of their current abilities to act, in a program that they can realise only by going beyond these limits.[27]

This option is realistic for the reasons specified above: on the one hand the nation-state remains the frame in which a political debate can take place, but on the other hand, the solution represented by the nation-state is historically dated and national politics finds itself increasingly in the process of losing its monopoly status. If a political and social struggle has any meaning today, it should be directed, *in the nation-states themselves, against the single thought of neo-liberal globalisation*. The national political debate must from now on target resolutely, not the 'program' of one or another party on the national political chessboard, but rather on the un-said of globalisation in order to create a global political publicity on a national scale. It is certainly not because "the idea that a society be able to act upon itself democratically has known, up to now, no credible actualisation except on the national scale"[28] that one must exclude *a priori* the utopia of a global space of debate recreating *what is dangerously in the process of disappearing: public political opinion*.

The way in which Habermas presents the problem is therefore not merely realistic but the only way that can save the republican political debate on the scale of nation-states and, beyond that and at the same time, promote a space of cosmopolitan debate because it does not bet abstractly on planetary solidarity but leans on the formation of a republican political will *within each state*. Concretely, it is far from being utopian to call, as Habermas does, for the participation of non-governmental organisations in the deliberations of international negotiation systems as well as the right for the United Nations, "constantly to ask member states to organise referenda on important subjects" for "in this very way would we succeed at making transnational decision procedures [. . .] transparent to public national spaces."[29] This is the only option that could thwart the tendency to multiply negotiations between states, that is, a jurisprudential reinforcement of the 'rights of peoples' in which the peoples have no role.

The utopico-realistic model Habermas proposes does not only save the hope for the formation of a 'trans-national' will but it also cuts off one of the frightening fantasies of ambient ideology at its root: to make people believe that

they have direct access to a global democratic space and that they can, at the same time, make an abstraction of the citizenship they clamour for. What is truly at question here is, obviously, the socialised individual, socialised in a state. The opposition between individual and state is an artificial front that serves neo-liberalism well. Its theoreticians wake the ghost of the 'omnipresent state' and send individuals back to their virtual status as purely individual contractors—the core of Rawls' theory. However, as is usually the case with Habermas, the danger of civil society's decomposition is underestimated.

Things are certainly more complicated than Habermas' reflections indicate, and the hope that international civil society and the change in the dimension of national politics can be reciprocally combined and comforted is in any case not inscribed in the current evolution of rapport between civil society and the state. In effect, the *internationalisation of civil societies and globalisation over-turn the rapport between civil society and the state*. We are, through a kind of Hegelian deformation, accustomed to seeing in the state the very moment that gives form to civil society. The evolution we are witnessing, and which is simultaneously precisely the result and the problematic of international law, resides in that the latter engenders and consecrates independent states, while globalisation simultaneously deprives them of their autonomy, and in that a '*society of self versus the state*' gets developed:

> Given the deepening gap between the State and civil society, individuals experience a greater facility leaving their countries, getting out of allegiance, un-embedding themselves so to speak: they keep contacts, but these are more and more lax. While the 'disembedding' of individuals in their State has been considered until now as an accession to supreme liberty, since the individual was becoming a citizen, this same un-boxing becomes a sign of greater liberty, a possible access to cosmopolite life, carried by the aware-ness of a humanity being realized beyond the plurality of States.[30]

Overall, the problem of society versus the state is one of the status of differ-ences at the very interior of nation-states. The conception of human rights has today, by a boomerang effect, been transposed from the plane of inter-national recognition, which is the condition for the constitution of peoples as independent states, onto the nation-state, at the heart of which lies the tendency to recognise in its composite communities the right to difference. The current reflection on communitarianism cannot, by any means, be

dissociated from the reflection on globalisation. It is, on the contrary, one of the keys of the renovation of a political public sphere based on a cosmopolitan will.

Notes

¹ J. Habermas, "Geschichtsbewußtsein und Posttraditionale Identität," in *Eine Art Schadensabwicklung*, Frankfurt/Main, Suhrkamp, 1987, p. 165. All subsequent translations are mine.

² See G. Raulet, Kant. *Histoire et Citoyenneté*, Paris, PUF, 1996 (coll. Philosophies). Republished in *La Philosophie de Kant*, eds. P. Clavier, M. Lequan, G. Raulet, A. Tosel, & C. Bouriau, Paris, PUF, 2003, (coll. Quadrige), pp. 217-412.

³ G. Raulet, *Apologie de la Citoyenneté*, Paris, Cerf, 1999.

⁴ G. Raulet, *Critical Cosmology. On Nations and Globalisation*, Lanham, MD, Lexington Books, 2004.

⁵ See Raulet, "Exoticism Within," in *Critical Cosmology*, chapter 5.

⁶ J. Habermas, "Die Postnationale Konstellation und die Zukunft der Demokratie," in *Die Postnationale Konstellation. Politische Essays*, Frankfurt/Main, Suhrkamp, 1998, pp. 106-107.

⁷ J. Habermas, "Kants Idee des Ewigen Friedens—aus dem Historischen Abstand von 200 Jahren," in *Die Einbeziehung des Anderen. Studien zur Politischen Theorie*, Frankfurt/Main, Suhrkamp, 1996.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 194-198.

⁹ See Raulet, "Citizenship, Otherness and Cosmopolitanism in Kant," *Critical Cosmology*, chapter 2.

¹⁰ Habermas, "Kants Idee des Ewigen Friedens," p. 198.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 214.

¹² Kant, *Zum ewigen Frieden*, quoted by Habermas, "Kants Idee des Ewigen Friedens," p. 205.

¹³ Habermas, "Kants Idee des Ewigen Friedens."

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 226.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 212.

²³   *Ibid.*, p. 213.

²³   See Raulet, "Citizenship, Otherness and Cosmopolitanism in Kant," *Critical Cosmology*, chapter 2.

²⁴   See "Mea culpa du FMI sur l'Argentine," *La Tribune. Quotidien Économique et Financier*, 26/27 March 2004, p. 7.

²⁵   J. Habermas, "Aus Katastrophen Lernen? Ein Zeitdiagnostischer Rückblick auf das Kurze 20. Jahrhundert," pp. 85–86.

²⁶   *Ibid.*, p. 88.

²⁷   Habermas, "Die Postnationale Konstellation und die Zukunft der Demokratie," pp. 124-125.

²⁸   *Ibid.*, p. 95.

²⁹   *Ibid.*, p. 167.

³⁰   A. Leijbowicz, *Philosophie du Droit International*, Paris, PUF, 1999, p. 296.

Chapter Thirteen

Gender and Political Representation: The Question of *Parité* in France[1]

Yves Sintomer

"Here goes the vagina concert"

(Interjection by a member of the Gaullist movement during a speech by Roselyne Bachelot, Director of the Committee on Parity appointed by President Chirac.[2])

Until the end of the eighties, France had been one of the European countries with the lowest rate of participation of women in political assemblies (for example, 11% in the National Assembly, 5% in the Senate, 7% out of the mayors; one woman out of the 104 Presidents of departmental Assemblies, one woman out of the 25 Presidents of regional Assemblies. . .).[3] In June 1999, after a huge national debate on the so-called parity of participation of men and women in politics, the French parliament voted in favour of an amendment to the Constitution. The amendment has added the following sentence to the article on sovereignty:[4] "The law promotes equal access of women and men to electoral mandates and elective offices." Another sentence has been added to the constitutional article concerning political parties: "They

contribute to the implementation of [this] principle." The aim has been to quickly reach the objective of parity of participation of men and women in all elective offices. Two instruments are to be used: a legal obligation of parity for the party list system in local or European elections, and financial incentives through the public funding of political parties for the other elections, most notably legislative elections. In order to amend the Constitution, the National Assembly and the Senate first have to vote on the same text separately and then have a joint session in which a 66% majority is required. In fact, the majority was even stronger and nearly reached unanimity: 94% of the Parliament members who expressed their opinion voted in favour of the proposal.[5] With the so-called 'PACS', a legal status that allows homosexuals to have their relationship legally recognised in a manner comparable, in some respects, to marriage,[6] the parity law has been one of the most important institutional reforms of the Left-wing government.

How was this French backwardness on female political representation to be explained? French women, after all, are no less emancipated than in most other European countries. The explanation has therefore to rely on specifically political factors. And in this situation, how was the radical shift that the parity laws represent possible? Beyond the ethnology of French political culture, is there something that can be learned from the parity debate? These are the questions I would like to answer in this paper. I shall develop my argument in three steps. Firstly, I will briefly sketch the events that led to the parity law. I will then analyse the debate that has taken place and will emphasise the peculiarity of the French discussion on gender in politics. Even though I do not claim that the discursive dimension is the only important one, I will focus on it to understand the specificity of the French situation. Finally, beyond the French example, I will make some cognitive and normative claims concerning gender and political representation.

I. Parity in Politics: A Success Story

In 1982, under the first French Left-wing government in the Fifth Republic, the National Assembly voted almost unanimously on a law stating that no party list in municipal elections shall consist of more than 75% of candidates of the same sex. The French Supreme Court (*Conseil Constitutionnel*) objected

that this law was not constitutional, because the 'Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen' from 1789 (which has a constitutional value in the French system) states: "As all citizens are equal in the eye of the law, positions of high rank, public office and employment are open to all on an equal basis according to ability and without any distinction other than that based on their merit or skill"; moreover, article three of the Constitution of 1958 adds that "no group (*section*) of people, nor any individual, may lay claim to the exercise" of National Sovereignty. After this decision, most people thought that the only way to pass a law promoting women's participation in political offices was to amend the Constitution, but during the next decade such a change was considered highly improbable.

Some years later, a Green and Alternative political group ('*Arc-en-Ciel*') introduced a new notion, the 'parity' of political participation, and decided to implement an internal quota of 50% women in most of the leading positions. The Green Party also implemented this principle systematically. The concept was adopted by a majority of feminist associations that popularised it at the beginning of the nineties. In the years that followed, they lobbied actively for this cause. In November 1993, 577 people published a Manifesto in the newspaper *Le Monde* arguing for the adoption of a law demanding equal participation of men and women in political assemblies. At the European elections of 1994, 6 lists (out of twelve) had parity between men and women.

The parity idea had also spread to Europe. In 1989, the Council of Europe set up a working group on 'parity democracy' and in the following years adopted several recommendations on equal representation in political life. In 1992, a Conference in Athens funded by the European Commission led to an Appeal for "parity in representation and administration of nations" that was widely broadcast.[7] Still, at the beginning of the nineties, the objective of parity defended by the feminist movement in the short run seemed out of reach, due to the strong political and theoretical opposition it faced and to the difficulty of amending the Constitution.

The situation shifted dramatically with the consecutive defeats of both socialist and right-wing governments in 1993 and 1997. All parties were weakened and in a state of deep crisis. Opinion polls showed French citizens' growing distrust towards political life and political leadership. The so-called '*affaires*',

that is, the bribery scandals that affected both the Left and the Right, were the most visible symptom of the gap between ordinary people and the political 'class'. In this context, both Right and Left, Chirac and Jospin, became advocates of a so-called 'modernisation of political life', whose aim was to reduce the gap between politicians and citizens. To many politicians, parity suddenly appeared to be a necessary part of this modernisation process. A further advantage in a time of economic recession is that it had no financial cost attached to it. President Chirac created a 'Committee on Parity' in 1995, which was led by an open-minded Gaullist representative, Roselyne Bachelot, and a famous feminist lawyer, Gisèle Halimi. At the Legislative elections of 1997, Jospin imposed a quota of 30% female candidates on the Socialist Party, which resulted in significant electoral success. He also promised to propose a constitutional amendment if elected Prime minister. Although Jospin could not generally be defined as a feminist, he seemed to be really convinced by this proposal, influenced by his wife, Sylviane Agacinski, a philosopher who played a major role in the parity debate. Once elected, he asked a leading Feminist historian and philosopher, Geneviève Fraisse, to become state Secretary for women's rights and to prepare a reform. The Right globally accepted the constitutional bill, partly because they were afraid of being seen as 'archaic'. The constitutional amendment was adopted with some modifications after one year of intense discussion, and in spite of temporary opposition from the Senate. The National Assembly proposed to modify the constitutional article on sovereignty, in order to be able to *impose* parity through a law regulating the organisation of the ballot. But the Senate wanted only to modify the constitutional article concerning political parties, in order to *promote* parity through the public funding of parties. The final compromise, in which both Jospin and Chirac were very active, was to modify both. The word 'parity' did not appear in the text of the amendment, which mentioned only the word 'equality', but parity was mentioned in its official justification. Political opposition reappeared with discussions about the ordinary bill that should implement the principle mentioned in the Constitution. However, a simple majority in the National Assembly is sufficient in this case, and the law was adopted on May 3, 2000. As an initial result, the percentage of women in local councils (in towns with more than 3,500 inhabitants) grew from 25.7% to 47.5% with the 2001 municipal elections.[8] One should note, finally, that the constitutional amendment on parity mentioned only the *political* sphere. It had not been

necessary to mention the objective of *social* equality in the constitution, because the Supreme Court (*Conseil Constitutionnel*) had no objection to ordinary laws that promote *social* equality between women and men.

II. The Peculiarity of the French Debate

1. *"Only Paradoxes to Offer"*

In order to understand this success story, Catherine Achin has analysed the peculiarities of the social formation of professional politicians in France and the refusal of the French feminist movement to enter into the political system at the end of the seventies.[9] This interesting explanation is however not sufficient and one has to look at the ideological and discursive dimensions.[10] Certainly, the role of one individual, Lionel Jospin, was important: as Geneviève Fraisse puts it, it was a happy circumstance that he had been in love with a feminist.[11] Political strategies were also decisive in moving a number of male representatives, who had not been personally convinced, in favour of the policy of parity. Still, one has to explain these strategies. Why did parity become so popular, such that to oppose it was considered by most politicians to be dangerous for their party's popularity? Why is there such pressure concerning this topic?

In the past few years, a widening gap has become apparent between the evolution of the position of women in French society at large, and their role in politics. Although equality in the family or workplace remains a long term objective, legalisation of divorce, contraception and abortion, equality between men and women in civil law, a rapid progression of female participation in higher education, and two decades of feminist movement had radically altered the image of both sexes in society and, at least partially, modified gender roles. Meanwhile, politics remained a sphere in which women were virtually excluded from important responsibilities.

The claim for gender parity had been a grassroots feminist and green proposal before being accepted by the political leadership. It has proven a popular topic, the only one upon which a large majority of feminists could agree. Even though the feminist movement virtually disappeared from the public arena in France at the end of the eighties, the claim for gender parity has

given it a second wind. Whereas some women of the older generation refused it, because they suspected it was not radical enough or because they considered it too essentialist, it was very popular among younger activists. Until the mid-nineties, parity, however, remained a kind of an underground vindication. It was only when the crisis of all institutional political parties and when the gap between them and ordinary citizens became visible that parity increasingly became a popular topic. In the mid-nineties, the polls showed wider public support. Between two thirds and three fourths of all citizens considered it legitimate, and the proportion was even higher among women.

At this point, parity became almost inevitable; it was considered one of the privileged ways of building a bridge between the politicians and the people. The idea was that the political sphere had to reflect the composition of society at large if it wanted to respond to this legitimacy crisis. Due to the feminist movement, the gender dimension was considered central. Still, it is interesting to note that the emergence of parity in public discourse was contemporary with the popular critique of the monopolisation of administrative and elective positions by a small group of people coming from the so-called '*grandes écoles*', especially the Ecole Nationale d'Administration (where the administrative and political elites are formed). It is also worth understanding the popularity of the parity ideal in light of the weakening and reshaping of republican ideology.

2. *French Republicanism*

My claim is that the peculiar French republican ideology has been the main reason for the French backwardness in political representation of women, and that its contemporary weakening and reshaping is a key factor that has allowed a move forward at this level, besides the growing concern for equality between men and women at all levels in society, politics included.

This ideology is not to be confused with what is called 'civic republicanism' in the English or American world. It is a republicanism expressed by the Jacobins and Durkheim, not by Harrington or Arendt. Although they share common topics, these two types of republicanism differ from each other on important questions. French republicanism has not only been concerned with the active political participation of citizens, the priority of the political order

over pre-political rights, or the legitimacy for a political community to define its own substantial values. It has also relied on the state—often against associations, intermediate powers, and local governments—to embody the national sovereignty. It has also put a strong emphasis on the general interest (which has to be defined politically above all particular social interests), on 'universal' citizenship (which is supposed to be disembedded from any social characteristic), on the indivisible character of the Sovereignty and the Republic (against any 'partial association', as Rousseau said, or particular difference). The reluctance concerning any division of the political community and the strong 'universalistic' claims had, however, been made when women were excluded from the public sphere; when regional peculiarities and languages were repressed; and when colonisation was taking place.

The strength of French republicanism has been to impose its 'universalistic' grammar on the groups that have been excluded from political power, legally or *de facto*. Members of these groups therefore faced a paradox. They have often contested their exclusion and claimed their 'universal' rights as a group— a notion to which republican political grammar and the very notion of 'universal' rights were inhospitable. But when they opted to act only as individuals and claimed to be recognised as individuals, most of them remained powerless and voiceless against this 'universalistic' structure which excluded them precisely as members of a particular group. As Joan Scott rightly puts it, the problem for women has been particularly serious. They have been excluded in the name of their sexual difference, which was supposed to put them in the realm of nature (v. politics), of the private (v. the public), of feelings and emotions (v. reason)—all of which are things quite opposed to the universal, disembedded, rational and autonomous citizen. They faced a dilemma. They either had to vindicate themselves as women, as sexually different, relying therefore on a category which had been constructed in order to exclude them; or they had to try to gain full citizenship identifying themselves with the other side of the dichotomy, the unencumbered, rational and autonomous citizen, that is, with a figure which had been constructed for men as distinct from women. In this assimilation, they had to deny their femininity. The political vocabulary itself expresses this difficulty: a *'femme publique'*, a 'public woman' means in French a prostitute; an *'homme public'*, a 'public man', means a politician or an artist. As the conservative representative Robert Pandrau

said during the debate, (he was protesting against the feminisation of elective and administrative offices names), "one cannot feminise it."[12] Another example: '*politicien*' is in French very pejorative. The neutral name to describe a person whose activity is politics, is '*homme politique*', literally 'political man' but '*femme politique*', 'political woman', does not exist. Nearly all the names of official higher offices, both administrative and elective, used to have masculine names until the socialist government came to power, which has begun to change this situation.

That is why French feminists have "only paradoxes to offer" (Joan Scott). However, these paradoxes were firstly those of republicanism. Debates were structured within republican discourse rather than on their own terms. French feminists have defended quite contradictory positions throughout their history. But the interest of their fight has been the critique of the antinomies of republican discourse.

As the analysis of the parity debate shows, the dilemma of feminism facing French republicanism has partly remained the same. Still, republican grammar has lost some of its hegemony, and has been forced to adapt itself to a new situation in which the under-representation of women in political offices can no longer be taken for granted, or as natural.

3. *Mapping the Debate*

What were the different positions in the parity debate?[13] As in any wide public discussion, there were internal divisions within both camps. I shall distinguish three philosophical and political sub-currents on each side, for and against parity. The mapping of the debate clearly shows the peculiarity of the French configuration, with at least one original (though for me not very convincing) position (that I will call the '*parity republicans*') and some amazing absences.

A conceptual map of the debate

Type of argument	Parity opponents	Parity supporters
Essentialist	Classical sexists	Difference feminists
Transcendental	Anti-parity republicans	Parity republicans
Constructivist	Radical deconstructionists	Pragmatist egalitarians

a. Three positions fight the parity reform. The first one is the one of '*classical sexists*'. They think that women are generally less able and interested than men to become representatives. This position is very strong among male politicians, as shown by the sexist insults when women talk in public in the Parliament or in the parties. Roselyne Bachelot, the first Observatory on parity president, had the surprise to hear one of her colleagues shouting: "Here goes the vaginas concert" when she began speaking during a meeting of the Gaullist movement. "Naked" ("*à poil!*"), shouted another Gaullist representative during a speech at the National Assembly by Ségolène Royal, a socialist minister.[14] But though it is possible to say it off the record or in private jokes, it is no longer acceptable to express such an opinion in the light of the cameras or in front of a public of ordinary citizens. Even the softer version of this meritocratic (or more simply . . . sexist) argument, which says that there are not enough competent and available women at the moment, has hardly been expressed in public discourse. This position, although numerically important, has therefore remained nearly mute in the public discussion. The contrast with the previous century, but also with some decades ago, is striking.

b. The second position opposed to parity is the one of '*classical republicans*' like Elisabeth and Robert Badinter or Evelyne Pisier.[15] Politics, they say, radically transcends any social or natural difference. And this is even more crucial with the core of politics, which is sovereignty. To define people according to their biological difference hankers after the Vichy regime more than after progressive politics. To introduce a difference in the Sovereign people is to break the symbolic basis of the French political order. It will open Pandora's box of communitarian divisions. Parity law will import identity politics and affirmative action into the French Republic (which is translated in French as 'positive discrimination', '*discrimination positive*'), that is, typically American products that have failed even in the US. It will ultimately destroy the Republic through the 'balkanisation' of the public sphere. This discourse used to be hegemonic in the past. Though it is still strong among politicians and academics, it is striking that it has lost most of its appeal in the public (according to the polls, less than fifteen percent of the electorate share this argument).

c. The third position is the one of radical critics of representative democracy and '*radical deconstructionists*'. This position is weak among politicians and

among the electorate, but it has a certain role in the feminist movement, particularly among the generation that began to be active in the seventies.[16] Their argument is that women cannot vindicate their rights or equal participation with the concept of parity, which rests ultimately on the dualism that was constructed to exclude them. The problem is not only to reverse the hierarchy in the duality between men and women, but also to contest all the oppressive categories that force individuals to respect normalised social roles. This is even truer when the categories are essentialist and derive gender roles from sexual identities. The problem is less about gender equality than the critique of the gender division of society. Furthermore, parity would only reform representative democracy, although under-representation of women in politics should be denounced as symbolic of the limits of this political order. The problem is not to replace male politicians by a parity political class, but to criticise politicians and wider social divisions altogether.

Two features seem distinctive here compared with other countries. Firstly, the parity opponents are very focused on principles, and pragmatic arguments are secondary (such as "imposing quotas would put a negative label on all women representatives"). As such, they do not define a specific position. Secondly, one can hardly distinguish this from a liberal position that would argue in the name of the rights of the electors to vote for the persons of their choice.[17] Even the qualified version of the liberal argument, which says that something could be made concerning equality of opportunities but in no case concerning equality of results, is not very frequent and is used in rhetorical rather than in theoretical contexts (though it is not completely clear whether the law will impose parity among candidates or among representatives). And the concern for accountability, which seems important in other countries, is not widespread in the French contemporary debate.[18]

d. Parity supporters are equally divided. '*Difference feminists*' (such as Julia Kristeva) represent the first component. Women and men are different by nature, they say. Women have different values, concerns, interests, behaviours, and experiences than men. These values, concerns, interests, behaviours and experiences have been excluded from the public sphere, and the aim now is to make them equally part of it. The political presence of women will change politics and improve it: because of their potential maternity, women care for others whereas men care for power. Though this argument

is constitutive of a specific position only for a small group of feminists, mainly of the older generation, it is widespread as a secondary argument among other women (and even some men), be they politicians, young feminists, or ordinary citizens.

e. I shall call *'parity republicans'* those who compose the second position: Sylviane Agacinski, Blandine Kriegel and Gisèle Halimi are the most famous supporters of this position.[19] They also rely upon a duality between men and women, and consider it as a social construction that is built on a natural one, sexual difference. The content of gender roles differs in history and between civilisations, but the division of humanity into men and women and the dual structure of gender identity, as such, are universal. This is why *'parity republicans'* want to blend the dualism of humanity with the universality of the French republican tradition. This universality has been 'abstract' because it has been blind to sexual difference. This abstractness has led to the monopolisation of the public sphere by men and the resulting exclusion of women. Earlier feminists such as Simone de Beauvoir were misleading. They asked women to integrate into politics as it was, namely one-sidedly masculine, and to drive back the feminine dimension of humankind. Parity is a new principle: it says that universality has to be conceived as a duality. Political parity between women and men will not open the Pandora's box of communitarianism; it will not overload the general interest with particular interests: women are neither a category nor a community nor a minority, they are half of humanity. If it is general, the general interest has to be defined by (and for) both women and men. This is why women's demand for parity has nothing to do with potential demands of ethnic, regional, social, age or whatever kind of specific groups. *'Parity republicans'* even say that parity has nothing to do with quotas, even with a 50% quota. By the way, 51 or 52% of French people are women, not 50%. The question is qualitative, not quantitative.

This position is very specific to French political discourse. It has been influential among academics, feminists of all generations and ordinary citizens. It has also been amazingly influential among politicians. *All* the political groups in the parliament have officially justified their position in favour of parity relying on this argument (although with strong 'nuances' for Communists and Greens), and it has been expressed continually in the speeches at the Assembly. The other two groups that were promoting parity, the *'essentialist*

feminists' and the *'pragmatist egalitarians'*, would have probably got a majority among the electors. But alone, they would have been unable to get 66% of both National Assembly and the Senate, a level that was necessary to amend the Constitution. This newly fashioned republicanism, a republicanism reshaped in order to resist the new trends in society, is decisive to explain why the constitutional law on parity has been approved by 94% of representatives in a Parliament in which men were over 92%.

f. The third group supporting parity is composed of *'pragmatist egalitarians'* (such as Geneviève Fraisse or Françoise Gaspard). Rather than a principle, they tend to consider parity as a tool. A constitutional amendment is necessary only to the extent that in 1982 the French Supreme Court (*Conseil Constitutionnel*), opposed the Constitution to the law that aimed to promote equality between the sexes in politics. An ordinary law would otherwise have been better. The hierarchy between the sexes has been historically constructed, and some kind of affirmative action in politics is necessary to rectify past and present discrimination. Parity is a stage in a journey to social and political equality, and therefore to democracy. For Geneviève Fraisse, parity is philosophically false, because it is based on an essentialist dualism; but it is politically interesting, because it is popular and helps to fight against discrimination.[20] *'Pragmatic egalitarians'* are sceptical about sexual difference: certainly, men and women are biologically different, but this difference has in itself no significance in political matters. Gender identities matter, but they are historically and socially constructed. Some argue that they can even disappear or at least lose their importance in a future egalitarian society. Others think that the gender polarity will remain important in some aspects of life, but that its importance will dramatically decrease in an egalitarian society, as far as politics is concerned. Most think that the fight for parity has a positive meaning only if combined with a fight against other forms of discrimination.[21] The PACS (a sort of homosexual marriage, as I said previously) was discussed during the same period in public debate and in the Assembly. This group defended it, when a large part of the *'parity republicans'* were opposed to 'homosexual marriage' in the name of the symbolic order of sexual difference. This group is influential among ordinary citizens and probably has majority support among academics and feminists. It is far less important among politicians. Still, probably due to the action of Geneviève Fraisse and Françoise Gaspard, it has been strong enough to prevent the government

from introducing the word 'parity' in the Constitution, and to insist instead on the word 'equality'.

III. Beyond the French Case

What can be learnt from the parity debate beyond the French case? I would now like to briefly outline some cognitive and normative assumptions about gender and political representation.

1. *Sexual Difference*

I am highly sceptical regarding any positive affirmation of sexual difference in politics, as I am in respect of any attempt to understand gender as based on biological sex. To politicise sexual difference may, however, have a deconstructive force: 'sexual difference' has been combined with republican universality in order to exclude women from the public sphere. To fight this exclusion should imply the refutation of the ground on which it was built. It is not enough to argue for a reversal of the previous hierarchical structure and affirm proudly feminine values or behaviours that were under-estimated in the past. On the other hand, one cannot accept the kind of citizenship that was based on men's monopoly, a citizenship built on a rigid distinction between the private and the public, the social and the political, particular interests and general interest, the representative and the represented. The frontiers have to be challenged; this does not mean they have to be suppressed. A real democratisation has to displace the problem.

Still, there is no need to confuse the utopian project of a society in which gender roles would lose weight, a 'queer' society, and the present fight against sexual discrimination. The queer utopia may be a leading idea for some concrete proposals (such as demands for an equal distribution of the care of children in the family, or for the equality of alternative sexualities before the law, and therefore the legalisation of gay and lesbian marriage). But one cannot simply 'dissolve' social groups and divisions into fluid identities, and gender is one of the most powerful divisions. Various kinds of group affirmation and positive action are necessary in order to deal with past and present injustice and domination. This entails a risk of essentialism, but there is no way of simply escaping it. One has to face this risk. This is also true in politics.

2. *The Social and the Political*

Juridical and political equality represents a symbolic realm that differentiates itself from social differences. It has an ambivalent meaning. On the one hand, it has an emancipatory dimension against the old regime, but also against any form of racism, sexism, and so forth. On the other hand, it has an ideological function when juridical equality masks social inequalities and a factual unequal political power. The constitutional order (human and citizens' rights) is an autonomous symbolic sphere that has performative effects. Still, this sphere is socially constructed and the rights are socially exercised. This is why social divisions matter in politics. To say, as do most parity opponents in France, that the Republic does not know any distinction of race, class, sex, and so on, is therefore simply misleading. Public nursery schools, to give only one example, are not only a question of welfare: they also influence the actual presence of women (and men) in politics. The same is true for power relations inside the family.

This is not to say that politics has to be conceived as a mere instrument in the hands of social groups and interests, or that democracy is the aggregation of pre-political preferences, or that the general interest is an addition of particular interests. To put it simply, one cannot easily 'jump' from the particular interest to the general interest, from social differences to political neutrality. What Boltanski and Thévenot call the '*montée en généralité*', and Habermas the generalisation of validity claims, is not a transcendence but a discursive process that is both social and political.

Deliberative democracy seems the most convincing normative ideal to define this process. Still, fair deliberation cannot rest only upon fair procedures; it cannot be only procedural. It implies some substantial equality. Power cannot simply be dissolved into discussion. When the input in the deliberative process is social domination, the output can hardly be equal and fair. It also implies the actual participation of the people from all relevant social groups in political deliberation, at all levels: grassroots politics, institutional politics, and representative or administrative bodies. Most often, 'neutral' assumptions are ultimately paternalistic. A politics of presence, as Anne Phillips calls it, has to complement the politics of ideas.

Finally, good deliberation is not the whole story. The parity debate in France was rather good, one could say even exceptional for a political debate. Still,

political arguments involve a rhetorical dimension and a degree of coherence that is less significant than in philosophical debates (not to speak of scientific ones). Institutional constraints (such as the parity law) and social mobilisation have to complement deliberation. This is why, sometimes, a bad philosophical principle can be a good political solution, as Genevieve Fraisse puts it about parity.

3. *Political Representation and Representative Democracy*

Some consequences follow for representative democracy. The marginalisation of women in political representation, fifty years after they finally got the franchise, could not be explained if politics were completely disembedded from the social. Parity is not 'natural' in representative democracy, and this has consequences for understanding what this system really is. As the founding fathers of the French and American Republics rightly stated, a Republic, that is, in modern terms, representative democracy, is not to be confused with democracy, assuming that one understands democracy etymologically, as the power of the people. Bernard Manin is right when he characterises representative democracy as a dual system, both aristocratic (it is the power of an elite) and democratic (people can control this elite to a certain extent).

The principle of distinction that is inherent to the act of selecting a representative cannot be explained only through a meritocratic account (the one who is the best is elected). More generally, methodological individualism hardly makes sense of the regularity with which some persons present themselves and are perceived as 'better' than others. This is best understood in more structural terms, relying on concepts such as Bourdieu's 'habitus' (one tends to incorporate and internalise one's place in the social structure and conform one's desires and expectations to one's social 'fate'; this produces an 'individual' frame of perception and behaviour that is mobilised each time individuals act and think). All inquiries tend to show that, after the franchise, a '*cens caché*', a hidden franchise, has remained: the exclusion or marginalisation, though no more legal, has persisted *de facto*. The tendency is clear: the higher the level of representation, the lower the participation of socially dominated groups. To give only this example, in France, women have parity of participation in neighbourhood assemblies, but only 10% in the National Assembly. In some circumstances, one could even say that representative

democracy adds a specific power relation to social domination produced by the political system.

Political representation cannot simply be reduced to this aristocratic dimension. The political system of elites competing for power is autonomised in respect of the ordinary world of citizens, but it remains coupled with it through legitimacy. A gap between these that becomes too significant may induce a legitimacy crisis, as the French example shows. This fosters indirect control by the people. Moreover, representative democracy is not simply what Weber (and later Schumpeter) thought it was, namely the mere possibility of choosing the leaders who have the real power. Even present democracy cannot be understood through the metaphor of the market, which attributes to politicians the monopoly of political supply. As the French parity debate shows, the political 'supply' comes often from below, from civil society, associations, intellectuals, or social movements.

The level of sexual difference and the level of political representation by sex are clearly distinct. For even if one claims that there is something like sexual difference, it does not follow that it has to be politically represented. On the other hand, those who want to dissolve gender into ambiguous and individual identities can concede that, during a transitory stage, both sexes have to be equally politically represented: this could help to break the identification, for instance, of the masculine with the public and the feminine with the private. To pass from sexual difference to political representation by sex implies a further argument for the supporters of parity. In order to be able to say that parity in elected offices matters, one has to deny that the act of representation is independent from the characteristics of the persons who represent citizens. As Anne Phillips puts it, the question is not only "*What* ideas are represented?" but "*who* will represent the ideas?"[22] It adds a politics of presence to a politics of ideas. The response to the second question (Who?) will influence the response to the first (What?): it is highly plausible, for instance, that an elective body composed only of men and a assembly with parity between genders would debate differently on a topic like sexual harassment. But the second question (Who?) also has an independent worth. Aside from the ideas that are defended, the presence of women in elected offices may have a symbolic value for gender equality, and therefore for justice, in society at large. The political process can also be emphasised, rather than the output of the

process: democracy may be considered as a value as such, and the partici-pation of both men and women at all levels of decision-making may be con-sidered as a democratic requisite. In any case, at this level parity supporters have to defend the idea that the representative body should reflect (or look like, or be similar with) the dual composition of society.[23]

This is why the parity debate confirms that notions like 'representative' or 'representation' have quite different meanings, as authors like Hanna Pitkin, Anne Phillips or Bernard Manin have shown.[24] In this case, two major mean-ings are involved. In all the arguments that defend parity (or softer versions of affirmative action for women in politics, such as bonus and penalties in the public funding of political parties), a representative body has (at least partially) to 'reflect' society, even though this reflection has performative effects. It has something to do with a representative sample. But another version of representation claims quite the opposite. It insists on the in-commensurable difference between social and political representation. The latter means that the people delegate the power to enact laws and to symbolically embody the Nation to a special group of individuals selected independently of their social characteristics and exclusively according to their ideas. These two versions are less complementary (as Hanna Pitkin thinks they are) than conflicting. This has to do with the ambivalence of rep-resentative democracy itself, this mixed regime combining aristocratic and democratic dimensions. As such, this conflict about the meaning and the implications of political representation is not related exclusively to the gender dimension. The ideal of similarity was defended and criticised long before the parity debate. The opposition between Federalists and anti-Federalists about the size of constituencies at the beginning of the American Republic, or the demand for worker representation in nineteenth-century France, are only some examples of a similar problem.[25] Contemporary ethnic demands for political representation also involve the same 'politics of presence'.

4. *From Parity to Discrimination at Large*

Parity in political representation and, more generally, quotas for women, belong to a 'politics of presence' (Anne Phillips). Could they be dangerous? Are they really interesting?

Their first risk is essentialism, that is, the reification of socially constructed roles and identities and the neglecting of the multiplicity of individual identities and positions. Even though some of the arguments for parity have been essentialist, it seems highly implausible that a parity representation of women and men in politics will rigidify gender roles. It is much more probable that it will contribute to questioning their present definitions and making them more complex.

A second risk is that the parity principle, even if inoffensive at present, could be used in a regressive way in a different historical context (this was the 'Vichy' argument: to introduce biology into politics is very risky). When the parity argument is a deconstructive one, directed against historical and present discrimination, and when parity is subordinated to equality, this risk seems rather improbable.

One of the main critiques against parity has focused on the third risk, to wit 'balkanisation' of the public sphere: quotas for women will open the door to similar demands from other groups. A common political culture will hardly overcome this challenge. The majority response to this objection in France is that women are different from all other groups, that they are actually not a group nor a category, and therefore, that there is no continuity between parity and minorities political representation.

I would like to give a different answer to the fear of 'balkanisation'. Certainly, women are not a minority, nor a group like other groups, nor a category like other categories. Still, the most interesting thing in the parity idea is not the insistence upon the peculiarity of gender relations in respect of all other social relations. Beyond the influence of French republicanism, parity seems more appealing when this struggle against a specific and highly crucial discrimination leads not only to a reduction or suppression of this discrimination but to a fight against any form of discrimination.

First, gender discrimination is not reducible to the political sphere. One of the most interesting impacts of the debate over the under-representation of women in politics has been to reveal (or cast a harsher light on) other kinds of gender discrimination to a wider public. It has also helped the feminist movement to re-emerge in the French public arena.

A greater presence of women in political representation could also be interesting if it leads to a change in politics. It would not be very interesting if, in the future, we carry on with the same kind of politicians and if the difference is only that they are from both sexes. More appealing is the idea that the arrival of women in politics will bring some fresh air, new and less professional figures, and more communication between politicians and ordinary citizens. Not because women 'naturally' would care more than men do for ordinary people. To put it simply, they used to be challengers or outsiders; they were marginal in political groups. That is why they could bring with them new experiences, values or behaviours. In the long run, this change will go on only if parity is coupled with other genuine political reforms. The modernisation of French political life, to which I have made some allusions before, has to reduce the autonomy of the political system. It has to limit the plurality of elective offices, impose rotation in these offices, and institutionalise forms of participatory democracy.

Thirdly, the lack of correspondence between the political system and society cannot be reduced to the dimension of gender. Nor can political and social discrimination be reduced to gender. The parity debate would have been much more interesting if it had also helped people to question the under-representation of lower classes or naturalised migrants in politics, and to criticise the relations of domination that this under-representation (at least partially) reflects. The parity debate can be seen as part of a broader emergence of a cultural politics and of a cultural Left. This is something new in France, and is parallel to the decline of republican ideology. The fact that the under-representation of the working class has been nearly absent from the debate also indicates the weakening of social politics and of the social Left.[26] One can hope that the implementation of parity will cast light upon other forms of under-representation, such as class or ethnicity, rather than focussing exclusively upon gender relations. Certainly, these forms of discrimination are different, and therefore require responses other than simply imposing quotas by law. But they do require a response.

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Notes

[1] A previous version of this paper has been published in *Social Texts*, Brno, 2002 (in Czech).

[2] Roseline Bachelot & Geneviève Fraisse, *Deux Femmes au Royaume des Hommes*, Paris, Hachette, 1999, p. 12.

[3] Council of Europe, *Women in Politics in the Council of Europe Member State*, Ref. EG (97)6, Strasbourg, October, 1997.

[4] Which states that "National Sovereignty resides in the people who exercise it through their representatives and by way of referendum. No group (*section*) of people, nor any individual, may lay claim to the exercise thereof."

[5] There were 741 votes in favor, 42 against, and 50 abstentions or non-voting.

[6] Currently the PACS (which is open to heterosexual couples) differs from normal (straight) marriage on two points: it is much easier to 'divorce' for a couple engaged in PACS, but it does not open the right to have children through adoption or artificial insemination.

7   J. Mossuz-Lavau & A. De Kervasdoue, *Les Femmes ne sont pas des Hommes comme les Autres*, Odile Jacob, Paris, 1997, p. 36.

8   Still, the percentage of women among the mayors in these towns remains very low, less than 7% (*Le Monde*, 22-23/4/2001). In the Assembly, the law has not been technically successful, because most parties preferred to pay the fine rather than elect more women.

9   Catherine Achin, " 'Représentation Miroir' vs. Parité. Les Débats Parlementaires Relatifs à la Parité Revus à la Lumière des Théories Politiques de la Représentation," *Droit et Société*, 2001, vol. 47.

10 Joan W. Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer*, Cambridge Mass., Harvard University Press, 1995; *Parité: Sexual Equality and the Crisis of French Universalism,* Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2005. See also E. Lepinard, *L'Egalité Introuvable. Stratégies de Légitimation et Mise en Oeuvre de la Parité Politique en France*, PhD, EHSS, Paris, 2004.

11 Roseline Bachelot & Geneviève Fraisse, *Deux Femmes au Royaume des Hommes*, Paris, Hachette, 1999.

12 *Compte-Rendu des Débats de l'Assemblée Nationale*, 15/12/1998.

13 A peculiarity of the parity debate has been that a large interaction has taken place between politicians, feminist associations, and academics or intellectuals. In the meaning Bourdieu gives to this notion: those who have accumulated legitimacy in the academic or artistic spheres and who invest this legitimacy in the public debates.

14 Bachelot & Fraisse, *Deux Femmes au Royaume des Hommes*, p. 12.

15 See ed. Elisabeth Badinter, *Le Piège de la Parité. Arguments pour un Débat*, Paris, Hachette, 1999, pp. 15-22, 35-39.

16 See Helena Hirata, Danièle Kergoat, Michèle Riot-Sarcey and Eleni Varikas, "Parité ou Mixité," in *Le Piège de la Parité*, pp. 11-14. Bourdieu defends a similar argument in *Masculine Domination*, trans. R. Nice, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2001.

17 Among the few exceptions was the 'doyen' Vedel.

18 The tension that Anne Phillips emphasises between deliberative democracy and the politics of presence is also completely absent in France.

19 Sylviane Agacinski, *Politique des Sexes*, Paris, Seuil, 1998, and "Contre l'Effacement des Sexes," *Le Monde*, 02/06/1999. Blandine Kriegel, "Non, la Mariée n'est pas trop Belle," 02/17/1999. Gisèle Halimi, "Etablir la Légalité Politique: Un Référendum pour les Femmes," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, October 1994; *La Nouvelle Cause des Femmes*, Paris, Seuil, 1997; "Parité, Je n'écris pas ton Nom …," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, September 1999.

20 See Bachelot & Fraisse, *Deux Femmes au Royaume des Hommes*, pp. 177, 185-186. See also Françoise Gaspard, "La Parité, Principe ou Stratégie?," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, November 1998.

21 "Manifeste pour l'Egalité Sexuelle," *Le Monde*, 06/26/1999.

22 Anne Phillips, *The Politics of Presence*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1995.

23 Whether this duality is biological or social, transitory or universal, does not matter here.

24 Hannah Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, University of California Press, 1967; Bernard Manin, *Principes du Gouvernement Représentatif*, Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 1995.

25 See Manin, *Principes du Gouvernement Représentatif*; Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le Peuple Introuvable. Histoire de la Représentation Démocratique en France*, Paris, Gallimard, 1998.

26 The real presence of workers among representative bodies had been a major concern to the Left for decades, at least since the so-called "Manifesto of the Sixty" in 1864, which called for a worker representation in politics (see Rosanvallon, *Le Peuple Introuvable*).

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