

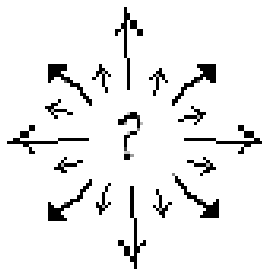
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VICO'S IDEAS IN PHILOSOPHICAL MASTERPIECES

Borges and Vico

Donald Phillip Verene
(Emory University)

Abstract

Jorge Luis Borges and James Joyce are authors of works that can be considered as literary commentaries on Giambattista Vico's *New Science*; the whole of Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* is based on Vico's masterpiece. Borges' fiction "The Immortal" is connected to the third book of Vico's work concerning the "discovery of the true Homer." Borges' "The Immortal" is connected to his essays on infinity and the circularity of time. These essays involve the principle of cycles found in Vico's conception of history as well as in the works of other figures in the history of philosophy. The metaphysical conceptions of finitude and infinitude correspond to the existential structures of mortality and immortality that determine the human condition as we experience it.

The Idea of Literary Commentary

There are two notable literary commentaries on Vico's *La scienza nuova*: an extended one, by James Joyce, and a very short one, by Jorge Luis Borges. Joyce based *Finnegans Wake* on the *Scienza nuova* as he had based *Ulysses* on the *Odyssey*, as I have discussed elsewhere.¹ The 628 pages of Joyce's work involve the whole of Vico's *New Science*; the twenty pages of Borges' fiction—"El inmortal"—are specifically

¹ Donald Phillip Verene, *James Joyce and the Philosophers at Finnegans Wake* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2016); Verene, *Knowledge of Things Human and Divine: Vico's New Science and "Finnegans Wake"* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003); and Verene, ed., *Vico and Joyce* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987).

connected to Vico's discussion of the search for and discovery of the "true Homer." For Joyce to write a big book, another big book was required as a foundation. For Borges, in writing his fictions as well as his non-fictions, brevity is his aim. But for Joyce as for Borges, who was an admirer of Joyce, all books are about other books.

"The Immortal" has a central place in Borges' writings and is connected to several of his essays on the idea of infinity and the circularity of time. In his Norton lectures at Harvard that appeared as the little volume *This Craft of Verse*, Borges, reflecting on how he conceived his fictions, gives "The Immortal" as an example. He says: "I thought of a quite good plot; then I wrote the story 'El inmortal.' The idea behind that story—and the idea might come as a surprise to any of you who have read the story—is that if a man were immortal, then in the long run (and the run *would* be long, of course), he would have said all things, done all things, written all things."

Borges continues: "I took as my example Homer; I thought of him (if indeed he existed) as having written his *Iliad*. Then Homer would go on living, and he would change as the generations of men have changed. Eventually, of course, he would forget his Greek, and in due time he would forget that he had been Homer." Borges concludes: "This idea of Homer forgetting that he was Homer is hidden under many structures I wove around the book."² Homer is the ideal figure for this story because he represents the origin of Western literature that is preserved in the memory of the Western canon. It is with Homer that the Western literary imagination begins.

Neither Borges' *ficción* of the immortal Homer nor Joyce's *Wake* are intended as commentaries in the ordinary sense.³ They offer a differ-

² Jorge Luis Borges, *This Craft of Verse*, ed. Calin-Andrei Mihailescu (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 112-13.

³ Vico appears in several contemporary works of fiction. Vico is part of the theme of A. S. Byatt's novel *Possession: A Romance* (New York: Random House, 1990), 3-6, 10, 23, 510, 512, 548. A paragraph summarizing Vico's views appears in Salman Rushdie's *The Ground Beneath Her Feet: A Novel* (New York: Picador, 2000), 83. The novels of Carlos Fuentes are influenced by Vico's conception of history, especially *Terra Nostra*, trans. Margaret Sayers Peden (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1976), *passim*, and *Christopher Unborn*, trans. Alfred Mac Adam and Carlos Fuentes (New York: Vintage, 1990), 132, 255, 278, 461, 463, 519. Vico's philosophy of

ent approach to understanding Vico than that of Benedetto Croce's *La filosofia di Giambattista Vico* or Isaiah Berlin's *Vico and Herder* and the range of philosophical and historical studies that succeed them in Italian, English, French, German, and Spanish.⁴ In literary guise Vico appears anew. From this perspective we find Vico, to use his own terms, as a "poetic character" or "imaginative universal" (*universale fantastico*), as a figure of the fantastic imagination. In Joyce, Vico appears as "the producer (Mr. John Baptist Vicker)" among other guises, including even the central figure of the *Wake*, H. C. Earwicker.⁵ Vico is merged with the rare bookdealer Joseph Cartaphilus of Smyrna, who sells the copy of Pope's *Iliad* at the beginning of Borges' story.⁶

To consider Borges' literary use of Vico as a form of commentary raises the theoretical question of the relation of philosophy to literature. How are we to understand this relationship as such? The relation of philosophy to literature, I think, may be approached in four ways. It may be thought of as a field of philosophy, as philosophy of literature. So conceived, philosophy is considered as a mode of thought independent from literature. From its perspective, philosophy can examine literature as a production of the imagination and arrive at a theory of literature in a manner analogous to other "philosophies of," such as philosophy of science, philosophy of history, philosophy of religion, and so forth. Philosophy of literature pursues the questions: What is literature? What is its function in human knowledge? What is its place in human culture and human affairs? Philosophy of literature, then, is part of the field of aesthetics and the philosophy of culture in general.

A second conception of the relation of philosophy to literature is the finding of philosophy *in* literature. On this conception, works of literature

history appears as part of a program of humane education described in Flaubert's posthumous novel *Bouvard et Pécuchet* (1880). See Gustave Flaubert, *Œuvres complètes* (Paris, 1902), chap. 4.

⁴ E.g., see Molly Black Verene, "Works on Giambattista Vico in English from 1884 through 2009," *New Vico Studies* 27 (2009): 83-304.

⁵ James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (London: Faber and Faber, 1939), 255.27. See Verene, *Joyce and the Philosophers*, chap. 4.

⁶ Jorge Luis Borges, "The Immortal," in *Collected Fictions*, trans. Andrew Hurley (New York: Penguin, 1998), 183-95; "El inmortal," in *El Aleph, Obras completas* (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 1957), 7-26.

are approached in terms of the philosophical ideas contained in them. Literary works may project views of reality that are of significance for metaphysics, and they may contain philosophically important views of the self and of ethics. Literature becomes a source for philosophical speculation. Philosophy in literature reflects the origin philosophy has as the transformation through reason of the apprehensions of the world in ancient myths.

The third conception of the relation of philosophy to literature is that of philosophy *and* literature. This approach affirms a dialectical relation between philosophy and literature as independent but connected directions of thought. Philosophy seeks to achieve a grasp of the nature of things through the pursuit of pure, rationally formed ideas. Literature seeks to fulfill the power of the imagination by the expression of patterns of images. The most immediate form of this expression is found in lyric poetry. Yet the image dominates all forms of fictive expression, even if joined with ideational patterns. Philosophy never frees itself from the image. Philosophical works are filled with metaphorical language, but their aim is to take the mind to the thought of the pure idea. Hence the ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry. Philosophy in its pursuit of the idea loses the immediacy natural to the image. Poetry sees no need to move beyond the vitality of the image.

The fourth conception of the relation of philosophy to literature is philosophy *as* literature. On this conception literature is conceived in the broadest sense, as the power of the word to embody thought. This conception places both philosophy and literature within the Republic of Letters. The great works of philosophy, such as those of Plato or Hegel, are seen as intellectual narratives, the self in dialogue with itself. The great works of literature, such as those of Dante or Goethe, are inherently narratives of the intellect as well as of the imagination. Great works of philosophy and great works of literature arise from the same impetus and point in the same direction—the attempt to grasp what is absolute. Both philosophy and literature, in the ultimate sense, are attempts to take language beyond itself and to allow the mind to approach the really real. Philosophy and literature seen in this way are two sides of a coin. Neither can be fully separated from the other. The philosopher becomes a literary thinker and the litterateur becomes a lover of wisdom. They are both parts of a single process of the human spirit.

Borges' "The Immortal" is an example of this fourth conception. It may be described as an instance of literary philosophy. In it, image and idea

are bound together so as to take the reader to a glimpse of the absolute through the interconnection of memory, time, and mortality. The unseen appears in the seen, yet remains in essence unseen. A fiction, as we encounter it at the pen of Borges, is a verbal emblem in which a large and complex meaning is condensed into a particular circle of thought. A fiction is not a novelty. It brings to mind elements of other works in the way that an emblem is composed of elements reflected in other emblems.

Borges says: "It is a laborious madness and an impoverishing one, the madness of composing vast books—setting out in five hundred pages an idea that can be perfectly related orally in five minutes. The better way to go about it is to pretend that those books already exist, and offer a summary, a commentary on them."⁷ Borges says that he takes this procedure of writing from other writings—from Carlyle's *Sorter Resartus* and Butler's *The Fair Haven*. He says he carries this procedure even further in some cases, by writing about imaginary books. Fiction becomes tautological—fiction about fiction.

At another place, commenting on his fictions, Borges says: "I have tried (I am not sure how successfully) to write plain tales. I dare not say they are simple; there is not a simple page, a simple word on earth—for all pages, all words, predicate the universe, whose most notorious attribute is its complexity." All words are about other words, just as all works are about other works. Borges says, further: "But I do wish to make clear that I am not, nor have I ever been, what used to be called a fabulist or spinner of parables, what these days is called an *auteur engagé*. I do not aspire to be Æsop. My tales, like those of the *Thousand and One Nights*, are intended not to persuade readers, but to entertain and touch them. This intention does not mean that I shut myself, as Solomon's image would have it, into an ivory tower."

Fictions are not fantasies or parables, that is, they are not retreats from the world or moral allegories. They allow the reader to think thoughts which, if expressed in purely discursive terms, would lose the complexities of their truth. What is truly simple is always in fact complex. As Borges continues: "Each language is a tradition, each word a shared symbol; the changes that an innovator may make are trifling—we should remember the dazzling but often unreadable work of a Mallarmé

⁷ Borges, Foreword (1944), in *Fictions*, 67.

or a Joyce.”⁸ We can say of a fiction what Horace says of a poem—that its purpose is to instruct, delight, and move (*Ars poetica* 333). All bad philosophy is sincere. The opposite of sincerity, in this regard, is not insincerity but irony. Irony is the trope that governs both philosophy and fictions. Discovered by Socrates as the instrument of his thought, irony inhabits all true philosophy.

Irony affords the mind distance from the matter in hand, non-attachment. It is this distance that we find in ourselves as philosophers and as readers of a fiction. The mind can hold something before it, knowing that it can never fully know (and certainly not literally know) what is before it. There is always more before the mind than what it can perceive and what it can hold in thought. Philosophical thought is in principle ironic. Truth is always partial. What is thought and what is not thought, its opposite, both have a claim to truth. The True, then, is the whole. The sense of the whole is what is captured in the fiction as well as in the philosophical narrative.

The Fiction

Much of Vico’s *New Science* has the character of a philosophical fiction, such as his presentation of the primordial giants’ first experience of Jove as the basis of his “poetic metaphysics” and his “discovery of the true Homer” as a figure of the imagination of the Greek peoples. Borges’ attachments to the importance of memory and fictive grasp of ideas, as well as Joyce’s, have a natural sympathy with Vico’s approach to thought and language that unites philosophy and philology by paying close attention to the etymology of words.

In the opening lines of “The Immortal,” the rare bookdealer Joseph Cartaphilus, who sells the volumes of Pope’s *Iliad* to the Princess de Lucinge, in London, is Vico, who, like Cartaphilus, has a friendly love of paper (Italian: *carta* = paper; Greek: *philos* = friendly; Latinized: *philus*). The bookseller is described as “an emaciated, grimy man with gray eyes and gray beard and singularly vague features [*un hombre consumido y terroso, de ojos grises y barba gris, de rasgos singularmente vagos*].”⁹ Vico’s early biographer, Nicola Solla, describes

⁸ Borges, Foreword to *Brodie’s Report* (1970), in *Fictions*, 345-46.

⁹ Borges, “Immortal,” in *Fictions*, 183.

Vico as being “of medium height, his body tended to be adust [*adusto*], aquiline nose, and lively penetrating eyes.”¹⁰ Vico was a gaunt, adust, and melancholic figure, all skin and bones, derisively called (by his *gran tormentatore*, Nicola Capasso), “*maestro Tisicuzzo*,” an antique slur meaning tubercular (*tisico*).

Vico's father was a bookseller in Naples; his bookshop was in San Biagio dei Librai (*libraio*, bookseller, bookshop), one of the system of streets commonly called *Spaccanapoli* because they split the ancient center of Naples in two. Vico was born and raised in the single room in which his family lived, above his father's shop. In 1726, the year following the publication of the first edition of his *New Science*, Vico served as appraiser of the library of Giuseppe Valletta, the best in Naples. In preparing the *New Science*, Vico said: “I entombed myself completely in the silence of a great library rich in all the various works of human thought, where I meditated on the most ancient authors of all nations from whom after more than a thousand years modern writers take their beginnings.”¹¹ The *New Science* throughout is built upon citations to other works. Vico is a lover of books, of writings, of what appears on paper.

The manuscript that is bound into the last volume of Pope's *Iliad* that the Princess buys is the text of “The Immortal” that is declared to be written in English but that “teems” with Latinisms. Borges' Spanish rendering of it also teems with Latinisms. Vico's *Scienza nuova* is traditionally regarded as written in a Latinized style, thought to be so because Vico wrote his prior works in Latin and from the fact that Vico prided himself as having mastered Latin equally with his own language. Vico's oration on education *De nostri temporis studiorum ratione*, is composed in an exceptional Latin style.

Once he has passed on the manuscript hidden in the *Iliad*, Cartaphilus, the double of Vico, dies on his way back to his birthplace, Smyrna, as Borges relates. Smyrna is in western Turkey, south of the ancient location of Troy. Borges says Cartaphilus “expressed himself with untutored

¹⁰ Donald Phillip Verene, *The New Art of Autobiography: An Essay on the Life of Giambattista Vico Written by Himself* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), 28-29.

¹¹ Giambattista Vico, *Vici Vindiciae*, in *Giambattista Vico: Keys to the New Science; Translations, Commentaries, and Essays*, ed. Thora Ilin Bayer and Donald Phillip Verene (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), 134.

and uncorrected fluency in several languages.”¹² This mixture of languages may indicate a mixture of previous identities, indicating that he may be one of the immortals, having lived many lives. Now, having passed on the manuscript regarding the immortals, Cartaphilus can finally achieve mortality and be returned to his humanity. He is buried on the Greek island of Ios in the south central Cyclades, in the Aegean Sea.

If we accept the opinion of Pindar (fr. 279), who holds that Homer’s birthplace was Smyrna, Cartaphilus may also be Homer. That Cartaphilus speaks in various languages and dialects may reflect the fact that Homer’s poems combine dialects of various Greek peoples, leading to the view that this is why so many Greek cities claim to be his birthplace, a view involved in Vico’s theory of the “true Homer.” Homer’s works are not transmitted in any one dialect but in as many Greek dialects as there are cities that claim to be his birthplace.

The manuscript describes an odyssey, subsequent to that of Odysseus, of a warrior in the service of the emperor Diocletian in the revolt in Egypt in 296 A.D., which was suppressed by Diocletian in person at Alexandria the following year. The warrior-narrator says he “had fought (with no glory) in the recent Egyptian wars and was tribune of a legion quartered in Berenice, on the banks of the Red Sea.” Although quartered in Berenice, a city founded by Ptolemy, he says his “travails began in a garden in hundred-gated Thebes.” This is the Egyptian Thebes, formerly capital of Egypt, on the left bank of the Nile. The reference to the hundred-gated Thebes is to its description in the ninth book of the *Iliad*. Diocletian was known not only for his conquests but for his attachment to the old Roman religion, traditions, and discipline.

The narrator of the text is confronted by an exhausted rider, whose birthplace is beyond the Ganges, and who is in search of “‘*the secret river that purifies men of death*.’” He dies before dawn, but not before relating that “on the far shore of that river lay the City of the Immortals.” The narrator decides to go in search of that city. He encounters great difficulties; can find no water; his men desert him, etc. He is obsessed with the image of the City. He dreams of an “orderly labyrinth at

¹² Borges, “Immortal,” in *Fictions*, 183. Quotations from “Immortal” in this section follow the sequence in which they occur in the translation of Borges’ text and are thus not separately cited.

whose center lay a well." But he dreams: "I knew I would die before I reached it." Then he wakes from this nightmare to find himself before the City of the Immortals, surrounded by a group of Troglodytes, who survive by devouring serpents. We then learn his full identity: "Marcus Flaminius Rufus, military tribune of one of the legions of Rome." Flaminius Rufus drinks from the river the rider had sought. He says: "I plunged my bloodied face into the dark water and lapped it like an animal."

He enters the City of the Immortals to find that, instead of being a wondrous labyrinth of divine design, it is a deconstructed architecture such that "the width and height of the treads on the staircases were not constant." He says the architecture had no purpose. "There were corridors that led nowhere, unreachably high windows, grandly dramatic doors that opened onto monklike cells or empty shafts, incredible upside-down staircases with upside-down treads and balustrades." He decides that the "*gods that built this place were mad.*" It "*pollutes the past and the future and somehow compromises the stars. So long as the City endures, no one in the world can ever be happy or courageous.*" When he emerges he swears to put this experience out of his memory.

Who is Marcus Flaminius Rufus? Why must he erase so far as possible any memory of this city? Unlike Odysseus he is not royal, but his name is patrician. Marcus is a common Roman *praenomen*—the name, for example, of Cicero's son. Flaminius is a patrician surname from the Roman gens Quinctius. Rufus has noble associations—Rufus of Ephesus, the noted physician who had a knowledge of Egypt, and Quintus Curtius Rufus, who published a large history of Alexander the Great. He had expected the city to be a great work of the gods, an ideal city made actual and eternal, but it is a nightmare of deconstruction and disorder. The hope of something eternal being a perfection that can be set off against the imperfection of temporal existence—is dashed. What is immortal, eternal, is space and time gone mad. We are better off not to know of it.

Flaminius Rufus is left with the companionship of a single Troglodyte, who attaches himself to him and follows him in the manner of a faithful dog or horse. He says: "The Troglodyte's lowly birth and condition recalled to my memory of the image of Argos, the moribund old dog of the *Odyssey*, so I gave him the name Argos, and tried to teach it to him." He fails time and time again to get the Troglodyte to respond to the name. He reflects "that it is generally believed among the Ethiopians that monkeys deliberately do not speak, so that they will not be forced to

work; I attributed Argos' silence to distrust or fear." He realizes that the Troglodyte and he likely live in separate universes; that of the Troglodyte is one of swift impressions devoid of memory and thus without objects that populate the human world. Then in desperation, in a rainstorm in the frigid desert night, Flaminus Rufus cries out: "*Argos!*"

Suddenly, in answer, "Argos stammered out these words: *Argos, Ulysses' dog*. And then, without looking at me, *This dog lying on the dungheap*." This is the dog that appears in the seventeenth book of the *Odyssey*, when Odysseus returns to Ithaca, and that is living on top of "piles of dung from mules and cattle." Now very old, Argos recognizes his returned master by wagging his tail and dropping his ears instead of pricking his ears, as he did at strangers. Eumaeus, the loyal swineherd, believes Odysseus to have died far from home. Argos dies as soon as he recognizes Odysseus. Then Odysseus, in the guise of a beggar, follows Eumaeus into his own royal house to confront the suitors.

In the odyssey of Marcus Flaminus Rufus, Argos the Troglodyte is Homer. He says: "I asked Argos how much of the *Odyssey* he knew. He found using Greek difficult; I had to repeat the question. *Very little*, he replied. *Less than the meagerest rhapsode. It has been eleven hundred years since I wrote it.*" Homer explains that the Troglodytes were the immortals. The city had existed as a marvel, but the Immortals had destroyed this version about nine hundred years ago and on the same spot they had built the incoherent city as a temple to the irrational gods that rule the world and who do not resemble men. Then the Immortals abandoned this city and went off to dwell in caves and exist only as self-absorbed beings, scarcely perceiving the physical world.

Homer, after composing his poems, had gone in search of the Immortals and lived for a century in the City of the Immortals. When it was destroyed it was Homer who counseled the incoherent city be built as its replacement. We are told: "We should not be surprised by that—it is rumored that after singing of the War of Ilion, he sang of the war between the frogs and rats. He was like a god who created first the Cosmos, and then Chaos." One thinks of Joyce's "chaosmos" (*FW* 118.21).

In the *Homeric Apocrypha*, in the "Battle of the Frogs and the Rats" the gods, at the advice of Athena, allow the meaningless event to take place. Athena says: "gods, let's forget aiding these creatures, in case one of you gets wounded by a sharp missile: they are close fighters, even if a god should come against them. Let's all just enjoy watching the battle from

heaven. So she spoke, and the other gods went along with her advice" (193-97). The war between these two species is without meaning. It is chaotic activity that simply ends, as the poem describes, when the day itself ends.

The manuscript states: "There is nothing very remarkable about being immortal; with the exception of mankind, all creatures are immortal, for they know nothing of death. What is divine, terrible and incomprehensible is *to know* oneself immortal." Mortality is the necessary condition of the desire for virtue, for the best life. The Immortal lives all lives and need not prefer one over the other. "No one is someone; a single immortal man is all men." Mortality is the condition that generates the drive to create meaning, to make literature. "Homer composed the *Odyssey*; given infinite time, with infinite circumstances and changes, it is impossible that the *Odyssey* should *not* be composed at least once." To be all things is the same as to be not. For to be is to be something particular, individual, that cannot be completely duplicated and that can pass out of existence.

In the life of mortals everything is contingent. "Among the Immortals, on the other hand, every act (every thought) is the echo of others that preceded it in the past, with no visible beginning, and the faithful presage of others that will repeat it in the future, *ad vertiginem*." The existence of the Immortal is a turning around on itself without end. There is no past, present, and future. One thing is always counterbalanced by another. The Immortals are prevented from having any sense of pity, for any wrong will eventually be balanced by a right and the reverse. It is comparable to betting in games of chance: winnings and losings tend to equal out over time.

Flaminius Rufus and Homer separate, and the manuscript relates how this Roman Ulysses wandered through "new realms" and "new empires," fighting in the battle of Stamford Bridge in 1066 in the ranks of Harold II and wandering through the centuries in the cultures of Europe and the East. He recorded the seven voyages of Sindbad and taught astrology in Bikaner in northwest India and in Bohemia in central Europe. He subscribed to the six volumes of Pope's *Iliad* in Aberdeen in 1714, just prior to its publication, which began in 1715, as noted earlier. He says: "In 1729 or thereabouts, I discussed the origin of that poem with a professor of rhetoric whose name, I believe, was Giambattista; his arguments struck me as irrefutable." On his way to Bombay in 1921 Flaminius Rufus drinks from a spring on the Eritrean coast and while so doing scratches the back of his hand on a thorn. A drop of blood appears, and he realizes he is once more mortal.

The True Homer

In the last several paragraphs of the manuscript, the tale told in the first person by Marcus Flaminius Rufus breaks off. These paragraphs contain a reflection on the credibility of the tale by Cartaphilus, who claims that what is related does not pass beyond the bounds of truth but in some details he detects “a certain falseness.” He says it is “a way of writing that I learned from poets; it is a procedure that infects everything with falseness.” This claim echoes Horace’s *Ars poetica*, in which he acknowledges that poets make things up but also advises that poetry should not be inconsistent. The poet naturally fills in what is lost to memory. Cartaphilus is speaking for Borges himself in saying: “it does not matter that I may be judged a fantast [*fantástico*].”

The reason for the intermingling of truth and falseness is that the memories of two figures are intermingled—that of Flaminius Rufus and of Homer. This intermingling is characteristic of the poet inspired by the Muses, the daughters of Memory who, as Hesiod says, sing both true and false songs, but can sing true songs when they will. The Roman is both a warrior like Ulysses and a man of letters like Homer because on several occasions, especially when he first drinks the water of the river of the Immortals, he speaks the words of Homer that appear at the end of the famous catalogue of ships of the *Iliad*, of the “clan that drank the Aesepus’ dark waters.” The tale has thus been “composed by a man of letters desirous (like the author of the catalog of ships) of wielding splendid words.” To this line is appended the footnote: “Ernesto Sabato suggests that the ‘Giambattista’ who discussed the origins of the *Iliad* with the rare book dealer Cartaphilus is Giambattista Vico, the Italian who defended the argument that Homer is a symbolic character, like Pluto or Achilles.”

Finally, both Flaminius Rufus and Cartaphilus assert that now, at the end of their lives, they have lost all images supplied by memory and all that remains are words. The Roman Ulysses says: “As the end approaches, there are no longer any images from memory—there are only words.” The “me” of memory—the “mememormee” on Joyce’s final page of *Finnegans Wake*—with its storehouse of images formed as an individual, is gone. The river of Lethe, runs as well above ground as below. Flaminius Rufus says: “I have been Homer, soon like Ulysses, I shall be Nobody [*outis*]; soon, I shall be all men—I shall be dead.” The manuscript ends with these words: “*As the end approaches*, wrote Cartaphilus, *there are no longer any images from memory—there are only words.*

Words, words, words taken out of place and mutilated, words from other men—those were the alms left him by the hours and the centuries.” The immortal becomes a fiction without unique identity. As a fantast telling the story of his life—the story made up of the words of other fictions. Thought is now just the manipulation of words in a present.

What is Vico’s account of Homer, the arguments of which seem irrefutable? In the third book of the *New Science*, Vico engages in a digression addressed to the “Discovery of the True Homer.” It confirms the claim of the abovementioned footnote, that Vico regards Homer as a “symbolic character [*personaje simbólico*].” Vico says: “Homer was an idea or a heroic character of Grecian men [*un carattere eroico d’uomini greci*] insofar as they told their histories in song.”¹³ Vico takes a position between the views that Homer did not exist and that Homer is an abstract symbol. Instead, Vico regards Homer as actual but not in the sense of a given individual. Homer is a collective name for those ancient Greeks who narrated their histories in song. Homer, then, is a generic name of the imagination, or what Vico calls a “poetic character” or “imaginative universal” (*universale fantastico*), the logic of which is at the basis of all fables.

The two examples the footnote gives of such characters—Pluto and Achilles—are not the standard combination that Vico gives. His two constant examples of heroic characters are Achilles and Ulysses, the heroes of the two Homeric poems. All gods and heroes are poetic characters. Pluto, one of the children of Kronos, is not a hero but a god with the Roman name Dis. He is likely included here because of his association with the underworld, and Vico has several passages interpreting Pluto escorting Proserpine into the underworld.¹⁴ Vico identifies Proserpine with Ceres, the goddess of grain, a symbol of ancient wealth, and with the fable of Aeneas the Trojan-Roman Ulysses and the golden bough.

Vico says that the discovery that the first gentile peoples were theological poets who spoke in poetic characters, and thus expressed the origin myths upon which all nations are founded, is “the master key of this Science.”¹⁵ These first humans could not form abstract class terms

¹³ Giambattista Vico, *The New Science*, trans. T. G. Bergin and M. H. Fisch (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), para. 873.

¹⁴ Ibid., paras. 714, 716, and 721.

¹⁵ Ibid., para. 34.

or “intelligible universals” (*universali intelligibili*) as formulated in Aristotle’s *Organon*. They formed the primordial experience of thunder as Jove by onomatopoeia. The thunderous interjections of Jove gave birth to one produced by the human voice: “*pa*” which was then doubled as “*pape!*”¹⁶ Prior to formulating the first name, Jove, the first humans or protohumans, like the Troglodyte Argos, experienced the world as a series of fleeting impressions without the impressions coming together as objects. Each instance of thunder was a unique perception. The sudden finding again in one of these perceptions the meaning of the whole series produces Jove as the first named object.

Once in possession of the power of the name, everything can be named and all flora and fauna become gods. Vico says: “The first founders of humanity applied themselves to a sensory topics [*topica sensibile*], by which they brought together those properties or qualities or relations of individuals and species which were, so to speak, concrete, and from these formed their poetic genera.”¹⁷ These topics are formed not by reflection or intellection but by imagination (*fantasia*) and memory. Vico says in his discussion of Homer that “memory is the same as imagination [*la memoria è la stessa che la fantasia*].”¹⁸ The first humans, like children, have strong memories and thus strong imaginations; they think in poetic characters. Vico says: “‘Character’ means idea, form, model; and certainly poetic characters came before those of articulate sounds [that is, before alphabetic characters].”¹⁹

In Vico’s “ideal eternal history” of three ages through which any nation develops—the ages of gods, heroes, and humans—poetic characters or universals are the thought-form of the ages of gods and heroes, and intelligible class-concepts or universals are the form of the human age. Once a nation develops to its heroic age it can employ heroes as poetic characters that embody virtues which direct behavior. The human mind at this age is unable to form moral abstractions such as courage or wisdom (*prudentia*, *phronēsis*). It forms these as the heroic characters of Achilles and Ulysses.

All warriors who are courageous are perceived as Achilles. All warri-

¹⁶ Ibid., para. 448.

¹⁷ Ibid., para. 495.

¹⁸ Ibid., para. 819.

¹⁹ Ibid., para. 429.

ors who are prudent and clever are Ulysses. These individuals are not *like* Achilles or Ulysses. They literally *are* them, and in addition Achilles is Achilles and Ulysses is Ulysses. That Achilles and Ulysses are one and many at the same time in the same sense is a meaning that can be reached only by the power of *fantasia*, not by rational reflection. Achilles and Ulysses can be univocally (literally) predicated of individuals in the same way that the rational mind can literally predicate the virtues of courage and prudence as properties of a class of individuals. The imaginative universal is phenomenologically presupposed by the intelligible universal.

The reflective or rational mind can have access to the logic of *fantasia* only through fictions. Once the world of mythical thinking is left, myth proper can never be made again. Lyric can capture only one aspect of the myth—the power of the immediate image. The lyric must be bonded with the dramatic and the epic to attain the fiction, because myth is more than immediate images. Myths, whether primal or societal, structure the world. Like the poetic characters upon which they are based, myths are a world of proto-thought accessible to an extent by the imagination, but whose inner form is not accessible to reason.

Vico says: “Aristotle in his *Poetics* says that only Homer knew how to invent poetic falsehoods. For his poetic characters, which are incomparable for the sublime appropriateness which Homer admires in them, were imaginative universals.”²⁰ Aristotle says: “Homer more than any other has taught the others [poets] the art of framing lies in the right way. I mean the use of paralogism. Whenever, if one thing is or happens, another is or happens, men’s notion is that if the latter is, so is the former—but that is a false conclusion.”²¹ Vico points out, rightly, that Horace in *Ars poetica* advises poets above all to imitate Homer’s creation of characters.²² Paralogism is incorrect reasoning and has a connection to legend (Greek *para-logos*, against speech or reason; legend, akin to *legein*, to collect, gather, speak; *logos*).

A fiction is always a doubling-up. Everything is a “twone” (*FW* 003.12). Two things can always be associated such that the presence of one seems to justify the presence of the other. As in an imaginative uni-

²⁰ Ibid., para. 809.

²¹ Aristotle, *Poetics*, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 2:2336 (1460^a).

²² Vico, *New Science*, para. 806.

versal, Cartaphilus can be Vico and yet be Cartaphilus. Flaminus Rufus can be Homer and yet be the Roman tribune attracted to the use of letters. The imagination can tolerate what reason cannot. Yet it is in the imagination that original connections are made that supply the beginnings for the rational sense of *logos*. In the fiction we can think the unthinkable.

The Circularity of Time and the Ethics of Immortality

The epigraph Borges affixes to “The Immortal” is from Bacon’s essay “Of Vicissitude of Things”: “Solomon saith: *There is no new thing upon the earth*. So that as Plato had an imagination, *that all knowledge was but remembrance*; so Solomon giveth his sentence, *that all novelty is but oblivion*.”²³

A source for Bacon’s sense of vicissitude is Machiavelli’s observation in the *Discourses*: “that things are forgotten.” Machiavelli says: “To those philosophers who have held that the world is eternal, I believe it can be replied that, if such antiquity is correct, it is reasonable that there should be a record of more than five thousand years, except that such records of the past are blotted out by various causes, part of which come from men, part from Heaven.”²⁴ Only what repeats itself in some way is remembered; what does not at some point is forgotten. Eternity depends upon repetition of events.

In the *Phaedo* Socrates says to Cebes that “coming to life again in truth exists, the living come to be from the dead, and the souls of the dead exist.” Cebes replies that “for us learning is no other than recollection. According to this, we must at some previous time have learned what we now recollect. This is possible only if our soul existed somewhere before it took on this human shape. So according to this theory too, the soul is likely to be something immortal.”²⁵ Knowledge, then, is dependent on what can be remembered and what can truly be remem-

²³ Francis Bacon, “Of Vicissitude of Things,” in *The Major Works*, ed. Brian Vickers (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 451.

²⁴ Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses on the First Decade of Titus Livius*, in *The Chief Works and Others*, trans. Allan Gilbert, 3 vols. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1989), 1:339-40.

²⁵ Plato, *Phaedo*, in *Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1997), 63 (72E).

bered over time is what can repeat itself. What is purely novel disappears from memory because it is unconnected to the whole which exists beyond time and which itself does not change.

At the beginning of *Ecclesiastes*, the author of which by tradition may be Solomon, puts forth the claim that all novelty is oblivion in the famous lines: "What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done; there is nothing new under the sun." This claim of repetition is followed by: "Is there a thing of which it is said, 'See, this is new'? It has already been, in the ages before us." And then: "The people of long ago are not remembered, nor will there be any remembrance of people yet to come by those who came after them" (Ecc. 9-11). The causes of oblivion are those that Machiavelli identifies: the acts of Heaven, natural disasters that destroy all records, and the acts of men's memory, which is affected as much by its powers of remembrance as those of forgetting.

To endorse this view of vicissitude and also to offset it, we may add the maxim of the Florentine historian Francesco Guicciardini: "All that which has been in the past and is at present will be again in the future. But both the names and the appearances of things change, so that he who does not have a good eye will not recognize them. Nor will he know how to grasp a norm of conduct or make a judgment by means of observation."²⁶ Guicciardini's *buono occhio* is the key to prudence. The circularity of time is not simply the condition of change; it is the time of eternity. The eternal, the immortal is not a reality separate from the contingent world of change; it is the circularity and repetitiveness of that world itself.

Poetry is based on falsehoods, not in the sense that poets lie in an ordinary sense. Poetic falsehoods are logical falsehoods. As Aristotle claims above, the paralogisms of poetry commit the fallacy of affirming the consequent found in hypothetical syllogisms. The poet or fictionalist is naturally speculative, thinking in the form of "if-then." But instead of affirming the antecedent to justify the consequent, the poet affirms the consequent and then claims the truth of the antecedent (instead of p implies q , p , therefore q ; p implies q , q , therefore p). If Flaminius Rufus is Homeric, then he will be a Roman Odysseus; he is a Roman Odysseus; therefore he is Homeric. Hypothetical judgments embody the category

²⁶ Francesco Guicciardini, *Ricordi* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1977), 131. My translation.

of cause; they state a causal connection. The poem or fiction does not accept this sense of causal implication. The poet or fictionalist replaces this sense of causality with the a-causal principle of the coincidence of opposites. According to this principle, anything may coincide with anything. Everything is a double of itself and everything is what it is in itself and what it is not, its opposite. The coincidence of opposites is present in everyone's experience. It is the basis of repetition and of the logic of the dream, as Joyce has demonstrated in his book of the dark, his "dreamoneire" of *Finnegans Wake* (280.01). *Coincidentia oppositorum* is natural in fiction, but surprises us in ordinary life.

In his non-fictions or essays Borges returns repeatedly to the subject of the circularity of time and the nature of immortality. In the "Doctrine of Cycles" (1936) he addresses the doctrine of the Eternal Return, which he finds in Nietzsche. Borges formulates it as: "*The number of all atoms that compose the world is immense but finite, and as such only capable of a finite (though also immense) number of permutations. In an infinite stretch of time, the number of possible permutations must be run through, and the universe has to repeat itself.*"²⁷ This doctrine of cycles is challenged, Borges says, by Georg Cantor's doctrine of transfinite numbers entailed in his arithmetic of the infinite and theory of sets of points.

On this conception all that there is can be considered finite, yet within this finitude we can conceive of an infinite progression that never wholly repeats itself. Such an infinite progression can be conceived in terms of temporal moments or sets of spatial points. Transfinite is either an index of the ordered set of all natural numbers or can be generated from these by purely algebraic means. Another way to see this principle is to regard a cardinal number of a mathematical aggregate as not finite.

Although Borges presents this conception of finite-infinite in terms of Cantor's sets, we may more easily view it in the broader epistemological terms of a logical function of the form $\phi(\chi)$ where χ is a series of variables constructed through its bond with a law of the series ϕ . The ϕ and the χ are of different logical types yet have meaning only when taken together. The law of a particular series is meaningless when taken in itself and the variables in such a series have no meaning apart from

²⁷ Jorge Luis Borges, "The Doctrine of Cycles," in *Selected Non-Fictions*, ed. Eliot Weinberger (New York: Penguin, 1999), 115.

the order that the law establishes in the series. Variables have no independent or intrinsic meaning as individuals. They are only individuals when serially ordered—when they are part of a progressively constructed whole. The $\phi(\chi)$ is at any point finite, yet the series is infinite. At no point need it become a cycle or repeat itself.

In an essay of the same year, “A History of Eternity,” Borges says: “as everyone knows—eternity is the model and archetype of time.” He says: “For us, time is a jarring, urgent problem, perhaps the most vital problem of metaphysics.”²⁸ Borges is at one with Hegel’s claim that “the true infinite [*das wahrhafte Unendliche*] is the fundamental concept of philosophy [*der Grundbegriff der Philosophie*].”²⁹ All metaphysics depends upon the proper comprehension of the concept of infinity, which is the proper comprehension of time. Hegel distinguishes between the true infinite—the concept of an infinite progression that dialectically or functionally recapitulates itself (in the manner described above)—and the bad infinite (*schlechte Unendlichkeit*)—an infinite series in which one thing simply comes after another and in which the finite and infinite are simple opposites, making the infinite conditioned by the finite. This is not an abstract problem, as Borges rightly holds, for time is the very condition of our human existence. In metaphysical terms, it is the problem of the finite and infinity or eternity. In anthropological terms, it is the problem of mortality and immortality.

In “When Fiction Lives in Fiction” (1939), Borges describes his first experience with infinity, which is his childhood notice of a Japanese scene painted on a large biscuit tin, in the corner of which reappears the same scene, in which appears the same scene, etc. Some years later he “discovered in one of Russell’s works an analogous invention by Josiah Royce, who postulates a map of England drawn on a portion of the territory of England: this map—since it is exact—must contain a map of the map, which must contain a map of the map of the map, and so to infinity.”³⁰ The source of this is most likely Royce’s “Supplemen-

²⁸ Borges, “A History of Eternity,” in *Non-Fictions*, 123.

²⁹ G. W. F. Hegel, *Die Wissenschaft der Logik*, vol. 8 of *Werke* (Frankfurt on Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), 203 (sec. 95). My translation.

³⁰ Borges, “When Fiction Lives in Fiction,” in *Non-Fictions*, 160.

tary Essay” in *The World and the Individual*.³¹ Borges sees, in this map and in the double portrait of Philip IV in Velázquez’ *Las meninas*, the phenomenon of “the interpolation of a fiction within another fiction.”³² Since all books are about other books, as all artworks are about other artworks, a fiction is always a determinate moment either explicitly or implicitly in a “true infinity” of images.

In “Circular Time” (1941), Borges says: “I tend to return eternally to the Eternal Return.” His purpose in these several pages is to define the three fundamental modes of the conception of circular time. The first is that attributed to Plato, which is the idea of a literal return to the past such that there will be, as Borges says Thomas Browne put it: “A revolution of a certain thousand years when all things should return to their former estate and he [Plato] be teaching again in his school as when he delivered this opinion.”³³ The source for this conception of “Plato’s year” is Augustine’s *City of God* (12.14). The second mode is that of Nietzsche, as discussed earlier. Borges finds this Nietzschean view stated in Hume’s *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, in which he considers the view that instead of supposing matter to be of an infinite number of particulars, as did Epicurus, we consider it finite. Hume writes: “This world, therefore, with all its events, even the most minute, has before been produced and destroyed, and will again be produced and destroyed, without any bounds and limitations.”³⁴

Borges says: “I now arrive at the final mode of interpreting eternal repetitions, the least melodramatic and terrifying of the three, but the only one that is conceivable. I mean the concept of similar but not identical cycles. The infinite catalogue of authorities would be impossible to complete.”³⁵ One of the authorities Borges cites is Vico, but he does not discuss Vico’s conception of the life of nations as governed by *corso* and *ricorso*. He quotes Marcus Aurelius: “The lengthiest and briefest periods are equal. The present belongs to all; to die is to lose the present, which is

³¹ Josiah Royce, *The World and the Individual: First Series, The Four Historical Conceptions of Being* (New York: Macmillan, 1899), 504.

³² Borges, “Fiction,” in *Non-Fictions*, 160.

³³ Borges, “Circular Time,” in *Non-Fictions*, 225.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 226, quoted by Borges.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

the briefest of lapses. No one loses the past or the future, because no man can be deprived of what he does not have.”³⁶ And Schopenhauer: “No man has lived in the past, and none will ever live in the future; the *present* alone is the form of all life.”³⁷ That to be alive is simply to be in the present is the first consequence of this third mode of eternal repetitions. “The second is a negation of all novelty, following the author of Ecclesiastes [as quoted in the epigraph for “The Immortal”].”³⁸

Vico’s *corso*—his cycle of three ages of ideal eternal history of gods, heroes, and humans—is followed by the *ricorso* of these ages. But the *ricorso* is not “Plato’s year” of literal repetition, nor is it the eternal return of cycle after cycle in a finite universe. Vico’s *ricorso* has the sense of a retrial in which he claims providence tries to teach its divine truth of a natural eternal republic a second time. The *ricorso* is a recollection of the *corso* and thus a repetition of it in different terms. Applied to Western history, the *corso* is the age of gods and heroes before Homer, whose poetry summarizes them and preserves them in the Greeks’ common memory. The Homeric turning-point is followed by the heroic mind of Socratic reason that originates the distinctively human world of ideas and written laws that is continued by the Romans until the fall of ancient civilization.

The *ricorso* is a return to religion in the early Medieval or “Dark Ages” of Europe. This period is followed by the high middle ages of chivalrous heroism and Scholastic thought that is summarized by Dante, the “Tuscan Homer,” as Vico calls him. Dante is followed by the Renaissance Humanists, who revive the thought and culture of Athens and Rome, which then declines into the Cartesian world of ratiocination and a jurisprudence of laws as regulations rather than the embodiment of virtues.

Borges says we “all secretly share the same destiny—the only possible destiny—thus universal history is the history of a single man.” Time and our fate of mortality now becomes tolerable. Borges further says that our allotted seventy years “becomes no more than an affirmation that the number of human perceptions, emotions, thoughts, and vicissitudes is limited and that before dying we will exhaust them all.”³⁹

³⁶ Ibid., 227.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., 228.

Vico's *corso* is childhood; his *ricorso* is adulthood. At any moment we are in the true infinity of the present. We have the assurance that at no time can we be imprisoned by external events, if we have this inner form of human memory. To extend Borges' point, we may add that this assurance presupposes an education of the soul—*paideia*, *Bildung*—which is the education of memory, for memory is the form of our humanity in the present. "Personal identity is known to reside in memory, and the annulment of that faculty is known to result in idiocy."⁴⁰ It is the teaching of the Muses, who can sing of what was, is, and is to come.

In "A New Refutation of Time" (1944–47), Borges says: "In the course of a life dedicated to belles-lettres and, occasionally, to the perplexities of metaphysics, I have glimpsed or foreseen a refutation of time, one in which I myself do not believe, but which tends to visit me at night and in the hours of weary twilight with the illusory force of a truism. This refutation is to be found in one form or another, in all my books."⁴¹ To consider the question of the refutation of time Borges turns to Berkeley, the first figure of the modern version of philosophical idealism, Plato being such in the ancient world. Borges holds that idealism is perhaps the most ancient and most widely held doctrine in the history of philosophy.

Borges rightly puts aside the view that Berkeley's philosophy entails solipsism because "Berkeley affirmed the continuous existence of objects, inasmuch as when no individual perceives them, God does."⁴² He also affirms Berkeley's ingenious refutation of the view that the mind can be material because the brain is simply an idea the mind has of itself. In Berkeley's *Three Dialogues*, Philonous says: "The brain therefore you speak of, being a sensible thing, exists only in the mind."⁴³

The idealist position as Borges describes it, moving from Berkeley to F. H. Bradley, is that succession is the condition of our perceptions and thoughts but succession does not apply to the Absolute as such. Temporal succession, then, is a property of our subjective mind but not of divine mind, which perceives all simultaneously as an eternal present. Yet Bor-

⁴⁰ Borges, "A History of Eternity," in *Non-Fictions*, 136.

⁴¹ Borges, "A New Refutation of Time," in *Non-Fictions*, 318.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 320.

⁴³ George Berkeley, *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*, ed. Colin M. Turbayne (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs Merrill, 1954), 52.

ges, having argued that the idealist denial of time as ultimately real is not logically refutable, concludes: "To deny temporal succession, to deny the self, to deny the astronomical universe, appear to be acts of desperation and are secret consolations." He says our destiny to be mortal is not terrifying because it is unreal; it is terrifying because it is irreversible. Nothing can prevent our death as a particular self, even if the really real of the Absolute is not in itself temporal, that is, if its being is not successive. Borges concludes: "Time is the substance of which I am made. Time is a river that sweeps me along, but I am the river; it is a tiger that mangles me, but I am the tiger; it is a fire that consumes me, but I am the fire. The world, unfortunately, is real; I, unfortunately, am Borges."⁴⁴

We may connect this sense of the personal in relation to temporal succession with Borges' final remarks in his "A History of Eternity." There he relates a passage entitled "Feeling of Death," from his book *The Language of the Argentines*. It captures his personal theory of eternity. "Mine is an impoverished eternity, without God or even a co-proprietor, and entirely devoid of archetypes."⁴⁵ He describes walking, one evening, in an unfamiliar neighborhood. Suddenly he felt the simple scene he took in as if timeless. "I felt as the dead feel, I felt myself to be an abstract observer of the world: an indefinite fear imbued with knowledge that is the greatest clarity of metaphysics." The serenity of the night and of the scene produced a true sense of eternity. It was a sense of the unchanged, not of similarity or repetition of things but of something being absolutely the same.

Borges says: "When we can feel this oneness, time is a delusion which the indifference and inseparability of a moment from its apparent yesterday and from its apparent today suffice to disintegrate." He concludes: "Life is too impoverished not to be immortal. But we lack even the certainty of our own poverty, given that time, which is easily refutable by the senses, is not so easily refuted by the intellect, from whose essence the concept of succession appears inseparable."⁴⁶ Borges' "intimation of eternity" is a moment of metaphysical insight that overcomes the sense of *aporia* that Aristotle, in the beginning of the *Metaphysics*, describes as

⁴⁴ Borges, "Refutation," in *Non-Fictions*, 332.

⁴⁵ Borges, "Eternity," in *Non-Fictions*, 137.

⁴⁶ Borges, *Ibid.*, 138..

generating *thauma* (wonder), from which metaphysics originates.

Borges' final consideration of the problem of time is his lecture on "Immortality" (1978). Here he declares: "I don't want to continue being Jorge Luis Borges; I want to be someone else. I hope that my death will be total; I hope to die in body and soul." Borges says: "The most poignant text in all of philosophy, without trying to be so, is Plato's *Phaedon*."⁴⁷ This is the dialogue of Socrates' last day of life, in which Socrates discusses the question of the immortality of the soul with the two Pythagoreans, Simmias and Cebes, and which ends in the scene of his death. Borges marvels that on the last day of his life Socrates speaks of the inseparability of pleasure and pain as well as holding the soul to be separate from the body and that the soul, when freed from the body, can dedicate itself to thinking.

In this final lecture on the subject of immortality, Borges insists that he wishes to cease as Borges. After reviewing various philosophical views of the immortality of the soul, he concludes: "I would say that I believe in immortality, not in the personal but in the cosmic sense. We will keep on being immortal; beyond our physical death our memory will remain, and beyond our memory will remain our actions, our circumstances, our attitudes, all that marvelous part of universal history, although we won't know, and it is better that we won't know it."⁴⁸ Borges apparently sees his own immortality as that of those he includes within his own thoughts and writings. He will become one of the authors on whom other authors base their works. But Borges the actual man will be no more. Borges portrays himself as having reached a point at which he has been all he can be and he wants not to continue as a repetition of himself.

In his "Afterword," reflecting on the various fictions of *The Aleph*, Borges says the subject of "The Immortal": "is the effect that immortality would have on humankind," and that this text is an "outline for an ethics of immortality."⁴⁹ The metaphysics of infinity points to an ethics. Borges's considerations of infinity and immortality in his various non-fictions take us to the view that a concept of personal immortality is unnecessary for an ethics of humankind. For us to seek the best life it is not necessary for us to prove or believe in an afterlife in which the succes-

⁴⁷ Borges, "Immortality," in *Non-Fictions*, 484.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 481.

⁴⁹ Borges, "Afterword," in *Fictions*, 287.

sion that characterizes temporal existence is overcome in an eternal present. The Kantian view that we require a sense of God as judge to be faced in an afterlife, in order to be moral in this life, is mistaken. The best life is its own reward. Borges quotes Plutarch: "Yesterday's man died in the man of today, today's man dies in the man of tomorrow."⁵⁰

If we go to Plutarch's *Moralia*, we find that he adds: "Nobody remains one person, nor is one person; but we become many persons, even as matter is drawn about some one resemblance and common mould with imperceptible movement." We know this because we experience things differently at different times in our lives. Plutarch continues: "What, then, really is Being? It is that which is eternal, without beginning and without end, to which no length of time brings change. For time is something that is in motion, appearing in connexion with moving matter, ever flowing, retaining nothing, a receptacle, as it were, of birth and decay, whose familiar 'afterwards' and 'before,' 'shall be' and 'has been,' when they are uttered, are of themselves a confession of Not Being."⁵¹

Our Not Being is always at every moment in our Being. At death the successive sense of ourselves disappears and we are in time no more. Death gives us full access to Being. Whether this Being is that of our individual soul or a merger with the cosmic soul of *nous* remains an open question. It is evident by now that Borges' consideration of the interrelation of eternity and immortality, joined with the Vichian circularity of time, offers no intellectual solution to the problem of our mortality. We can confront this problem only existentially, not theoretically. It is an *aporia* not simply in thought but inscribed in the human condition itself.

We might take consolation in considering the Socrates of the *Phaedo*, who says we do not know what our state is after death for we cannot know what death is while alive. But we have the Socratic precept that no harm can come to a good man either in life or in death. A good person is one who makes no one the worse for knowing him. It is the ideal of true civility, the wisdom befitting the human. If we keep this precept before us, we can say to ourselves that which Plato was wont to say: *eu prattōmen*, "we shall fare well." More we cannot say.

⁵⁰ Borges, "Refutation" in *Non-Fictions*, 331-32.

⁵¹ Plutarch, "The E at Delphi," in vol. 5 of *Moralia*, trans. F. C. Babbitt (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 243 (19).

TOPICAL ISSUES OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Colliding Times and Global Disorder: The Common Blindness to Social Time of Radical Liberalism and Leo Strauss's Neo-Conservatism

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Abstract

Taking our post-Cold War geopolitical circumstances as its contextual backdrop, this paper argues that radical liberalism and neo-conservatism, a position, that, at its most philosophical, is exemplified in the writings of Leo Strauss, fail to address the fact that human beings are caught up in different 'bodies of time.' The paper argues that the roots of the problem go back to the pioneers of liberalism, who were also major contributors to the metaphysics of modern science. It argues that social time must be a fundamental variable within any important political analysis.

Introduction

The overwhelming paradox of the contemporary world is that the world is more technologically and administratively 'ordered' than ever, but politically chaotic. Certainly it is as chaotic as it was last century, even allowing for the collapse of the balance of European powers, which drew most of the globe into a cataclysm of such immensity, so that one may argue that the chaos of today is geopolitically preferable to what existed a century ago. In the aftermath of the Second World War, the world seemed more predictable because the great global contestation was between two powers. But that was because it lay under the threat of nuclear devastation. None can be sanguine about the global future who looks at

the world's hot spots today—particularly running from Central Asia, to the Middle East and through much of Africa. There were very different sensibilities at work in 1914, 1940, 1970 and now. In 1914 there was a general European chauvinism that was the psychological accompaniment to empire. The commonplace sense of shame which is found amongst Europeans today about their imperial past was next to non-existent. Whose world would hold sway was not a question that made any sense outside of the conflicting powers of Europe. Though Japan had certainly displayed militaristic and expansive ambition in the years preceding the Great War in Korea and Russia, it was with its Manchurian conquest that Japan seriously presented itself as a ruthless member of a global political ideological power of a sort which had rendered nineteenth century concepts of empire obsolete. The ideologies of Fascism and communism, which dominated so much of the twentieth century and which led the world into the next war, now look far less like the seriously new approaches to making the future that they presented themselves to be as they emerged in the turbulence at the end of the Great War. With our distance, the fascistic and communist amalgamation of militarism, nationalism (which the ostensibly cosmopolitan ideology of communism simply could not escape), the masses, and the party, along with the economic imperatives that accompany modern industrial societies, now make these ideologies of the twentieth century look less like genuine ideological alternatives than members of a common political family which could only have emerged under a sufficiently shared set of conditions that were galvanized by the dreams and forces that are peculiar to modernity: large scale industry, modern technology, the 'crowd,' and secularised political systems expressing social interests and objectives.

While it took a world war to defeat fascism, and a cold one to defeat communism, it is becoming increasingly questionable whether liberal democracy really did win out. Just as fascism and communism had all manner of elective affinities, we are increasingly finding some of those very same affinities clustering within so called liberal democratic states—the cult of leadership in public organizations and management, the nexus of state and social knowledge, the interdependency between capital and government, the increasing contraction of civil society along with the increasing expansion of the law and policy into spheres of life once thought to be relatively outside of politics, and the emphasis upon economic calculability at the expense of all other values, once a peculiarly materialist and

Leninist contribution to governance, is now a common place. Small signs are frequently the most telling: and the phrase one hears everywhere today whether from sport coaches to business directors to politicians to departmental meetings is ‘moving forward into the future.’ Anyone familiar with ideological narratives of the twentieth century can hear that this phrase has far more typically fascist and Stalinist resonances than old-fashioned liberal, not to mention conservative ones.

We have, in other words, not only outlived the ideological polarisations that created the second world war and the cold war, we, at least in the industrial world, have ingested them and now continue to enact them. To be sure, the militaristic components of fascism and communism were not digestible—and those Prussian and Bismarckian remnants which were so potent in 1917 (with the Bolsheviks) and 1919 (the Italian fascists) had to be sacrificed, along with anti-Semitism, and concentration camps (though, in some places to be replaced by refugee camps, which Giorgio Agamben, borrowing from Foucault, argues expresses a fundamental underlying continuity with what is most terrifying about the modern hybrid of the Western conception of sovereignty and ‘bare life’).

When Fukuyama wrote his triumphalist essay and much more nuanced and ambivalent book on the end of history, he saw the future as essentially involving similar institutions for all of us.¹ But it is precisely the questionable dimension of this prediction that typifies the third period of our comparison—now. The one thinker in International Politics who has been as widely cited and criticised (in many quarters I think the accurate term is hated) as Fukuyama is Samuel Huntington. If the weakness of Fukuyama, at least as his critics saw it, was the teleological functionalism (perhaps even more Aristotelian than Hegelian) of the

Frances Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, (London: Hamish Hamilton), 1992. Fukuyama was in many respects, and widely seen to be, a ‘classic neo-con,’ and then he wrote *After the Neocons: America at the Crossroads*, (London: Profile Books, 2006) in which he attacked Bush and the politics of ‘regime change.’ More recently his *Political Order and Decay: From the Industrial Revolution to the Globalization of Democracy*, (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2014) takes a hard look at the difficulties democracies face, whilst conceding much greater importance to different developmental pathways and their significance than he did in *The End of History*.

premise, Huntington's was his anti-teleologism and anti-functionalism: for if the one saw freedom and recognition as the fundamental motivation behind politics, the other saw that there was no ground of mutual recognition, and that all values (hence freedom) are cultural, which he also takes to be civilizational.

The problematic nature of the term civilizational, though, is made conspicuous by Huntington's typology of civilizations: people might readily accept that there are Western, Sinic and Islamic and African civilizations, but Latin American, Orthodox, Hindu, and Buddhist civilizations? The list betrays the very problem that lurks in the more critical variable in the narrative: what makes a civilization? Spatial location/a place on the map? Shared linguistic or genetic heritage? Are Latins not Western? Religion? If as Huntington tells us, "religion is a centrally defining characteristic of civilizations,"² why are not all his examples of civilizations defined by it?

Huntington writes a book to make sense of such quandaries, but apart from trying to pin down the core term with a great more deal of erudition than his critics gave him credit for, one cannot help but feel that whatever value the term has is due to its macro-significance; 'civilization' must be used loosely to allow for the wars, dynastic, territorial and national rivalries, revolutions, rebellions and other (frequently violent) divisions, discontinuities and asymmetries which are internal to a 'civilization's' history. Such macro-significance is really but a 'point of entry' into countless tales of turbulence and 'momentary' coalitions. Which is to say, the term by its very nature defeats the very analytic precision that Huntington hopes to convince his readers it provides. Huntington's list of luminaries who have written on civilizations is conspicuous by the fact that their purpose was very different from his. To be sure, Huntington wants to alert his readers to the kind of complexity in international relations that was 'cloaked' by the bi-polar nature and nomenclature of the Cold War, and by the more archaic modes of social anchorage, which never really evaporated in the ideological divided twentieth century.

If I share the consensus critique of Huntington about the problem-

² Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*, (London: Touchstone, 1998), 47.

atic nature of ‘civilizations’ as a precise term, I am broadly sympathetic to Huntington’s warning of the danger of thinking everyone wants/thinks alike. Nevertheless, reference to different social memories and different rationales of different groups rather than ‘civilizations’ far better explains why the different European empires/nations went into the First World War, rather than the more generic term Western—though, now far more than in 1914 there is a sufficiently broad consensus shared by North America, Europe, Australasia that talk of the West, at least in certain contexts, is warranted. But I do think that in the main, since the end of the Second World War, and the Cold War, the dominant ideological alternatives within the West tend to share a normative view of society in which the significance of vastly different social memories do not count for much at all.³ There is presently a widespread prejudice within liberal democracies that talk of serious differences plays into the hands of ‘conservatives’ and that talk about serious differences inevitably leads to hostilities. This ‘interfaith’ approach to different peoples is, I think, bound to fail, and far more likely to generate hostilities as groups of people find a narrative consensus does not fit their realities which are far more conflict-based. Concomitantly, social amnesia is the

³ The nature of institutions in the West, even when allowing for such differences as US military spending versus European styles of welfare, are extremely similar, and, in part, it is due to shared histories. Thus, to take the welfare example, the US was far less affected by social democracy than Europe in which social democratic parties evolved in a society to give representation to workers’ rights that had been much more radicalised than in the US. Nevertheless, the response to the Great Depression involved a state led programme of recovery. While the US tends to see ‘socialism’ as a European disease, the various conditions of compliance required in setting up a business in the US, and the various regulations upon most of them, in part driven as much by the highly litigious culture of the US as by special interest groups demanding that those entering a business must hold a license/ qualifications etc. reinforced by insurance companies defining what constitutes genuine liability claims is no less onerous than setting up a business in Europe. The different choices that states make about how they spend their revenue in the US far more on prisons and the military—does point to different political ‘cultures,’ with their different consensus, expectations and valorisations, but the Calvinist foundations of the US are indicative of it being a branch on a far greater tree of historical and social ‘evolution.’

enemy of any possibility of genuine dialogue between peoples with different social memories—for it disables ‘seeing’ the Other, and it makes us unmindful of what we simply take for granted.

Liberalism and neo-conservatism both share this blindness toward historicity, at least outside of the norms they elevate as the most important ones for entering into history (i.e. looking at history on their own terms—instead of seeing the terms that contribute to their own making, or formation). Given the institutional significance, particularly in the United States, of these ostensibly antithetical discourses, it is important to investigate what liberal and neo-conservatives have in common and how, in spite of their antagonism, both are complicit in blinding people to realities that have to be better grasped if the United States—and other nations who broadly fall within its sphere of influence—are to make better geopolitical decisions.⁴

Radical Liberalism

Liberalism emerged as a way of construing government and society that required eliminating more traditional roles and claims on political office and social power. The voluntary nature of human associations is defended by the earliest theorists of ‘liberal’ social contract—Hobbes, Spinoza, Locke, Rousseau—as a right, and a right is what it is, not (again) because of any ongoing practice or obligation, but because it is held to be reasonable as such. Factually liberalism begins as a historical reaction to powers and privileges denied to those who see themselves as the politically unrepresented or insufficiently represented producers of wealth. But from the first the metaphysical seam it draws upon is that which undergirds modern ‘natural philosophy,’ i.e. modern classical mechanics.⁵ For just as the natural philosophy that emerged in reaction to the lack of utility of traditional (Aristotelian) natural philosophy and

⁴ Amongst IR specialists Angelo Codevilla makes a similar call. See especially his *The Character of Nations: How Politics Makes and Breaks Prosperity, Family and Civility*, (New York: Basic Books 2009).

⁵ In the case of Rousseau, who is followed by Kant in this respect, the notion of freedom has to be defended as rigorously untouched by the mechanistic world: thus freedom consists of ‘obedience to a law which we prescribe to ourselves’ ch. 8 Book 1, *The Social Contract*.

metaphysics dissolved the actual world of nature into the models of its imagination and the laboratory which the imagination designed, liberal philosophy dissolved real existing social relations into imagined ones and then provided reasons which would lead to a better form of governance. The great social contract theorists all did this, though none seemed to bother with the fact that the deployment of the contract itself involved recourse to a historical precedent that had been at the very heart of Europe's pre-liberal social and political arrangements. Instead they treat contracting as a 'natural' and rational act along with the other 'natural' acts they conjure: and of course none of the great social contract theorists concur about exactly what acts predominate in the state of nature. The indifference to history, which is nevertheless predicated upon the possibilities and traumas of real history, is identical to the metaphysical moves of Descartes and Spinoza. Modern science and modern politics emerge together and it is no accident that it is often the same men who are important in the philosophies of both in constructing new beginnings. Just as the metaphysics of nature of Descartes, for example, commences in the resolve to not be burdened by the useless and dead weight of history,⁶ which in turn leads to a foundation and subsequent accumulation of knowledge of nature, the ahistorical foundation of the social and political will lead to (the idea of) the expansion of social and political liberty, which, paradoxically, thus leads to history itself taking

⁶ René Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, ch.1. Descartes does say that 'the grace of fable stirs the mind; that the memorable deeds of history elevate it; and, if read with discretion, aid in forming the judgment'—but the critical issue is in the cogito, which require that everything be subject to doubt and then only that which is allowed as permissible is what conforms to the Cartesian method of the analytic break-down and synthetic reconstruction of elements. The following sentence is also salutary: 'I was thus led to take the liberty of judging of all other men by myself, and of concluding that there was no science in existence that was of such a nature as I had previously been given to believe.' <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/59/59-h/59-h.htm> last viewed October 5 2014. Contrary to Descartes, the value of history lies in uncovering the forgotten but still living deeds. The mechanistic metaphysicians dissolve everything into natural forces, and, for human beings, this translates as appetites, the symbolic character of social existence, itself a historical matter, is but an epiphenomena poorly *understood* by overactive imaginations.

on a moral interest which eventually becomes identified with progress over time. The morality of liberalism as a product of rational principle is outside of space and time, and it becomes the measure of what transpires within space and time. The way in which Spinoza's geometrical Ethics 'matches' a 'socio-ethical' examination, in his *A Theologico-Political Treatise*, of the bible is a model of the approach: on the one hand we have the prophets driven by the 'fleeting and inconstant' imagination,⁷ on the other the calm scholar identifying the rational/natural forces at work behind the imaginings. The more our imaginings are made to conform to our nature (Spinoza)—or the maxims of practical Reason (Kant)—the more meaningful will the past be. The real truth of the enlightenment lies in the enormity of what aspects of our humanity it covers with the term 'superstition.'

History as a story of moral social and political progress enables a future to be built and uproots those aspects of past which cannot accommodate. The engine of progress is the increasingly complex nature of social association that is indicative of different socio-economic stages of history. In the movement from tribe to empire, or chieftain or warlord to state there are numerous extra kinds of social possibilities and relationships. Locke has this notion in view when he provides a rationale for the transition from simple accumulation and exchange to commerce and the need for political authority. So successful was this way of 'seeing' history that it is appropriated entirely by liberalism's bitter opponent Karl Marx, who in spite of all his claims about historical being, claims to discern the 'riddle of history' in a social formation whose key characteristic is that it is a solution to a problem of improved and increased economic production and distribution⁸—which for Marx becomes *the* problem of human association. Marx deemed it unworthy to pose any difficult theoretical questions to his solution,⁹ which in spite of his insistence upon

⁷ Baruch Spinoza *A Theologico-Political Treatise* in *Spinoza: Complete Works*, translation of Samuel Shirley edited by Michael Morgan, (Indianapolis: Hackett), 404.

⁸ Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts (1844)*, in *Karl Marx Early Writings*, introduced by Lucio Colletti translated by Rodney Livingstone and Gregory Benton, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), 348.

⁹ Marx took pride in the fact that he did not write 'cookbooks for the future.' Afterword to the Second German edition of *Capital* volume 1. Not needing

not being an idealist remains a ‘mere idea.’ And after the failures of communism it is not surprising to see Marxists such as Badiou turn Marx on his head by avowing a commitment to communism as an ‘idea’!¹⁰ Marx’s animosity toward liberalism did not extend to the hiatus I have been suggesting between history as a plethora of contingencies played out across the times, and history understood as a matter of moral and material and social progress in which rights and liberties expand.¹¹

The problem with the stage theory idea of social evolution shared by liberals who see history as meaningful and Marx is that while one may well demonstrate the increasing complexity of human association along with the opening up of human potential, techniques, technologies and so forth, this is completely consistent with a horror story about the human condition. The dystopian futures of Heidegger, Kafka, Benjamin, Adorno, Houellebecq et. al. all tap into the deep alienation which suggests that history is a nightmare from which we need to recover rather than a highway to plenty and peace.

The idea of enlightened evolution and progress has some similar features to the idea of history as providential, in so far as it breaks with the idea of history as fall or history as cyclical—history is the journey to a (promised) better future. But the providential view of history does not place all the weight of the future on the minds and moral rectitude of the

to demonstrate how conflicting interests of distribution would be resolved—because, he argued, once private property was eliminated alienation was overcome—Marx’s fall-back position was invective against anyone who doubted his method.

¹⁰ Thus Badiou: “‘Communism’ as such denotes only this very general set of intellectual representations. It is what Kant called an Idea, with a regulatory function, rather than a programme,” “The Communist Hypothesis,” *New Left Review* 49 (Jan./Feb. 2008), 34.

¹¹ My argument is deeply indebted to Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy’s account of social time as developed in his forgotten masterpiece, *Im Kreuz der Wirklichkeit: Eine nach-goethische Soziologie*, 3 vols., Mit einem Vorwort von Irene Scherer und einem Nachwort von Michael Gormann-Thelen, new edition of *Die Soziologie* by Michael Gormann-Thelen, Ruth Mautner, and Lise van der Molen, (Tübingen: Talheimer, 2009/10). An English translation of volume 1, *The Hegemony of Spaces*, edited by Wayne Cristaudo and Frances Huussy, and translated by Jurgen Lawrenz, with Wayne Cristaudo and Frances Huussy, is to appear with Transaction in Spring 2017.

present—providence exists in spite of our evil, in spite of our frail and limited nature. Nor does it require the conformity of all to a liberal vision of the good life. It is an amalgam of faith, hope and love: and not only our love but God's love. The providential view of history traces those enduring contributions to a more convivial society—a society worth loving, and one that is driven by the expansion of neighbourly love. Liberalism eliminates the need for God's love, if not our faith and hope, but these become as in Kant 'mere ideas.' Although Kant requires that politics be grounded in a constitutional form that is morally defensible (i.e. in conformity with the categorical imperative), his view of historical progress as a 'regulative idea' conveniently allows us to deploy a narrative of moral progress caused by socially natural necessity, whilst at the same time identifying what he believes are the naturalistic impulses harmonizing into a greater social concordance. This concordance is one in which all become part of a greater heuristic—a rational totality in which the fog of ignorance and superstition (religion) dissipates in the light of knowledge of the world and morals reason. Hegel will, of course, see that rational totality as substantive so that reason and progress are identical. Hegel supports a state with liberal features, but his attempt at reconciliation makes him hard to accommodate as a liberal, and his animosity to the appeal to any moral 'beyond' makes him as sympathetic to the rational forces behind actuality as to the negative dialectic which smashes what must perish. (Those like Marcuse, and more recently Žižek, who emphasize the dialectic of the negative and who see Hegel as revolutionary, completely ignore why he attacked all voluntarist politics of the kind he saw in Rousseau, Kant, Fichte and Fries—perhaps not surprisingly as they themselves are far more Fichtean than Hegelian.)

The liberal idea of historical progress ultimately replaces real history with a very selective history based around its ends, instead of being, as it is in its providential formulation, the yet to be known fulfilment of God's will, it is the continuation of the rational plan. The difference between the bourgeois as the end of history and the redeemed soul, Calvinist moments of grandeur aside, starkly shows the difference.

In sum, liberalism—as an ideology, a matrix of principles as opposed to a number of features which cannot be completely extricated from other social-historical components—is ahistorical at its birth and it then creates a non-historical history, a nature that is not really our nature, as it is cultivated in time. As superstition is to enlightenment, the conservative

is to the progressive liberal, just as the bourgeois will be to the communist—the terrible Other to be expunged because—paradoxically—it is not really real; it is the vestige of a former reality that lacks what the future requires. Although in all of these examples, it is the superstitious, the conservative, and the bourgeois that *haunt* the enlightened, the liberal, and the communist: and the truth is there is no total enlightenment, liberalism or communism. Each is/was (in the case of communism), at best, a partial success because each only appealed to limited aspects of what we are capable of, whether that involves knowledge, freedom, or solidarity as producers. Time is prolific and the times are fecund, but ideology diminishes by requiring that reality be squeezed into the idea that serves as the means of its articulation. This tendency to stasis is the natural corollary of not really respecting time and the role it plays in our sociality.

It is no accident that liberal political theory pays so little attention to the different phases of a life as opposed to principles such as freedom and equality which we know don't really mean a lot for all sorts of people—the infant, the frail, the elderly, the diseased etc. What we are saying in broad theoretical terms is replicated in international relations by the emphasis upon international law—a product of shared rational principles—as the means for bringing peace between nations. That peace is also brokered by the rights of those who are members of nations. Again the atomisation of the self that chips or blasts away at historical roles and traditions is built into the process. Time is just a passage to fulfilment. If possible everything should be instant, timeless. Socio-ethical constructivism of the geometrical sought of Locke, Spinoza and Kant is the companion of acceleration noted by Marx to lie at the heart of capitalism, and hence liberal societies. Under liberalism 'things' do not need their own time as do all of our stages and roles in pre-liberal societies.

In the above description of liberalism I have been talking about liberalism as a theory, that stands in an extremely close theoretical relationship to modern classical physics as to classical modern metaphysics. Modern classical physics was very much the fruit of the new Adam, and the just as the old Adam named the creatures and world around him, the modern classical philosophy (as we examined in detail above) appealed to the vast blankness of 'experience' and to the all-important faculty of the 'understanding' so that the new correct names would replace the old traditional (and hence misleading) ones. Hobbes *Leviathan* and Spinoza's *Ethics* are the paradigmatic examples of such social applica-

tion of the understanding being applied afresh to the practices and emotions, drives, and sentiments which make us what we are and which are the building blocks that government must work with.

The hiatus, though, between liberalism as a constitutional ‘feature’ as opposed to a philosophical ‘essence’ is extremely important. Hayek’s invocation of the difference between ‘spontaneous or *catallactic* order’ and ‘constructivism’ or ‘*taxical* order’ is apposite: the all-important difference being that the taxical system is as good as the limitations of the planner/s as opposed to the catallactic system in which new information and hence new possibilities become revealed and generated in action.¹²

If one were to tell the story of the emergence of the liberal features of social reality—as opposed to a purely ideological ‘idea’—one would be embroiled in all manner of anticipations and legacies—mention of the Hanseatic league would not be mistaken, nor the Magna charter, nor the Italian republics as Skinner and Pocock emphasize, nor, as François Guizot, Brian Tierney, Christopher Dawson, Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, his student Harold Berman, and more recently Larry Siedentop¹³ (to take a very small representative sample) have persuasively argued, the Medieval and canonical roots of representative governments, constitutions and Western legal systems. But there would just as significantly be the story of the Reformation, in general, with its freedom of conscience,

¹² See chapter 2 of Friedrich von Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 35-54.

¹³ J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*, (Princeton: Princeton Uni. Press, 2003), Quentin Skinner *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought, 2 volumes, The Renaissance and The Age of Reformation*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), François Guizot, *History of Civilization in Europe*, (Liberty Fund, 2013), Brian Tierney, *Religion, Law and the Growth of Constitutional Thought, 1150-1650*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), Christopher Dawson, *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*, (New York: double Day, 1957), Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *Out of Revolution: Autobiography of Western Man*, (Oxford, Providence: Berg, 1993), Harold Berman, *Law and Revolution Vol. 1, The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition*, (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1985), Larry Siedentop, *Inventing the Individual: The Origins of Western Liberalism*, (Cambridge Massachusetts: Belknap, 2014).

mass literacy, of the key role of Calvinism, not only as harbinger of the ‘spirit of capitalism’ (something contested, but not refuted), but as a force for freedom from Geneva through France to the Netherlands, Scotland, England, and America.¹⁴ In such a story ‘constructivists’ such as Hobbes, Locke, Spinoza, Rousseau, etc. will invariably feature, but the story of European societies, to repeat, is one in which liberal practice and liberal theory feature: but it is not one in which either has a blank canvass. Political ideas are always adapting to circumstances. Thus it is that thinkers like Montesquieu and Burke can broadly be classified as liberal thinkers, although their sensitivity to institutions and historicity, make them in significant ways the antithesis of the constructivist model I described earlier. This kind of liberalism is one that is astute to the importance of temporal cultivation. I stress my argument is not that it is simply wrong to want certain liberal ‘goods’—such as freedom of speech, the right to property, the right to a fair trial, etc., when they are absent in a society, it is that the gap between the idea of what is desired and the actuality of their absence is one in which the transformation of existing interest and practices will have to occur through and over time. New practices, policies and laws release all manner of unknowns: the simplistic notion that an idea can be placed upon a people through the correct uses of the levers of ‘government’ betrays a failure to factor in the unpredictable character of human response to what they do not want—for in any society introducing something new will require those benefiting from the old ways will have to be changed/sacrificed. Further, in the restructuring of institutions there also needs to be transformation of behaviours which show a ‘fit’ between institution and people. Kemalism, in Turkey, for example is a classic example of the danger of the hiatus between the desire to implement modern ‘goods’ and a people’s willingness to sacrifice their ‘world’ and ‘selves’ to achieve those

¹⁴ Again the literature is vast and includes such classics as Hegel’s account of the reformation in his *Philosophy of History*, Ernst Troeltsch’s *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, and Max Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Two more recent works are particularly deserving of mention: Brad Gregory, *The Unintended Revolution: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap, 2012), and Harold Berman, *Law and Revolution, Vol. 2 The Impact of the Protestant Reformation on the Western Legal Tradition*, (Cambridge Massachusetts: Belknap, 2006).

goods. Kemalism was modern rather than liberal—but much of its illiberalism stemmed not from any desire to put people in prison without trial, but because it could not achieve the aims for a modern secular Turkey without coming into serious conflict with people who wanted another kind of future, who did not want to be part of a future in which the things they held most sacred were being sacrificed. Politics is selection and sacrifice because social reproduction is selection and sacrifice.

What the above also takes seriously is the role of time in institutional and social transformation. Institutions are themselves means for founding and reproducing commitments and practices across the ages. Societies are as much their institutions as they are their peoples. Likewise, the perpetuation of a people is a circulatory process involving ideas and institutions: institutions are storehouses of ideas, much as is language, but an institution is also the means for creating and selecting behaviours and peoples. Ideas are real to the extent they are incarnations—institutions are the primary means that people use for incarnation. This is why no matter how pure an idea may be in its conception—the truth of an idea is only disclosed in its circulation and ‘evolution,’ which is to say, in its adaptation. A fine mind may glean the theoretical and unsullied characteristics and relationships that constitute an idea, but a ‘great idea’ is one which is loved over time, which commands obedience because the devotion and sacrifice that is required for its endurance is sufficiently provided. And it is provided by those who are nourished by it. This was a fundamental insight of Augustine who grasped that perpetuity was an argument in the favour of the truth of something. Of course, this is contrary to the Enlightened new science belief that people have lived most of their lives as dupes of the manipulative priestly cast who pedalled superstitious nonsense.

The reality of so-called liberal societies is that they grew that way, but the conditions of growth of liberty and what we call a liberal society involves all manner of forces that are not liberal in origin or even character. The United States considers itself the freest society on earth—but its freedom is predicated upon the highest rate of incarceration in the world, as well as the largest military spending in the developed world. European states have eschewed these highly illiberal ways of protecting their freedoms, yet their protectionist economic policies are no more liberal than US military hegemony, and the devolution by EU members of sovereign powers to the EU is not just related to, but predicated upon what is invariably referred to as a ‘democratic deficit.’

While it is true that enormous changes have occurred within modern industrialized Western societies and states because of certain liberal features, it is also true that those liberal features have been compromised and fundamentally modified to coexist with the multiple social temporalities embedded in the complex of institutions which constitute any given society—even though, that coexistence may be only temporary, and even if the potencies of the liberal features may come to devour the very conditions which facilitated liberalism's existence. The most conspicuous and classic example of this today is the inversion that is taking place within so-called liberal societies due to entrepreneurship and economic efficiency being in the hands of an educated managerial elite.

The modern liberal democratic state (to use the conventional nomenclature) emerged in large part (and in this respect there is much truth to Locke) to defend the rights of property holders, which included capacity as well as land and capital, and their right to assemble and enter into contractual relationships free from the prerogative power of the crown or, as far as possible, 'rent-seekers.' In this respect the modern state—even though it was still involved in large scale enterprises requiring revenue for conducting wars, providing infrastructure, education, and supplying public goods to an extent that one can argue Hayek downplays too much. Modern liberal societies were societies in which wealth was a significant fruit of liberty, but the wealth of the common—the 'commonwealth'—was not strictly calculated in monetary terms. The market was an important sphere within liberal society in which freedom between investors as well as with those needing to sell their property/labour took place, but the rules of the market were not seen as transposable to spheres outside it—whether one is talking of the police force, schools, universities or hospitals, public libraries and so on. Of course they had a budget, and the budget was part of an overall stream of revenue. But it was acceptable that efficiencies in such areas were not solely calculable in pure monetary terms—that was largely because one accepted that groups such as criminals, students, the sick, were not only very different from each other, but were also very different from paying 'clients.' Just as prior to modern classical metaphysics, nature was not uniform, prior to the managerial transposition of modern classical metaphysics to every zone of life, economic calculability and efficiencies had to cater for the 'resistances' of public sociality. The everyday forms of life, which had their own social public character, did not exist com-

pletely outside of economic considerations, but they were sufficiently intransigent not to dissipate completely into them.

Attention to the vastly different needs of different spheres of society is closely related to the awareness of a society as a complex of variegations, which are not all subject to the same law—and they are not subject to the same law because they—have different social axes and circumferences, as well as different rhythms. Bluntly, and to repeat—they emerge out of different needs. Planned economies were indifferent to such variegations, and what was one ‘science’ of human action became *the* science of human action. It is true that there was a liberal seam of economics of this scale which was anti-socialist (von Mises’s *Human Action* is the classic example),¹⁵ but, as John Stuart Mill put the case in *On Liberty*, the real virtue of liberal societies lay in the inventiveness, creativity and spiritual nourishment that comes from what Mills sees as the nourishing creative character of liberty itself. It is true that historically the pursuit of liberty and the pursuit of commercial prosperity work in tandem, but the huge importance of religious freedom as a life and death matter in Europe and for what would eventually become the United States is indicative of the fact that one cannot simply reduce the history of the pursuit of freedom to the pursuit of wealth. Once, however, the state becomes an organ, as it is in almost every advanced liberal democratic capitalist country (again I am using traditional nomenclature) in the world for the *instrumentalization* of all its resources (including ‘human resources’) in order to maximize its wealth, then all other goods were to be sacrificed to the mechanisms of efficiency. The danger alluded to here was something that more or less united—in their fear—most of the social theoretical/philosophical minds of the twentieth century whether of the left or the right, as is evident if one reads Marcuse or Adorno, or Heidegger, Schmitt or Gehlen. Rosenstock-Huessy, who also saw this, in his *Multiformity of Man* formulated the problem in terms of the crushing homogenization of time that had become increasingly intrinsic to the mechanical processes of daily life (Heidegger makes the case metaphysically rather than sociologically).¹⁶

¹⁵ Ludwig von Mises, *Human Action: A Treatise on Economics*, (Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1966).

¹⁶ Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *The Multiformity of Man*, (Eugen, Ontario: Wipf

What we are witnessing in so-called liberal societies is an increasing instrumentalization of the spheres of human existence as part and parcel of a calculable totality subject to the stringencies and ‘outcome’ orientated plans of a class whose narratives of perpetuity have no need of knowledge about any other time than the instrumental time taken to complete a plan. Of course, this kind of time is purely mythical; outside of the narrative real time as a plethora of pluralities carries on: time taken to raise a child, get married, settle property after the divorce, or heal a cut, improve one’s guitar playing, make friends in a new community, etc., all defy the homogenisation of the totally calculable compliant efficient society that requires the sacrifice of all manner of liberties. That such formulations as ‘public scrutiny and accountability’ are invariably invoked to justify the process of instrumentalization and the economic advancement of the administrations of instrumentalizers is symptomatic of the way in which speech about public goods can be the source of so much public ill.

This lengthy aside has touched upon the paradox that liberal societies have facilitated the death of the very feature that makes them liberal. The kinds of conflicts which I focus upon for the rest of the paper are, on the surface, of a very different order, and yet the one overarching commonality, is that at the centre is the spiritual disease of social amnesia—the social amnesiac has forgotten the very conditions of his or her own liberty and what that liberty may mean (and again I want to emphasize that liberty is only one good, not *the good*, or even the best of the goods, though it is precious enough if adequately connected with other goods). It is the same social amnesiac, most brilliantly captured as the blinking last man in Nietzsche’s *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, who simply cannot fathom a world different than the calculable machine like one that ‘comforts’ while spiritually killing them.

Leo Strauss’s Neo-Conservatism

Typically the ‘type’ that drew attention to the deficiencies of the liberal understanding of time was the conservative. The conservative defence—if it can be brought into one formulation—is not simply that things would get even worse if a new order that was completely insensitive to the ‘traditions’ of a people were ignored and that new forms of

authority based in reason alone would miss the infinitude of micro-reasons of social being, it was that the traditional modalities of power had been cultivated in time, tested by time, and confirmed over time. If modern classical philosophy attempted to rescue us from the fevered imaginations that had been the source of all the turmoil and torture of history, the modern classical conservative mind sort to protect us from the fire of youthful imaginations who tested the reality of the existence in which they unhappily participated by pointing to its actual deficiencies, as they simultaneously contrasted their grim or dull everyday world with the merely imagined improvements of realities untried. The classical conservative mind as found in Burke or in the twentieth century in someone like Robert Nisbet is ever mindful of the time taken and needed for the cultivation and formation of peaceful human association. The question of whether an institution is so rotten to the core that it is useless to defend it any longer will always be one with divided answers, and the reasonableness of the question, as well as the urgency which may accompany its particular target make it difficult, if not foolhardy, for anyone to be a conservative about everything. Whatever we may think of any specific set of practices or institutions, however, does not change the fact that their existence is completely bound up with people—people are as much the extensions of a faith and a composite of practices, followers of pathways opened by founders as they are ‘individuals.’ Cutting off a path cuts off people: it is no easy thing to do. For while the word identity is often overlaid in certain kind of political and sociological narratives, members of communities with thick entanglements, with tightly knit obligations and kindred needs and strictly modified behaviours are not, in the main, *the kinds* of people who can simply become something else. The communitarian critique of liberalism going back some thirty years ago rightly recognized that the atomised self of thin liberal ‘communities’ arises from a precarious and dangerously self-destructive kind of community.¹⁷ It took a lot of time to create the members of the thin community of the ultra or, if one will,

¹⁷ John Rawls and Robert Nozick, for all their political differences, both typified the ‘liberal’—thin and rationally proceduralist—position that was fiercely criticised by Charles Taylor, Alasdair MacIntyre, Michael Walzer, and Michael Sandel among others.

post-modern. (By a thin community I mean a community in which identity may make one similar in various ways but in which the strictness of obligation is relatively lax.) But it also took a very specific set of historical conditions to facilitate this.

While the liberal mind-set tended to see that mind-set as purely rational or a natural/historical evolution, and have tended to see the problems of rights and appeals that emerge for members of thin communities based upon characteristics such as gender, sexual preference, ethnicity, race, etc., as all-encompassing—global even—the neo-conservative mind set which rarely tolerate these appeals, nevertheless shared much the same indifference to the horizons of those literally dwelling in other times. In liberal communities the complex array of traditional duties had sufficiently dissipated into obeying the law and earning a living, that the particular identity issue, which for non-Western peoples, comes so entangled in and ‘burdened’ by other ‘matters,’ the kinds of issues which seem of such enormous importance in the West—gays in the military, a racist comment, ethnic insensitivity etc. count for zero. The blindness of the modern liberal progressive is a blindness to the very Otherness, the acknowledgement of which in the last decades has come to be the all-important touchstone of being progressive. The simplification of identity that has become quite ‘normal’ in our modern increasingly abstract and disassociated societies obscures the very character of what is Other. The neo-cons baulk at identities being formed around such categories as women, gay, race, etc., but they come up with their own ‘thin community,’ every bit as selective around a particular interest (a certain way of reading/analyzing and talking) and abstract as the modern liberal.

The reasons behind the rise and fall of neo-conservatism in the US are many, and the label itself refers to many, often contradictory thinkers. I do not want to rehearse here the entirety of what may loosely be called a ‘program’ but simply to focus on one central feature which separates neo-conservatism from traditional conservatism—the lack of concern for social time in the neo-conservative ‘agenda’ and the role of political leaders in cultivating a regime with an ethos to counter the nihilism, which they argue, liberalism inevitably fosters. In this respect, the importance of Leo Strauss is worth reflecting upon.

There has been an enormous amount of literature about Leo Strauss’ role in neo-conservatism, and a number of Straussians such as the Zuckerts, Steven B. Smith, and Peter Minowitz have argued that

Strauss cannot really be classified as a neo-conservative, that, in spite of his identification of pathologies within liberalism, he was, not overtly political and/or nevertheless a ‘friend’ of liberal democracy.¹⁸ I certainly agree with those defenders of Strauss who take umbrage at him being an enemy of liberal democracy; he is a critic of tendencies within liberalism which he sees as undermining the order necessary for liberalism’s persistence—this does not make him a fascist.¹⁹ Nor does his appeal to

¹⁸ Some critiques are by students of Straussians e.g. Anne Norton, *Leo Strauss and the Politics of American Empire*, (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2004), and C. Bradley Thompson with Yaron Brook, *Neoconservatism: An Obituary for an Idea*, (Boulder: Paradigm, 2010). Others accuse Strauss of being anti-democratic to the point of Strauss’s philosophy being a closet fascism—Nicholas Xenos, *Cloaked in Virtue: Unveiling Leo Strauss and the Rhetoric of American Foreign Policy*, (New York, Routledge Press, 2008), Shadia Drury, *Leo Strauss and the American Right*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999) and *The Political Ideas of Leo Strauss*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), or a Nazi sympathiser- William Altman, *The German Stranger: Leo Strauss and National Socialism*, (Lexington Books, 2011). Some deny the neo-conservative connection e.g. Catherine Zuckert, and Michael Zuckert, *The Truth about Leo Strauss*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), Fukuyama *After the Neocon*, 21-31, Steven Smith, *Reading Leo Strauss: Politics, Philosophy, Judaism*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), and Peter Minowitz, *Straussophobia: Defending Leo Strauss and Straussians against Shadia Drury and Other Accusers*, (Lexington, 2009), and some criticise Strauss from a Burkean conservative position, e.g. Paul Gottfried, *Leo Strauss and the Conservative Movement in America: A Critical Appraisal*, (Cambridge University Press; 2011), and Grant Havers, *Leo Strauss and Anglo-American Democracy*, (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2013). This is just the tip of the iceberg of the literature on Strauss.

¹⁹ Drury’s work is so bitter, shrill and inaccurate, as well as smug in its own political certitudes that it is easy meat for the Zuckerts and Minowitz. Altmann’s book strikes me as bordering on crazy. Xenos is a more serious attempt, but it hangs an enormous amount on a letter by Strauss to his friend, the philosopher Karl Löwith, in May 1933, in which he said: “That the Germany of the Right does not tolerate us absolutely does not follow from the principles of the Right. On the contrary: only from the principles of the Right, from the fascist, authoritarian, *imperialist* principles, can one protest against the dreadful state of affairs.” For the letter see Eugene R. Sheppard, *Leo Strauss and the Politics*

an elite of gentleman who love wisdom. The language may be patrician and antiquated, and the assumptions pre-women's liberation, but it is nonsense to think that any one working in an elite North American University is not a member of the same class. And it is hardly surprising that students of elite universities will go onto hold important strategic positions within the state. Also, while the tone of the Straussians may well be redolent of a mystery school, and they engage in the same kind of career stake strategies which are a fundamental part of the 'closing of the humanities mind'—this does not make them different to any other of the humanities 'gangs.'

But against those who argue that the neo-conservatives had nothing to do with Strauss, I think the case is clear that Strauss was deeply admired by a number of leading neo-conservatives, who may not have studied with him directly, but with his students. (This does not rule out the point that his defenders make: that Straussians have not all been Republicans—Bloom, for example, was a conservative Democrat, and Strauss himself voted twice for Adlai Stephenson.) Rather than enter into the squabbles of how many neo-conservatives who are said to be Straussians are really Straussians,²⁰ the following assessment of what

of Exile: The Making of a Political Philosopher (Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University Press/University Press of New England, 2007), 156 n. 25. Xenos pays no attention to context, nor does he consider the variety of reasons why Strauss expressed himself thus. Moreover, Strauss may have been right—it is certainly plausible that a more effective strategic critique of Hitlerite Germany may have come from the right than the left. For this would have fractured his support base. But to suggest that this was how Strauss always thought about politics is, to put it mildly, far-fetched.

²⁰ Names that regularly come up—and get disputed about whether they really are Straussians—include Paul Wolfowitz, Rumsfeld aide Stephen Cambone, supreme court judge Clarence Thomas, supreme court nominee Robert Bork, Dan Quayle's chief of staff William Kristol, Leon Kass who was head of Bush's Bioethics Committee, Carnes Lorde who worked in the National Security council under Regan, and was named in Myles Burnyeat's which is probably the first piece to suggest that Strauss's teaching involved cultivating a conservative political elite. Myles Burnyeat, 'Sphinx Without a Secret,' *The New York Review of Books* 32.9 (May 30, 1985), <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1985/may/30/sphinx-without-a-secret/?page=3> last accessed October 9 2014.

Gertrude Himmelfarb, the wife of the leading intellectual neo-conservative figure, Irving Kristol, believes her husband saw in Strauss is for me the common ground between Strauss and the neo-conservatives that concerns me:

what impressed him [about Strauss] was not so much their political views (which were more implicit than overt) but the mindset that informed their discourses upon culture, religion, society, philosophy, and politics alike. His review of *Persecution and the Art of Writing* focuses on Maimonides as the exemplar of Strauss's major themes: the relation of the esoteric and the exoteric, of reason and revelation, of philosophy and the polity. It concludes by commending Strauss for accomplishing "nothing less than a revolution in intellectual history" by recalling us to the "wisdom of the past."²¹

What Himmelfarb identifies is the core of Strauss—and she is right to emphasize the 'mindset' as the clue to the politics, rather than the politics as the initiator (which is what so many of his critics miss). But it is this mindset that is, I think, the heart of the problem, specifically the indifference to social time. (In this respect I find my argument closest to Paul Gottfried's critique of Strauss.) In discussing Strauss, I also want to add that just as Strauss thought that one should always look at the best case arguments (something many would dispute he achieved say, in his analysis of Weber, in *Natural Right and History*, as a key representative of the connection between 'value-free' social science and nihilism), I think Strauss is by far the most sophisticated and significant apologist for timeless standards of the best regime, which the neo-conservatives definitely believed in.

Strauss' corpus is typified by his devotion to the best books and, what he considered, the best ways to read those books. His work was mostly written at a time when Political Philosophy was a very marginal discipline in the USA, and when behaviourism was by far the most dominant orientation within American Political Science. His approach was also shaped by the totalitarian forces he was reacting to, which, in the case of Germany had led to his emigration from Germany due to the

²¹ Gertrude Himmelfarb, "Irving Kristol's Neoconservative Persuasion" in *Commentary*, October 2014
<http://www.commentarymagazine.com/article/irving-kristols-neoconservative-persuasion/> last viewed October 8 2014.

Weimar Republic's inability to garner sufficient support to stave off Hitler's smashing of democracy. He argued tirelessly in favour of the philosophical life, and for the kind of regime that best protected the philosophical life—for he rightly recognized that the philosophical life was not a possibility within every regime. He also argued that positivism and historicism left a people with no standards to distinguish between the better or worse kind of life.²² His followers all share this conviction. They also share the approach typified by Strauss in seeing great book as part of a great philosophical conversation which proceeds across the ages. In this respect, his approach is the antithesis of that deployed by J.G. Pocock and Quentin Skinner, which draw us into the prevailing historicities than facilitate political theorists such as Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke etc. Or to say it another way, for the Straussians great books deal with the great problems of human existence, and the diversity of philosophical responses is largely to be understood as a matter of nuancing perennial possibilities. Strauss was renowned for being veiled, or, as Myles Burnyeat put it, 'sphinx'-like.²³ And while Strauss, for example, in his controversial reading of Plato, which, his critics saw, made the drama carry a weight that enabled the interpreter to reach the opposite conclusion of what was usually ascribed to Plato (e.g. Plato did not believe in life after death, the *Republic* is an anti-utopian book, and there may be no forms), he was consistent in his anti-historicist readings of books that few could deny had had an enormous impact on history.

There is another dimension to his work that is of no small importance and it has been discussed in various ways—he was Jewish. I say this because although his 'solution' to the best kind of life and the best

²² The critique of historicism is a hobby-horse of Strauss, and is at the heart of Strauss's *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953). Also see chapter 2 "Political Philosophy and History" of Leo Strauss, *What is Political Philosophy?* (Glencoe, Illinois, 1959) Cf. Paul Norton, "Leo Strauss: His Critique of Historicism" in *The Modern Age*, Spring 1981, 143-154.

²³ For what it is worth, I confess that my response to Straussian readings of 'great books' is akin to Burnyeat's: while I find the range of Strauss's learning 'formidable and impressive,' the yields strike me as frequently banal and, even more frequently, wrongheaded. Straussian readings tend, for me, to make a Straussian of every great philosopher—or as Burnyeat puts it: Strauss's reading "presupposes what it seeks to prove."

kind of regime was not the Jewish 'solution' of faith in revelation, although the Jewish problem is not obvious in his 'political answers,' his political solution certainly provides an answer. Namely, the Jewish people will more likely be safe in a society that is not plagued by any revelation or tradition which is anti-Jewish—as both Christianity and Islam, albeit in somewhat different ways, are—but which takes its bearing from a standard of cultivated philosophical nobility.

That this is behind Strauss' reconciliation of the tensional problem of revelation and outlandish is far more plausible than the outlandish thesis by Shadia Drury that Strauss is a nihilist. Her conjecture—presented as fact—fails to take seriously the value that Strauss himself places upon the philosophical life as a conversational life and the need to dwell within a regime that protects that life—as well as the far less dramatic truth which Strauss firmly held to: that no matter how much we know it amounts to rather little. Strauss was able to make the case that that the thoughtful person will always be in danger if the worst rule, and the society which protects the thoughtful person will also have to protect those who are not necessarily thoughtful, but accepting of the opinions which will best preserve a more well-ordered regime. Strauss's political commitment to liberal democracy generally and America, in particular, was akin to Socrates's to Athens—where else would he be able to do what he did? But with the caveat that America's freedom extended to religious freedom. The historical contingencies behind the institutional character of the United States of America are, to put it mildly, not explored by Strauss (which is the core of Grant Havers' conservative and thoughtful critique of Strauss.) In Strauss and his followers the question of the emergence, circulation and institutionalisation of 'ideas' is put side as one inspects their philosophical sophistication, which invariably also involves distilling the esoteric (the teaching from the wise few) from the exoteric (the open face of the text).²⁴ What matters are 'great books.'

Just as Aristotle demands a commensurability between cause and effect, Strauss seeks a philosophical great source for a great political benefit.

²⁴ The distinction is a central one to Strauss, and indicates the important of *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952) to his work as a whole. It is this distinction that facilitates the particular Straussian 'method' of discovering the perennial truths over and over again in the most disparate of works.

For the historian, the Straussian approach is almost unbearable: for it is as if the world is but the expression of a philosopher's sentences. The approach—again—ensures that what is good cannot be reduced to the contingencies that 'formed' it. I think the most revealing sentence of all by Strauss was expressed in a letter to Karl Löwith in 1946 where he says:

I really believe, although to you this apparently appears fantastic, that the perfect political order, as Plato and Aristotle have sketched it, is the perfect order...details can be disputed, although I myself might actually agree with everything that Plato and Aristotle demand (but that I tell only you).²⁵

No one who read Strauss with any care would really be surprised that he thought this—that Strauss would bury his deepest conviction in a letter as he lifts the veil to just one person is as typical of his 'esoteric' art of writing as the answer is of his belief in standards.

Let us concede to Strauss that in a philosophical question, argument and answer, an idea may be formed, disclosed, and seen which radiates across the times. But conceding this is not to concede that the conditions under which the question and answer were posed 'transcend' history, but rather that there are great commonalities to human sociality and formation, and they stretch across history. And some questions touch upon those commonalities—saying this does not necessarily mean these are the greatest questions, nor that they are the least. The fact of fundamental commonalities—the human need for orientation, the perennials of life and death and their interplay, survival and growth or extinction, good and evil (for are these not terms that relate to survival or extinction?)—is behind why there are common human responses that are not simply culture bound, but every-bit as much culture forming. Nor does this change the fact that answers long held may be ones that do not facilitate human flourishing. Indeed, that epochs are founded are invariably in response to the break-down of tried and tested ways of life that have persisted for a great duration only to find themselves as much a threat to life as means for it. That we live within epochs, that our world is institutionalised these ways rather than those ways, that we participate in certain ways of world-making, and that we are blocked from

²⁵ Leo Strauss to Karl Löwith August 15, 1946, *Independent Journal of Philosophy* 4 (1983): 107-08.

participating in ways that may have been once wide-spread, these are intrinsically related to our historical being. Setting up a dyad of transcendence versus history and making that dyad one of the most important lines of division for reflection strikes me as very simplistic. Strauss wants to emphasize the value of a certain kind questioning, of not stopping within some pre-determined horizon known to the historian. This is Strauss' real bug-bear with historicism, but he pitches his complaint in such a way that our historicity drops away so that we may be open to converse with the great across the times in such a way that these works will speak directly to us. As an educator Strauss and his students took pride in the task of liberation from the consensuses of their own time.²⁶ But the attack upon historicism is an attack upon liberation from consensus; for seeing things as they emerge in time and adapt and transform over time (exactly what Nietzsche [a critical figure in Strauss' rejection of historicism] hoped the genealogical method would do) enables us to see the powers that work through time, and which we, as temporal creatures, are now engaging with. It is actually Strauss and the Straussians who corral the vast differences of philosophical responses and the trails generated by those responses into a consensus that happens to lead to what the Straussians believe is wisdom. Plato is the classic case. The Straussian reading of Plato can only nod disapprovingly at the neo-Platonists who were inspired by what the more sagely Strauss dismisses as of no real importance—the soul's journey of purification. But the traces of neo-Platonism thread through the very Islamic and Medieval traditions that Strauss venerated. Dante's *Comedy* is unimaginable without neo-Platonism, as is the poetry of Rumi. Works that seek to orientate and instruct—as the works of Strauss also do—do require wisdom, but that wisdom is also built out of responses to historical circumstances.

²⁶ Thus the opening to the essay "Persecution and the Art of Writing," in *Persecution and the Art of Writing*. "In a considerable number of countries which, for about a hundred years, have enjoyed a practically complete freedom of public discussion, that freedom is now suppressed and replaced by a compulsion to coordinate speech with such views as the government believes to be expedient, or holds in all seriousness." (p. 22). Of course, after the more radical times of the Strauss would have had to frame the idea of compliant consensus by appeal to some other agent of conformism. Strauss' student Bloom finds these new agents in pop bands such as the Rolling Stones!

Philosophers draw upon materials, examples, quandaries, and possibilities that are ‘ready to hand’ and that in their responsiveness generate more materials. This readiness to hand does not mean that unpredictable inventiveness is not also a perennial human capacity (that may be exercised and required more under different conditions). But nor is this a substitute for the powers that capacity works with. Strauss conflates simplistic historical determinism—which is based upon the falsity that the knower can survey all the variables of an age—with a consciousness of historicity which is alert to the need to take into account that we are surrounded by the times.²⁷ The historicism that Strauss relentlessly attacks is one which ‘freezes’ a reality as an objective reality that does not, indeed cannot exist as an ‘object’ as such. We only ever deal in bits and pieces, which is not to say that we cannot discriminate—on the contrary we *must* discriminate. We live chronologically but we recall episodically—we retrieve this and that aspect from our past, we form narratives based on small ‘amounts,’ the narratives require constant nuancing as we discover more—but who retains all in one’s head? The ethical context of Levinas’ criticism of Hegelianisms aside, Hegel is absolutely correct to emphasize that we would literally have no idea about anything if we simply dissolved all into the ‘bad infinite’—an idea, a name demands some kind of closure, some means of binding relationships together so that a pattern is addressed and socially circulated. Of course, names and ideas are capable of re-appraisal—generations frequently have to ‘take stock’ of their world, especially after great catastrophes, and new directions of future making are undertaken.

History is invaluable but it is a different kind of reality from that mechanistic totality of law-governed forces with which the classical modern metaphysicians were preoccupied. It is on the one hand, an ever constant present: alive in our institutions, our memorials, our calendars, our holidays, the very names a community appeals to and venerates which are threaded and powerfully incubate within language, as meanings become tarnished only for some event to reawaken an interest or appeal that has been forgotten. On the other, hand history is also a

²⁷ Cf. also Claes G. Ryn, “Leo Strauss and History: The Philosopher as Conspirator,” *Humanitas*, vol. XVIII, Nos. 1 & 2, 2005 <http://www.nhinet.org/ryn18-1.htm> last viewed october 8 2014.

swamp into which we constantly are forced to make retrievals, and further clarifications. We dive or reach back into history to uncover something that may help make sense of now, and where we might be going; we try to reassemble the various 'retrievals' we have come up with. The very complexity of the process combined with the pure vastness of what is to be retrieved and the time required to know the past is why being a historian is, in the main, a professional career, and also why historians no more agree about the main causes of an event, or the main lessons to be learned from an event, than specialists in any other discipline where human symbols and narratives inevitably must contravene the more fundamental mathematical-laboratory style reduction.

Our actions take place chronologically, but, to repeat, we think episodically. Moreover, it is not just the past that pushes us on (our trajects as Rosenstock-Huessy calls them), it is the hopes and decisions, in part, directing and giving shape to a future which both beckons and reveals itself to us (though just as we cannot grasp the totality of the past or present we cannot grasp the totality of all that 'feeds' into the future). If we knew everything we would know nothing unless we knew how to order, i.e. rearrange and transform 'history,' i.e. what happened, into 'History,' our story about what happened. The filtering problem is conjoined, as Nietzsche has perhaps most famously put the case in his attack upon the philistinism of David Strauss, by the urgency and importance of our need to know the past, to draw from it to make—and indeed to be made by the future. Our historical appeals require that we enter deeply into deeply alien life-worlds with their own historicity, which also connects to our historicity. We are never simply being a mirror, i.e. never completely objective.²⁸

²⁸ J.G.A. provides a neat account of this in his dialogue between Ego and Alter in 'Political ideas as historical events: political philosophers as historical actors' in his *Political Thought and History, Political Thought and History: Essays on Theory and Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 51-66. The danger of contextualism is that the synchronic completely subverts the diachronic: that speech takes us through time and forms our times is no less important than that a speech is formed in time. For Pocock's critique of Strauss—he finds him "marvellously perceptive in some ways as well as marvellously wrong-headed in others," (pp. 385-6), see his "Prophet and Inquisitor," *Political Theory*, 3.4 (November 1975), 385-401.

We are in the existential condition where we cannot help be swept along by history as a plethora of living—radiating, incubating—powers, which is also to say that a generation and its members are never completely in control of their social world. But we are also in the condition that we never see very much of what it is sweeping us along. We build with the available contingencies, the selected episodes that we feel we sufficiently grasp to facilitate our bit of world-making. But then there is one more aspect that complicates everything even more—and I have been alluding to this throughout: the so called ‘we’ I have been speaking of is temporally formed as well as only ever relatively stable, at least in the social formations which contain greater freedoms and social diversities. What exists in time is always co-existence, albeit the collective also contains all manner of appeals and diversities that adjudicate on the respective values of different foundings and ultimate sources that govern us in our respective identities. Just as our consciousness enables us a synoptic ‘grasp’—a we recall Hegel’s *Begriff* ‘contains’ or is formed by *greifen*—we are ever implicated in and taking on roles in which we ourselves move through the times. The Orthodox priest or believer, the Catholic priest or believer, the pastor and Protestant believer, the convinced atheist are all appealing to and formed by different events, which is to say different social times—they co-exist, but their coexistence may or not be hospitable, as other forces (and I am not even speaking of direct conflict here). One only has to be cognizant of how rare it is now days compared with forty years ago to see a nun in a cornette and habit to realize what a large ‘slice’ of time has been diminished or cast aside. This diminution of a time is occurring constantly—and, of course, is accelerating under modern conditions. It is precisely because this is such a part of our reality that reference to ‘culture’ strikes me as a less astute way of taking the diverse realities into account.

The intensity of colliding foundations and hence colliding times may be dissipated over time—this is typically, but not necessarily, the case when extremely antagonistic life-worlds, which may have been ‘purchased’ with much blood and suffering are able to survive alongside each other for great periods of time. But that a particular event spanning a particular environment leads to the amelioration of tensions and hostilities which were once matters of life and death, and that subsequent generations can participate in, even benefit from a plurality of foundations and events and live peacefully with the diverse ‘time-bodies’ with

their shared symbolic stock is because a sufficiently strong sense of ‘we’ emerged out of subsequent collisions; many times became one time, but the one overall concordant time still ‘moves’ with multiple and diverse social memories; and the outbreak of old hostilities is not an impossibility. The greatest naivety is to think that the means of concordance that one social/political formation has been able to achieve can simply be replicated anywhere—for everywhere has its own time dynamics and conflicting foundations and time-bodies. This is the price of social complexity and survival.

The attunement to the very different temporalities at work within an age and place is not in contradiction with larger scales of temporal unity at work. Again I think Rosenstock-Huessy makes this case extremely powerfully, especially in his writings on revolutions, as he notes the way in which the great European revolutions have circulated beyond themselves and the World wars drawn us into planetary contiguities previously non-existent. Thus it is also not surprising that we must simultaneously be ever more conscious of universal history *and* local histories—both disclose fundamental realities of our being in time.

With this in mind, I wish to follow up on one last criticism of the Straussian approach to Political Philosophy, which in large part is due not just to Strauss, but to Philosophy itself, but which is even more clearly problematic for the Straussians in so far as they believe that their conversations take their orientation from the eternal standards they invoke in their readings. The Straussian accepts the great philosophical promise of a great resolution—even, if for the unphilosophical populace, they think that cooperation with a more easily comprehensible myth is part of any regime’s duty of care. The notion of the potentially rational resolution available to all who have the capacity to philosophize aright has always been the un-kept promise of philosophy. It raises the all-important questions: why can’t it keep its promise and what does it mean that it cannot? When I say it cannot keep its promise, I simply mean that there has never been a philosophical school that has ever commanded total ascent to the open minded person using their reason: as well as philosophers one only has to look at judicial decisions involving supreme courts and the like to see the extent of the lack of consent, the close calls which divide ostensibly disinterested lovers of truth and wisdom. Ultimately I am suggesting that the reason philosophy never achieves this and the reason it never will is because every individual is embedded in a

matrix of multiple, often contradictory foundations, with their various trails and historical adaptations, and transformations that enter into narratives of identity and which are ‘tested’ constantly by new information and circumstances. These matrices may vary significantly in their complexity, but it is impossible to think of anyone in the modern world, irrespective of what society they live in, who is not implicated in matrices far more complex (I am not talking about sophistication, but the sheer accumulation of temporalities and foundings) than one might generally find in pre-modern people. The compensation for this situation is as understandable as it is unsatisfactory—Western modern peoples are increasingly abstract, and, paradoxically, as I have suggested from the outset, less historically aware, less given to looking backwards into the future as peoples. This abstraction is, as I have also suggested, woven into the modern ideological framings of experience and future. On the other hand, more is known about the past today than at any other time in history. But that knowledge is known by few and invariably is ‘modified’ by the abstractions of appeal and value which we find in such modern framings as the liberal and neoconservative narratives I am criticizing.

Contrary to the Straussian dissolution of reality into a number of ‘great books’ written by wise ‘philosophers,’ if we really want to diagnose the ills of a life-world and espy possible improvements, we must be attuned to the vast array of contingencies which contribute to them. While I have argued that there will never be a great philosophical resolution of the type such apodictic sciences as physics or chemistry may avail of because life-worlds are symbolic worlds, and symbols are temporally active—in assaying these ‘worlds’ one has to be familiar with the contingencies which constitute them. But this cannot be serious unless their genesis and character are explored. Political philosophy cannot operate at an extra-anthropological, an extra- sociological, nor an extra-historical level—attempts to do so are always subterfuges.

The identification of a rationally concordant answer to the good life presupposes an agreement about the way in which contingencies are valued in different life-worlds. This does not mean that certain common or universal features (the absolutes) of human sociality may not be identified, but the absolutes all too quickly find themselves in antagonistic relationships with each other. The Platonic way to overcome this problem was to make the good in itself the object of human inquiry—but while anyone can ask the question is this action, this type of life, this

type of person, this type of behaviour, etc., good? Even allowing for there to be answers to these questions, the answers enmesh one in arguments about tactics of realization. And the tactics of realization push us to ask after the character of the peoples whose lives do not conform to the idea of the good to be realized, why they love this kind of life more than that kind of life? Again the contingencies that are valued are concrete: it is not that any society is good, that any state is good, that any culture is good, that any family is good. We find ourselves implicated or enmeshed in institutions because we are social beings, but our social commitments and responses are not to abstract forms of experience, whether they are benign or tortuous and hence the way we deal with them, are contingent as well.²⁹ The real truth of an institutions and ideas is in their playing out—our capacity to generalize and infer, as with our capacity to question, is an important capacity, but it is not one that can do more than use the modicum of logic and the modicum of our grasp of the plethora of contingencies we consider. This is the problem that Strauss is just not very helpful for and which the neo-conservatives botched so badly. Having decided that liberal democratic regimes were good—for all its flaws the liberal was, so the argument runs, the best of the possible regimes—they did not deem it necessary to ask for who and for what and when and how? Aristotle is also a favourite of Strauss and his school, but Aristotle was a most cautious thinker about the possibilities open to a regime. He was not a constructivist and his critique of Plato on the family and property (a critique that Strauss thought [in my opinion, very dubiously] did not apply to Plato—because Plato was only making a utopia which he never believed in) was based upon a psychological observation. Different peoples are ‘naturally’ inclined toward the kind of life they are familiar with, and the kinds of satisfactions and duties which enable who they are to continue being who they are. This does not rule out societies full of rage and despondency and alienation, societies in civil war and the like.

The failure of the invasions and Bush-initiated regime changes in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as the aftermaths of regime change in Egypt and Libya, and the ongoing crises in Syria, and the role that these

²⁹ Cf. Alasdair MacIntyre “Is Patriotism a Virtue?” in Igor Primoratz, ed., *Patriotism*, (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2003), 43-58.

policies had in facilitating, if not outright spawning, ISIS has a great deal to do with a complete failure to understand the societies the regime wanted to 'help.' The mind-set was simple: liberal democracy is a good, if we eliminate the obstacle to the good, then good things will follow. What they did not consider was how long it took to cultivate liberal democracy, how much suffering, struggle and sheer destruction was involved in the conversion of a people, or collective—let alone how long it took for the ancient institution of slavery to be eliminated in the West. This is the identical problem of liberalism, when it is constructivist. Philosophical talk is treated as if it is simply a matter of people changing their minds, as if their minds were unhinged from their being, and people were disinterested pursuers of the truth.

Conclusion

Liberalism and neo-conservatism are far from being alone in their inattention to societies as being bodies of time. I have suggested Marxism suffered the same ailment, and another area which has risen to prominence, especially with the relatively large and unprecedented numbers of Muslim immigrating to Western countries in recent generations is a certain kind of interfaith dialogue, which seeks a common spiritual core of assumptions around which to have meaningful dialogue.

It is no accident that Western ideologies and approaches, even solutions to religions problems which previously plagued Europe do not fly when transposed to regions whose peoples have different historicities. Different social memories involve different valorizations and different appeals. Reaching a large scale agreement about a form of governance or faith means that people are in the position to be orientated in one manner rather than another. The great transformations of peoples within the world are transformations within certain zones that sufficiently activate enough people to risk their all as their world is remade. But the differences in their making is what we have to live with. The liberal solution to that making has worked in Europe only after fighting off vested interests, i.e. people with life-roles and systemic stakes (members of classes) whose outlook on life and means of social reproduction were, in important areas, not compatible with a liberal world. It then had to fight alternative ideologies which also emerged out the debris of possibilities and types seeking some other future than they could envisage as desirable under liberalism. When we speak, the temporality

of our ideas (the names we invoke, the concepts we refer and defer to) is invariable veiled. Our grammar is but one key of time's social reality, but ideas all too easily can be spoken of as 'in-themselves,' and we, as Kant famously referred to in the *Critique of Pure Reason* and in the more limited context of a priori forms and functions of experience, easily take flight. In the air—'the clouds', as Aristophanes fittingly identified as the real locus of Socratic appeals—ideas can be matched against each other by our ostensible reason alone. But on the earth they are living and dying along with us, as much drawing us further into a future, by awakening us to respond to the calls from the past and across the present, as dwelling alongside us. All people's experience this—what they don't experience are the same calls and pulls.

At the end of the Second World the world looked as if it were on the brink between a communist or liberal democratic future. Not only did that prove to be false, but one ideology died (or as in China, transformed much of its essence into its opposite). As the twentieth century and twenty first century unfolded consensuses and narratives have time and again proven to miss the mark about where reality is heading: by the 1980s, Maoist Sinologists no longer had a place to call home, Soviet specialists became historians overnight, a small army of socialist academics became post-modernists when the Soviet system folded, and even religion found its way back into social science and International Relations. What has still persisted, though, as this paper has indicated across liberal and neo-conservative groups is a certain indifference to human historicity. The clash of peoples is not only a clash of times, of peoples who literally dwell in different epochs, who take their cues from very different 'events.' Thus, for example, although I think it no overstatement to say that the transformations that have been bought about by the fight against Nazism (whose essence is the holocaust) and fascism completely changed the direction of education, and over time the society at large and the policies of governments that have been responsive to a more 'liberalized' set of social values which take account of the rights of different 'thin' communities based around identity. The politicisation of the Humanities, based as it is on antipathy towards skewed power relations, that started to take place in the 1960s is directly related to the trauma of guilt in the aftermath of the Second World War—guilt by the children and grandchildren in Europe of their parents' fascism; guilt by the UK for their past imperialism, and guilt by the North Americans for

slavery and genocide of native Americans and their participation in the Vietnam war. By extension the treatment of indigenous, blacks, women, gays, marginalized ethnic and religious groups could all be read as subjects of oppression. I do not argue this is wrong or even defective, but such a template for studying the social world, which is built upon a certain shared set of normative values does not travel far outside of the Western world, even allowing for relatively small elites in other 'worlds' who do fight for social change along such lines. But if one assumes that an event such as the Holocaust means much the same to North Americans or Europeans as it does to peoples living in China, Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia, Russia, one is missing the point. In placing the liberal and neo-conservative mind-set it does not mean, for a moment, they are exactly the same. The obvious difference is where they have stood respectively on military intervention.

On the other hand, I think it very obvious that while the liberal academic mind challenges militaristic hegemony, and scouts out hegemonic ideas that are complicit with a certain style of tradition 'US-Eurocentrism,' it is equally as obvious that the style of 'critique' that typifies so much of what has changed within the Arts/Humanities and Social Sciences in the West is one which inevitably privileges a hegemonic role for elite universities (now exacerbated by university global ranking systems) which cannot help but draw in people from different 'cultures' into a common time, that only exists amongst those who share certain core appeals that have been part of their own historicity. That the liberal mind-set has also attempted to be respectful toward different cultures is one of the characteristics that led neo-conservatives to cry 'relativists.' But this criticism is not really true at all. For the idea of respect for different cultures and peoples, which is indeed a feature of the contemporary liberal mind, is one which does not dissolve its appeals into the different temporalities and mores of peoples who do not share their liberal sentiments and sources of appeal. On the contrary, what it tends to do is emphasize the shared fundamentals between cultures. At the same time, there is a kind of consensus of 'good manners' which means that certain highly illiberal societies in which illiberal mores are strongly shared not be broached when talking about the culture of the Other. Thus while the Western liberal tends to see all his or her traditional institutions as toxic, peoples from more traditional societies, though they may be critical of which person or group holds power tend to be very loyal to their tradi-

tions, and certainly there are no signs at all from the Middle East or Central Asia that there is an overwhelming sense of guilt about whom their traditions have oppressed.

In conclusion, the point of alerting us to the different social times that are circulating within one world is not simply to bring everything back to tacit normative appeals of settled matters about right and wrong involving power, oppression, in-equality, freedom etc. but rather to draw attention to what we are dealing with. The urgent question of how we deal with essential and non-negotiable differences is a tactical one: and it does not preclude the need to do what liberals do well—excavate pathologies, cruelties and injustices, which are a deep part of the West's social being. But being blind to who we are and what we are and why we are does not help orientate us, nor make genuine dialogue between peoples possible.

World History in the World-System Analysis Perspective¹

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Abstract

This article concerns the main principles and heuristic potential of world-system analysis. It describes the relationship between the categories of ‘formation’ and ‘world-system’ and the issue of defining the ‘revolution’ and ‘socialism.’ The author attempts to apply world-system analysis to world history.

Introduction

While contemporary socio-philosophical research has deviated from studying metatheories, still Marxism, despite having been regularly laid to rest, remains the only methodology and theory that is able to comprehend the essence of the processes happening in the world. Many of the leading representatives of the post-soviet Marxist school view re-actualisation of the Marxist heritage as the most important task for modern methodology.² The author of world-system analysis Immanuel Wallerstein openly calls himself a Marxist; and world-system analysis today is one of the most popular methods to study capital. In this paper we intend to show that world-system analysis can also elucidate the general course of world history, provided that some conceptual contradictions are solved.

Traditional Marxism uses the formational scheme of world history.

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² Alexander Buzgalin and Andrey Kolganov, “Re-actualising Marxism in Russia: The Dialectic of Transformations and Social Creativity,” *International Critical Thought*, 2011.

This opens up a question of complementarity of the categories of formation and world-system. A socio-economic formation is neither a particular society, nor a society in general—it is the commonality that belongs to all the socio-historical organisms with a certain socio-historical structure. One more characteristic of a formation is its global dimension, universality. For an example of the formational approach let us refer to the scheme suggested by Alexander Gotnoga who uses the dialectic and materialistic methods.³ He marks out the following successive stages of development in the history of humanity: pre-class society, Asian mode of production and capitalism. Slavery and feudality are viewed as local historical stages, incidental towards regular world-historical evolution. And a historical necessity here is socialism.

A unit of research in world-system analysis, according to Wallerstein, is a historical system,⁴ among the forms of which are mini-systems and world-systems. All historical systems have three critical characteristics: they are relatively autonomous and have spatial and temporal borders.⁵ History appears to be a sequence of rises and falls of historical systems. Wallerstein believes that in the pre-agricultural era there were many mini-systems, small in size and relatively short in duration, highly homogeneous from the point of view of cultural and managing structures. In the period between 8000 B.C. and 1500 A.D. the multiple mini-systems, world-empires and world-economies existed on the planet simultaneously. In the 16th century, even though the world-empire was the strongest form of that time, the capitalistic world-economy managed to survive, firm up and later subdue all the other historical systems, becoming universal and the only one. The main and defining feature of this historical system dominant in the modern world is its intrinsic division of labour.

However, the founder of the world-systems approach himself seems to fail to see the logic in history and views the transition from one historical system to another as a mystery. Because we mostly do not

³ Alexander Gotnoga, *Forecasting History: Theory and Methodology* (Moscow: Vlastos, 2007), 206.

⁴ Immanuel Wallerstein, *Modern World-System*, vol. 1 (University of California Press, 2011), 23.

⁵ Immanuel Wallerstein, "Historical Systems as Complex Systems," *Modelling Complex Systems* 130, no. 2 (June 1987): 198.

know how the mini-systems work, it remains outside of our ability to understand the transition to the other forms, says Wallerstein.⁶ The change in the state of play between the world-empires and the world-economy in the favour of the latter, which happened in the 1500s, Wallerstein has also seen as puzzling and not yet having a satisfactory explanation. In this view it is not surprising that he applied the language of synergetics to the transformation of capitalism into another historical system: he believes that one general scheme can be applied to all systems—from the physicochemical and the biological to the social.⁷

This inability to see the historical logic arises due to methodological imperfections, the main of which is Wallerstein's rejection of the dialectical method. Although György Lukács warned that historical cognoscibility gets lost under dismissal or blurring of the dialectic approach.⁸ And later Evald Ilyenkov added: "I often hear that the categories of dialectics have gone out of date, that they have to be radically modified and brought up-to-speed with the latest scientific advances. And in reality it occurs that out of date are not the definitions of the categories but that superficial understanding of them that is used in these cases."⁹ Today the oblivion of dialectics is often not even reasoned properly. Ivan Gobofov justifiably sees the explanation for this within the revolutionary nature of dialectics itself, in its demand for change of the existing social rules.¹⁰ Therefore, at first sight, the world-systems approach deprives history of logic and the possibility of forecasting. However we believe that the world-system, despite the mentioned limitations, can be an important category for exploring of the socio-historical organisms inside the formations, and, consequently, the formation itself. Even though the historical system is prescribed and defined by the formation, it may also give an additional key to understand-

⁶ Ibid., 199.

⁷ Immanuel Wallerstein, *Historical Capitalism with Capitalist Civilization* (Verso, 2011), 170.

⁸ György Lukács, *History & Class Consciousness* (Merlin Press, 1967), 114.

⁹ Evald Ilyenkov, *Dialekticheskaya logika: ocherki istorii i teorii (Dialectical logic, essays on its history and Theory)* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1984), 316.

¹⁰ Ivan Gobofov, "Socialnaya philosophia: dialectica ili sinergetica? (Social philosophy: dialectics or synergetics?)," *Philosophy and Society*, 2005, 17.

ing the formational approach and the world-historical process in general. Let us look at this idea in more detail.

The longest period in human history—the pre-class society—was the age where mini-systems dominated. They formed and fell apart and did not have a complex political or economical structure that are characteristic of later societies. Further, the drying out of the prairies called for a transfer to irrigative agriculture; and so the first states in the valleys of the Nile, Tigris and Euphrates appeared. Within the 3rd and 2nd centuries BCE this grew into a complex of states, and the Asian mode of production became a world-historical stage. A characteristic trait of this mode of production was a public, not belonging to any individual solely, and therefore state property.¹¹ A specific implication of this was the appearance of the world-empires which first of all were the complex political structures, and this allowed them to solve the economic tasks. The mode of production in which the state ruled over the public work called for a strong political component. Yuri Semyonov believed that the cyclical pattern of development is characteristic of the oriental societies because the main resource of their development—the constant increase of work hours—was very limited. And so they rose, they flourished and then decayed.¹² At the same time, this is a clear logic of the world-empires. Wallerstein writes: “The world-empires seem to have had built-in space and time limits, since the expansion outwards always seemed to reach a point where the central authority's power was overtaken by disintegrative forces and these world-empires then contracted.”¹³

Moreover, we ought to understand that ‘world-system’ is not necessarily synonymic to ‘world system.’ The world-empire cannot turn into a world system: it is not a world empire but a historical system that develops under the influence of internal factors, meaning that it is relatively

¹¹ Yuri Semyonov, *Politarniy (“Asiatskiy”) sposob proizvodstva: suschnost i mesto v istorii chelovechestva i Rossii. Philosophsko-istoricheskiye ocherki (Politar (“Asian”) mode of production: its nature and role in history of the world and Russia. Philosophical and historical essays)* (Moscow: Magic Key, 2008), 341.

¹² Yuri Semyonov, *Philosophiya istorii: Obschiye teorii, osnovnye problemy, idei i konceptsii s drevnih vremyon i do nashih dney (Historical philosophy: General theories, main issues, ideas and concepts from the ancient to the present times)* (Moscow: Modern Notes, 2003), 447.

¹³ Wallerstein, “Historical Systems as Complex Systems,” 199.

autonomous. It is not for nothing that Wallerstein insists on a hyphen in his terminology. The world-empire can be characterised by a universal and strong political and administrative system and a redistributive economic form.¹⁴ When the world-empires dominated, connections between the world-systems existed but played a much less important role than later. Some of the mini-systems were included in the world-empires and the others stayed independent, but the foremost form of the historical evolution was the world-empire. In our opinion, it has also been the only form of the world-system up until the capitalistic world-economy has evolved within the ‘long sixteenth century.’ One may find the examples of world trade and trade unions within this period, but Wallerstein stresses that world trade is not yet the world-economy. Even though Fernand Braudel claimed that the world-systems have existed from a very long time ago,¹⁵ it can be argued that those societies that formed an “economical whole”¹⁶ in that period managed to do so due to the unified political structure. One cannot help but drawing a conclusion that the capitalistic world-economy is the first world-economy, and it was born due to the unequal development of the existing world-systems and their interaction.

The world-economy is a broad, unequal system that consists of the production and other economic structures that are divided by multiple political structures. The accumulated income here gets distributed unequally—in favour of those who are able to acquire different types of monopolies within the market networks and labour division. The world-economy gets built upon the political structures and, moreover, changes them in line with its needs. The capitalistic mode of production is impossible in any other form but the world-system, which is its instrumented form. The capitalistic world-economy started its spatial distribution following its inner logic and by the end of 19th century had devoured all the other historical systems. At the same time, unlike the case of the world-empires, this process didn’t have intrinsic limits. On the contrary, in order to sustain the norm of income, the world-economy al-

¹⁴ Wallerstein, *Modern World-System*, 1:24.

¹⁵ Fernand Braudel, *Capitalism and Material Life, 1400-1800* (Harpercollins, 1973), 3–4.

¹⁶ Fernand Braudel, *Dinamika kapitalisma (The dynamics of capitalism)* (Smolensk, 1993), 83–87.

ways asks for enlargement and for involvement of other systems into its orbit.¹⁷ Thus, with the 'end of geography' capitalism needs to constantly organise local wars, disaster zones and terrorism hotspots in order to sustain the norm of income on the necessary level. Therefore, it can be concluded that capitalism is not eternal and sooner or later must be changed by a different type of world order, namely socialism.

Let us draw up the intermediate results. Every mode of production as a world-historical stage has a corresponding type of historical system. The pre-class society is the time of mini-systems. The Asian mode of production has found its place in the world-empires. And capitalism is impossible without the world-economy that has its core, periphery and half-periphery. At the same time the formation is a universal and global structure that sets the main characteristics for the historical systems representing this formation and that serves as a key to its understanding on the local level. This idea allows us to adopt the opinion that the Asian mode of production is a more developed world-historical stage than slavery and feudalism, and that the later were no more than local historical stages.¹⁸ Indeed, in the ancient and the feudal societies there was no original type of historical systems and that is why these stages were incidental in relation to the lawful way of the world-historical evolution. It is important, however, to not fall into superficial interpretation of this logic that could suggest, for example, that the Rome Empire, which is viewed as one of the classic examples of the world-empires, was an ancient politar society. The case is that every further period inherits the achievements of the previous period. Progressiveness here is defined by the ability to create a new type of historical systems that are not found in slavery and feudalism.

So, after making a brilliant impact on an explanation of the structure, logic and dynamics of capitalism, as well as its contradictions (which will unavoidingly lead to its crisis), the world-system analysis stops at the face of the socialistic alternative. A convincing concept of world history must include a possibility of prognosis. In our opinion, in order to realise this possibility within the framework of world-system analysis, it is necessary to overcome a terminological lack of clarity. Wallerstein describes two types of historical systems: world-empires

¹⁷ Wallerstein, "Historical Systems as Complex Systems," 200.

¹⁸ Gotnoga, *Forecasting History: Theory and Methodology*, 206.

and world-economies. In both cases ‘world’ means system but the notions of ‘empire’ and ‘economy’ lie in two different areas. Empire is a form of power, and economy is one of the areas of social life. Because a world-empire is what it is mostly because of its political structure, it is more logical to call this type of historical system a world-politics. This change of terms allows to avoid misunderstanding and to define the other historical system as a world-society. World-society is a historical system that develops on an actual human basis and includes the whole society in all the variety of its forms. Politics and economy along with the rest of the social areas have to be in harmony within a unity of the system. As shown earlier, a rule of the world-society (socialism) is a historical necessity and the only chance for a decent future of humanity. But the necessity of a transfer to the socialistic regime does not yet mean its unavoidable nature. The choice that humanity faces is either to die as a result of the deepened and sharpened capitalist-born controversies, or to appropriate the social element by conducting a socialist revolution.

Now it is important to overcome the difficulties in using the term ‘socialist revolution.’ These difficulties are a result of the multiple definitions of this term. Revolution is a form of transfer from one stage of social development to another. Or, in other words, a ‘cataclysmic leap’ from one mode of production to another as an alternative to reforms.¹⁹ The process of revolutionary changes can be undergone by the production forces (industrial revolution), economic regime (economic revolution), social, class and juridical superstructure (social and political revolution), ideological institutions and forms of social consciousness. In view of a complex character of this change and of its intermediate position between the two—highest and lowest—formations, a contemporary Russian researcher Alexander Seleznyov suggests calling it a ‘socio-economic revolution.’²⁰ Among the revolutions of this type were the anti-slavery, anti-feudal (capitalistic) and anti-capitalistic (communist) revolutions. The transition from the primitive communal system to the

¹⁹ Immanuel Wallerstein, *After Liberalism* (The New Press, 1995), 196.

²⁰ Alexander Seleznyov, “Vsemirno-istoricheskij process: obschestvenno-economicheskiye formatsii, civilizatsii i mezhformatsionnye rovolutsii (World history process: socio-economic formations, civilisations and inter-formational revolutions),” *Philosophy and Society*, 2005, 25–27.

slave-owning system as well as the establishment of the former can appropriately be called a 'leap.' According to Seleznyov, the revolution is an inter-formational stage of the world-historic process that represents the time of coexistence of at least two patterns that switch places so that the dominant pattern of the old formation becomes subsequent to the dominant pattern of the new formation, which used to be secondary in the old one. Also, Seleznyov criticises the common equation of the socio-economic revolution to the socio-political one. Another post-Soviet philosopher Yuri Nazarov marks out two stages of the social revolution: the political and the economic ones. The political revolution is a necessary condition for a fundamental change in ownership relations. This change is the economic revolution itself, the final stage of the change in mode of production. It constitutes a qualitative reform of the whole system of social production and management on the platform of the new property relations. Nazarov accepts the popular interpretation of the political revolution as a take-over that changes the type of power (political regime) and does not affect the economic foundation of the society. By this he deprives the notion of revolution of its totality, dividing society into different spheres, not conventionally but absolutely.²¹ Grigoriy Zavalko points out a common weakness of many 'sociology of revolution' studies. It is unclear how the notions of revolution and evolution correspond: usually they are presented either as a complete merge or as a complete disconnection. Zavalko himself points out two types of revolution: revolution-substitution (e.g. bourgeois revolution); and revolution-emergence (socialist revolution). In the first case, power is assumed by the class that has already been formed in the interior of the old society. In the second—by the class that emerged within the revolution itself.²² It is clear that this disunity is not distinct: the characteristics of one can always be found in the other and vice versa.

In his essay "On the Subject and Usage of the Notion of Revolution," Boris Kapustin specifies that there is no definition that would be

²¹ Yuri Nazarov, "Revolyutsii v politicheskoy zhizni obshchestva (The revolutions in a political life of society)," *Philosophy and Society*, 2006, 61.

²² Grigoriy Zavalko, *Ponyatiye "revolyutsiya" v filosofii i obshchestvennykh naukah: problemy, idei i kontseptsii (The notion of revolution in philosophy and social science: problems, ideas and concepts)* (Moscow: KomKniga, 2005), 60–60.

logically and conceptually perfect and would ‘ultimately’ eliminate variant readings of this term. He suggests sticking to the multiple definitions of revolution as products of theories on specific events that reside within a competence of historical and political sociology, but not a product of any kind of speculative ‘meta-historical’ theory.²³ According to his logic, Kapustin decided to clarify the unclarifiable and to define the undefinable. The impossibility of a final definition of ‘revolution’ is determined, first of all, by the fact that its role as an analytical instrument cannot be fully isolated from its role as a product and an instrument of cultural imagination and a political and ideological trope. According to Kapustin, any thinker is always positioned in one way or another in a particular cultural and political context and is dependent on it²⁴. If one follows this logic, all social research should be stopped, and the work of Kapustin itself has no value. However, what makes a good scientist is not a claim of ultimate truth but an open recognition and defence of a given position.

For Wallerstein the problem of defining the socialist revolution is not less complicated. Revolution in the Marxist tradition of the parties and especially in the Marxist interpretation by Bolsheviks started to symbolise a violent overthrow of a bourgeois government by proletariat or at least an overthrow of a reactionary government by progressive public. In an attempt to clarify the conceptual meaning of this phenomenon Wallerstein poses some difficult questions and contradictions:²⁵

- Which is more important: the industrial revolution or the French Revolution?
- Is revolution a spontaneous uprising, or a disintegration of an existing power structure, or does revolution happen only when such an uprising gets channelled to a certain direction by the revolutionary party?
- When did the French Revolution begin—with the Storming of the Bastille, or with the actual start of Jacobin rule?
- Did the Russian Revolution start with the storm of the Winter

²³ Boris Kapustin, “O predmete i upotrebleniyah ponyatiya ‘revolutsiya’ (On subject and applications of notion ‘revolution’),” *Logos*, 2008, 3–5.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁵ Wallerstein, *After Liberalism*, 197–198.

- Palace, or with the beginning of the revolutionary movements?
- Does the revolution end with the assumption of power over the public authorities, or does this assumption of power keep the revolution going longer?
 - Do the Algerian and the Vietnamese revolutions belong to the same type, or are they completely different?
 - On Cuba: the revolution was not Marxist and even not socialist before the assumption of power, and after it was both Marxist and socialistic. In Zimbabwe this rhetorical change happened the other way around.
 - The Mexican revolution does not seem so revolutionary anymore today.
 - What should we think of the Chinese Revolution?
 - The Russian revolutionists these days are a historical memory that is not very honoured in this country.
 - Despite the 150-200 years of the revolutionary history the whole world today speaks the language of “market.”

Wallerstein calls the worldwide public demonstrations of 1968 the ‘World Revolution.’ In this he has something in common with postmodernists. It is not surprising that he considers the revolution an inviable concept in today’s world. Without clarifying what the revolution is, Wallerstein then attempts to contribute to defining its strategy. The confusion in definitions of this phenomenon disorients him, and the notion of socialistic revolution remains unclear.²⁶

Possibly everything will fall into place if we admit that the upcoming socialist revolution is the only possible one. Let us elaborate on this idea. If the revolution is a truly complex transformation of all social areas, then a process of transformation of socio-political structures within a framework of state borders as a result of internal or even international political infighting cannot be considered a revolution. However, undoubtedly, in some countries such transformations have borne invaluable fruits. Also, history has proven—yet again confirming Marx’s thesis—that progressive world-historical formation cannot develop within the bounds of a particular country. As Leo Trotsky mentioned: “The

²⁶ Ibid., 200–202.

completion of the socialist revolution within national limits is unthinkable...the socialist revolution becomes a permanent revolution in a newer and broader sense of the word; it attains completion, only in the final victory of the new society on our entire planet...Insofar as capitalism has created a world market, a world division of labour and world productive forces, it has also prepared world economy as a whole for socialist transformation.”²⁷ Even though in the next sentence Trotsky refers to revolution as a process, this text shows that he sees it as a stage of social development, a transition from capitalism to socialism.

The transition from one antagonistic world-historical stage (formation) to another is also not a revolution. And not because it is hard to define the spatial and temporal limits of these transitions. On the contrary, the absence of such limits is, possibly, a characteristic of the true revolution because it should be universal (otherwise it will not happen at all). It also should be a constant movement forward because socialism is not a Utopia, not a frozen form of an “ideal, good society of the future,” but a society that constantly develops, moves towards freeing a person, developing their talents and realising of their creative potential. Another very important statement from the creative legacy of Marxism is: the first step a man can do on a way to the revolution is to acknowledge that alienation is a personal and social problem, to realise themselves as a function, a puppet in hands of external social powers, alien to human being.²⁸ The revolution is not just a change of power poles; it is a complex process that frees an individual. The usual critique of Marxism is that it surrenders a man to impersonal social powers, and thus ignoring personality, will and the moral. But this critique is based on a caricature image of the Marxist paradigm. From the classic Marxist stand, a person is someone with consciousness and will, a subject and not an object of history. A protest against capitalism arises when a worker realises themselves as a person that is oppressed by those external social powers, alien to human being. While admitting the existence and the importance of transitional and inter-formational stages within the class society, let

²⁷ Leon Trotsky, *Permanennaya Revolyutsiya (The Permanent Revolution)* (Moscow: Ast; Midgard, 2005), 434–435.

²⁸ Alexander Buzgalin and Andrey Kolganov, *Globalniy Kapital (The Global Capital)* (Moscow: Editorial URSS, 2007), 453.

us note that after these changes the society keeps its class character.

Thus, we believe that the revolution should be seen as a process that will mark the end of, as Marx himself said, 'prehistory' of human (class) society and the beginning of the 'history' of the (classless) society. Then humanity will make a step from the 'kingdom of necessity' into the 'kingdom of freedom.' From this point of view it seems reasonable that the transition from pre-class (primitive communal) society to the class society is also not a revolution. It is generally agreed that revolution is a process. And according to the above-mentioned, the revolution is a process of socialistic transformations that are not limited and cannot degenerate into a frozen form of society. This statement relieves us from a necessity to separate revolution from socialism and to seek where one of ends and the other starts. These two processes do not just merge in our minds, they are unthinkable without each other. Revolution is socialism, socialism is revolution.

But how will the revolution—a transition from one historical system to another—happen? The view of Yuri Semyonov seems essential here: there have never been and could never have been the socio-historical organisms that would go through all the stages of historical development. The socio-historical formations have always been, first of all, the stages of the development of humanity in general. It is not necessary and is even impossible that each particular society goes through all the stages of historical development. When the progressive part of humanity has reached capitalism, then for everyone, without exemption, the stages that they have not passed themselves were bypassed.²⁹ Although, Marx himself did not want his essay about the origin of capitalism in Western Europe to become a theory of the universal way that all peoples ought to follow.³⁰

The situation described by Yuri Semyonov was possible because the previous historical systems were not universal, and the new historical systems have formed on a periphery of the old ones adopting their

²⁹ Yuri Semyonov, "Istoriya chelovechestva ot vozniknoveniya do nashih dney v predelno szhatom vide s escho bolee kratkim prognozom na budushee (History of humanity from the origin to the present days in the shortest with an even shorter future forecast)," *Philosophy and Society*, 2009, 22–23.

³⁰ Karl Marx, "Letter to Otechestvenniye Zapiski," in *Collected Works of Karl Marx & Frederick Engels - General Works*, vol. 24 (International Publishers, 1989), 196–201.

achievements.³¹ However, the capitalistic world-system enveloped the whole world.³² This fact proves once again that the transition to the world-society can only happen on a global scale. By embracing the whole world, capitalism did not leave a geographical periphery where a new historical system could form. But it made it possible that such system could be born within capitalism itself because of the development of productive forces. The world-economy has divided the world into two global categories: the exploiters (centre) and the exploited (periphery). Semyonov calls this conflict of interests a “Global Class War.” On this basis he reaches the conclusion that, after the end of Western exploitation, the periphery will stop being a periphery and will become a centre, and the only option left for the Western countries will be dissolution of capitalism.³³ This can be contradicted with the idea that by getting rid of the external exploiter of a country, the peripheries will themselves become exploiters to their inner peripheries. The West will also necessarily reproduce a structure of the world-economy within itself on a smaller scale, and will rain all its exploiting capacity down on its ‘inner third world.’ In fact, this phenomenon becomes more and more real in the contemporary world.³⁴ But even this scenario seems to be unlikely because the West only strengthens its military presence in the periphery aiming not to lose its economic benefits. History and modernity have proven that capital, feeling a threat to its ‘invisible hand of the market’ will immediately turn into a ‘visible fist’ and will stop at no armed conflict of any kind. It is timely to recall that the first attempts of transition to a new historical system have happened precisely on a periphery of capitalism and faced inextricable difficulties.

³¹ Semyonov, “Istoriya chelovechestva ot vzniknoveniya do nashih dney v predelno szhatom vide s escho bolee kratkim prognozom na budushee (History of humanity from the origin to the present days in the shortest with an even shorter future forecast),” 16–21.

³² Even the regions that are not included in globalisation stay conserved precisely because the global capital does not see any economical benefit in them.

³³ Semyonov, “Istoriya chelovechestva ot vzniknoveniya do nashih dney v predelno szhatom vide s escho bolee kratkim prognozom na budushee (History of humanity from the origin to the present days in the shortest with an even shorter future forecast),” 26–35.

³⁴ Wallerstein, *Historical Capitalism with Capitalist Civilization*, 174.

However, the theoretical potential of Marxism is huge because of its rich instrumentarium. In this case we mean the ‘law of periphery development’ that Georgiy Bagaturia phrased in the following way: a new system emerges on the periphery of an existing old system.³⁵ And yet the periphery societies did not succeed in transferring to socialism. Does it mean that the law does not work, or not all of the time? We believe it does work indeed all of the time. The case is that the geography of the world-systems, which is habitual to us, is not the only dimension where the periphery can be found. The inability of geographical periphery to overcome capitalism by its own forces has already been proved. Therefore, the periphery where the world-society is being shaped should be sought in life patterns and forms that are in an inferior position in the world-economy. For this we should overcome the assumption, customary for many, that world-system analysis only deals with a spatial structure of capitalism. But if something is not applied it does not mean it is not applicable.

It is worth mentioning that the most important notion of this approach is a notion of a system. System can be explained as a formation that has one ruling centre and a dependant periphery.³⁶ We believe that this scheme can be applied to a class structure of the world-system. The history shows that there was no revolution of slaves, and the bourgeoisie did not relate to a feudal mode of production. These classes were in a periphery relatively to the central class conflict of the old systems. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri see the nowadays driving force of system transformations in the area of non-material labour, the importance of which is growing.³⁷ This area is still inferior to the dominant area of

³⁵ Georgiy Bagaturia, “K Voprosu o Razvitii Marxistskoy Teorii Formatsionnogo Preobrazovaniya Obschestva (On a Development of the Marxist Theory of Formational Social Transformation),” in *Socialism-21. 14 Textov Postsovetskoy Shkoly Kriticheskogo Marxisma (Socialism-21. 14 Texts of the Post-Soviet School of Critical Marxism)* (Moscow: Cultural Revolution, 2009), 174.

³⁶ Alexander Bobkov, “Obschaya Teoriya Sistem i Dialektika Edinogo i Mnozhestvennogo (General Systems Theory and Dialectics of One and Many),” *Philosophy and Society*, 2005, 63.

³⁷ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (Penguin Books, 2005).

material labour, as a periphery that depends on a core.

Thus, the subject of the revolution should be the proletariat that is involved in a non-material production. Hardt and Negri call this subject of the fight against capital the Multitude and stress that it gets formed in the interior of global capitalism and retreats from it by independently forming a new society.³⁸

The ideas presented in this paper may seem too ambitious, but today's challenges posed by globalisation call for a global approach.³⁹ We believe that Marxism that comes into fruition through creative development should take the leading role in providing us with a fresh look both at society and social science. It is impossible to elaborate on the details of the revolutionary world-society while staying on the ground of scientific thought. But at the same time there is no doubt that this world-society cannot be build on a sheer denial of capitalism. Historical development is impossible without historical succession. It will be realised by dialectic removal when the new system comprises the achievements of the previous ones in a modified and subordinated form.

³⁸ Ibid., 9.

³⁹ The first version of the text was published in the journal *Philosophy and Society*, 2012, №3, (Russia).

PHILOSOPHY OF PEACE IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF GENOCIDE

The Persistence of the Feudal Ages, Genocide, and the Bomb

Dan Corjescu (University of Sofia)

It is only by perpetual aspiration after what has been hitherto beyond our
reach that advance is made.

Herbert Spencer

Thomas Mann once spoke of the artist as a seismograph in whose work
tremors as yet unobserved are registered. The German philosophers of
the nineteenth century signal tremors far beneath the surface of their so-
ciety; they signal catastrophe to come.

Alasdair MacIntyre

In the beginning is the relation.

Martin Buber

A philosophy of history, a dialectic leading to peace among men – is
such a thing possible after the Gulag and Auschwitz?

Emmanuel Levinas

Hitler has compelled humanity to accept a new categorical imperative:
orient your thinking and acting so that Auschwitz would never repeat it-
self, so that nothing similar would recur.

Theodore W. Adorno

The year 1789 is hereby erased from history.

Josef Goebbels

(shortly after Hitler's rise to power)

Nazism was more than just a reaction to Bolshevism, or to the cult of progress and the sentimental exaltation of abstract humanity symbolized by the proletariat. It was in fact something brand new, an attempt to renovate the world by getting rid of the bourgeoisie, the gold, the money, the parliaments, the parties, and all the other “decadent,” “Judeo-plutocratic” elements. So Fascism was not a counterrevolution, as the Comintern ideologues maintained; rather it is itself a revolution.

Vladimir Tismăneanu

‘every stranger is an enemy’...this conviction lies deep down like some latent infection...when (this) unspoken dogma becomes the major premise in a syllogism, then, at the end of the chain, there is the lager. Here is a product of a conception of the world carried rigorously to its logical conclusion; so long as the conception subsists, the conclusion remains to threaten us. The story of the death camps should be understood by everyone as a sinister-alarm signal.

Primo Levi

Here there are no fathers, no brothers, no friends. Everyone lives and dies for himself alone.

Elie Wiesel

The trouble is that our period has so strangely intertwined the good with the bad that without the imperialists’ “expansion for expansion’s sake,” the world might never have become one; without the bourgeoisie’s political device of “power for power’s sake,” the extent of human strength might never have been discovered; without the fictitious world of totalitarian movements, in which with unparalleled clarity the essential uncertainties of our time have been spelled out, we might have been driven to our doom without ever becoming aware of what has been happening.

Hannah Arendt

Francis Ferdinand was merely the victim of the solitary terrorist commando that fired those fatal shots in Sarajevo. Behind the hapless victim was the larger target of venerable elites and institutions bent on prolonging their privileged life, if need be by force and violence. But this target was too vast, resilient, and resistant to be felled by a few terrorist bullets. It would take the two World Wars and the Holocaust, or the Thirty Years' War of the twentieth century, to finally dislodge and exorcise the feudal and aristocratic presumption from Europe's civil and political societies.

Arno J. Mayer

This article was written in the shadow of genocide. Of modern genocide. Of the fact of these horrible events as the ultimate task of explanation for all of the social sciences and humanities. It is the story of many stories. Perhaps first and foremost, it is the story of how an ancient instinct and practice persisted into the twentieth-century. Of how, contrary to the received wisdom, an ancient world, a feudal world, persisted in both practice, structure and thought long after many had thought it vanquished. It is a story of how transition into political and social modernity was fiercely resisted, in similar as well as different ways, by both left and right. Of how human beings perniciously persisted in their ancient way of thinking in terms of friend/enemy. How an "other" became the "stranger" that had to be eliminated so that a "chosen" group might live and thrive. It is also and importantly the sad story of Western humanity's apprenticeship in the "heart of darkness" of colonialism and imperialism. It is the story of how religion was lost and secular political messianism was gained. How Hegel's "Kingdom of Freedom" returned while banishing, as impossible, a chiliastic escape from the "Kingdom of Necessity" of Marx. It, too, is the story of how Hobbes' "Leviathan" transformed itself into the counter-intuitive peace-maker known as the "bomb" before which all modern men cower and how Levinas called us to an impossible responsibility towards an ever unreachable other. And finally, and perhaps most provocatively, it is the story of how Auschwitz transcended itself, not in a new theodicy, but in the reaffirmation of the necessary assumption, in an age of dangerously liminal technology, that it is the human being who continuously makes the world—or destroys it forever.

To begin, it is crucial to understand that the Europe of 1871-1914 was a cultural complex of racist, xenophobic, imperialist, Darwinistic, and Nietzschean belief. It was an historical stage of consciousness and

cultural practice, which was standing in the way of the further development of human freedom and dignity both in Europe and world-wide. This complex of thought was eventually challenged, or in Hegelian fashion its contradictions were partially resolved, by the outbreak of World War One. This event can be seen as the negation of the prior unstable synthesis of the world before the war. The developments that followed the end of that first great conflict in the 1930's and 1940's was the "negation of the negation" leading, at its end, in 1945 to the emergence of a new world synthesis, represented in part by the birth and sign of the bomb, under which we all now still live.

These arguments are captured in part in Arno J. Mayer's groundbreaking book *The Persistence of the Old Regime*.¹ In this book, Mayer argues persuasively that, what he calls the Old Regime, or in other words the persistence of the feudal ages, did not end with the nineteenth century. On the contrary, according to Mayer, the forces, practices, and elites representing conservative, even ancient, modes of thought were alive and well in the nineteenth century, slowing, even for a brief time retarding, the forces of liberalism, democracy, and capitalism that were trying to make headway against them.

The carriers of these trends were the landed and service aristocracy well represented in the armies, bureaucracies, churches, and, in part, large agricultural interests of the time. They wielded an immense amount of prestige and influence on the other competing classes of the time, not least of which was upon the bourgeoisie who as often as not sought to join them, rather than vanquish them.

Ideologically, they too developed involved ideas of elitist leadership and command that drew from archaic notions of blood, race, clan, and caste. Many of these ideas would later evolve, under the impetus of Nietzschean and Social Darwinistic thought, into varieties of Fascism both more traditional, as in the case of Eastern Europe, and more modernistic as in the case of Italy and Germany. In all cases though, the feudal ideas of control by a minority, the passive management of the masses from above, and the retaining of ancient roles and ideas of masculinity, femininity, prestige, honor, and 'them'-versus-'us' thinking were pre-

¹ Arno J. Mayer, *The Persistence of the Old Regime* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981).

served and given carefully planned flourishes of modernity. Yet, in the end, what they were selling was an old ideological cart freshened up here and there with a fresh coat of modernist paint. Thus, in every instance, the new dictatorial, collectivist ideologies were anti-democratic, anti-liberal, anti-socialist, and, in a seeming contradiction, anti-capitalist.

But the last part was not a contradiction. For whether Fascist or Leninist, the new rulers had inherited a world that was highly conservative and shot through with feudal ways of thinking, even if they now expressed themselves in more 'modern' ways through such ideas, based, in the Fascist case, on Nietzsche and Darwin, and, in the socialist/communist case, on Marx and Lenin. Large conservative states such as Russia and Germany, and later China, and their peasant agriculturalist populations feared the content and ideas of modernity. They sought refuge under the guiding hand of a leader or party that could assure them that they would be taken care of and lead to 'the promise land' of the future, technologically changed perhaps but not too much culturally, politically and socially.²

In short, the power of the old regime prior to World War One was considerable and, in the final analysis, pernicious. It was they who gambled on a world-wide conflagration in World War One. It was they, who when they lost the first world-wide struggle, mounted a counter attack under new forms of dictatorship. Their material and ideological bases were strong and were only finally removed during the 'thirty years war' that made up the first part of the twentieth century.

Now we should take initial pause to reflect on this striking historical explanation of the calamities of the twentieth century and the reverberations they would have, not least of which, upon the outcome of the Jewish question in genocide.

There is an ancient way of thinking. We call it 'binary aggressive thinking.' Essentially, it is the way of thinking that reduces the 'other' into an implacable enemy with which we cannot negotiate and live side by side. In effect the 'other' of the binary 'we/they' must be destroyed. This is by no means a new way of thinking and may, like genocide, pre-date humanity itself.³

² See Vladimir Tismaneanu, *The Devil in History Communism, Fascism, and Some Lessons of the Twentieth-century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

³ See Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz The Nazi Assault on Humanity*, trans.

But in the nineteenth century, this way of thinking was given a new lease on life by both forces of the right and of the left.

As Julien Benda was to note in his famous book *The Betrayal of the Intellectuals*, modern intellectuals, beginning in the eighteenth century, had spent more and more time organizing “political hatreds” rather than attending to the Enlightenment legacy of viewing humankind in a universalist manner.⁴ Battle lines were ever more sharply drawn.

Particularisms such as class, nation, race, and even gender were used to stigmatize and dehumanize whoever stood outside the circle of ‘we.’ Whether it was colonialist, social-Darwinistic, eugenicist, Marxist, even, to a certain extent, Freudian ways of thinking there was always an ‘other,’ which was to be reduced or, in the worst case, exterminated. ‘Jews,’ ‘Slavs,’ ‘Bourgeoisie,’ ‘Slave nations and races,’ ‘Emancipated Women,’ ‘Homosexuals,’ ‘the Weak’ were just some of the categories of people that were to be ‘put down’ by either a supreme leader or the inexorable call of history or both. The ‘other’ was not to be tolerated but eliminated so that the ‘we’ the ‘healthy’ collective was to be finally liberated from its pernicious temptation.

In a word, we can tentatively assert that the West, particularly between the years 1871 and 1914 represented a growing intellectual, cultural synthesis which we can conditionally call a ‘culture of genocide’ and thus a mental environment where the annihilation of the ‘other’ was increasingly imagined and finally carried out. This way of thinking reached its Hegelian climax, as we have already suggested, in the Nazi camps and finally in the detonation of the bomb, *the instrument that for the first time in history could guarantee the elimination of both ‘otherness’ and ‘sameness’ simultaneously. In a sense, with the advent of the bomb, the question of one being ‘other’ became irrelevant since either all of us are now the ‘other’ relative to the bomb or that none of us can claim ‘difference’ in the face of this ultimate terror. The bomb is the Hobbesian machine, par excellent; it is the perpetually terrifying Leviathan holding humankind in thrall. Furthermore, the bomb was the quintessential outcome of a culture of genocide that was to signal the beginning of the end of that culture based on something that was*

Stuart Woolf (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

⁴ Julien Benda, *La Trahison des Clercs* (Paris, Grasset, 1990).

stronger than it; the human will for self-preservation in the face of certain annihilation guaranteed a return to more sober reasoning and rational council concerning conflicts of all kinds. The bomb initiated a 'trickle down of terror' into the deliberations of men.

This would also explain at least two important puzzles. The one is why, at least since Benjamin Constant, some argued that war was out-moded serving no purpose at all but nevertheless it still persisted.⁵ Or why, later, those like Norman Angell famously argued that war was irrational in an age of globalization and international commerce.⁶ From a rational point of view both were, of course, correct. But from a practical point of view, they were not. Because, in the end, they neglected the lessons and teachings of Thomas Hobbes.

It was not because humankind had reached an unprecedented level of globalization and commerce that Global War had ceased starting in 1945. Indeed, many have argued that the level of globalization and commerce reached in Angell's day was at least as great as today. No, the promise of easy wealth and luxury was to prove not enough. Quite simply, the answer as we have just argued above, is that the current peace among the great powers is a direct consequence of the existential threat of the bomb. No one can attempt to conquer or vanquish their powerful adversary without risking their own annihilation. The nuclear Leviathan holds them all in thrall. This is the 'secret' behind what Steven Pinker calls the "long peace."⁷

And this brings us to some interesting speculations or thought experiments that might be useful in charting where we have been and where we are going in our apparently exponential escape from our erstwhile "culture of genocide."

Imagine if you will that the original 'culture/s of genocide' had not destroyed itself/themselves in the two world wars, but had managed to muddle along by some miracle until one of them, or some of them, had developed the nuclear bomb. What might have happened? Well, either they would have used the weapons goaded on by their ideas of prestige

⁵ Benjamin Constant, *De L'esprit de Conquête et de L'usurpation dans Leurs Rapports avec La Civilisation Européenne* (Paris, Flammarion, 1993).

⁶ Norman Angell, *The Great Illusion A Study of the Relation of Military Power to National Advantage* (London: Bottom of the Hill Publishing, 2012).

⁷ Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 2012).

and power or they would have had a sudden intellectual ‘epiphany’ concerning the values of peace. My money would be on a self-destructive path since ingrained ways of thinking are hard to break and ‘epiphanies’ of all kinds are seldom to rare. Granted such thought experiments bring up all sorts of interesting contradictions even absurdities, but they are not thereby less valuable.

An alternative world such as this arguably would not have had the prophylactic experience of the destructive power of modern technology; such as the Two World Wars and, especially, its coda demonstrated. This is crucial. Because the human being tends not to believe until he sees. It is no mere accident that the ‘mushroom cloud’ is an iconic symbol in our culture. It covers layers of meaning and practice which direct our daily lives and orient our eyes towards the avoidance of a certain kind of future.

In this alternative world, human beings would have not had any direct experience with the true nature of the destructive power at their command. And notions of power, struggle, prestige, glory, and heroic masculinity would most certainly have been a lethal mix. And all this speculation brings us back, via Kant, to the earlier speculations of Hegel, once more.

At least since Kant, the question of human freedom versus the human place in nature has been at issue. Kant, rather unconvincingly, pointed out that the human is both a part of the causality of nature but that his freedom occupies a place outside of it; that is to say that his freedom of choice is both uncaused and spontaneous.⁸ This is wishful thinking at its best and perhaps Kant at his worst. It is, to say the least, an unconvincing argument and I think that Kant knew it, too. He was constrained by his time to reserve a special place for human ‘freedom’ and thus to preserve the realm of his ‘moral choice.’ We feel ourselves under no such constraints. Our philosophical position is that the human being has no ‘freedom’ and is completely determined, albeit complexly, by a range of natural, social, and historical causes. In the final analysis, there is no freedom and no moral choice.

Now this brings us back to Hegel with whom we are more in accord. This way of thinking, of course, would exclusively suggest that history does follow a complex pattern and that it is not contingent and that all the new ‘counter-factual’ history now in vogue does is show how

⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Berlin, Reclam, 1986).

improbable, indeed impossible, their scenarios are. For example, in a pre-1914 world that had reached a self-understanding of itself as a world divided between nations struggling for ‘survival of the fittest’ and ultimate mastery of the world, would an imperial England seriously have considered ‘sitting out’ a challenge from an imperial war-like Germany that would, in all probability, have assured German European hegemony of the continent.⁹ In a word, of course not.

As Hegel had taught us in his somewhat mysterious utterance “What is real is rational, what is rational is real” there is a reason for things; they do not just happen haphazardly and by pure chance. For human beings and their affairs are not governed by chance but by admittedly complex natural, social, and historical factors that lead them to make the decisions that they make. Indeed, I am willing to wager a millennial bet that, if ever, we find more than a handful of extraterrestrial civilizations we would then be, for the first time, in a position to compare the civilizations and thereby elucidate similar patterns of development. For in the worst case scenario (which happens to be our case), if historians only have a sample of one global civilization it would be premature in the extreme to say that there are *no laws of human/societal/rational development*. Even from a practical point of view, it is just too soon to draw final ‘post-modern’ conclusions without further examples for comparison.

At the very least, we can be somewhat grateful that human self-understanding developed ever so slightly ahead of technological capacity for self-destruction. Because if it did not, we, in all probability, would not be reading and discussing this article.

Does all this ‘explanation’ or ‘grand narrative’ mean that I am arguing that Hegel provides us with a new ‘theodicy’ as someone like Levinas might object to?¹⁰ Emphatically, no. The tragic events of 1914-1945 do not have anything to do with a universal struggle between ‘good’ and ‘evil’; sadly they simply have to do with the evolving self-understanding of humanity in a tight dialectic with his technical devel-

⁹ Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War: Explaining World War I* (New York: Basic Books, 2000). See also Niall Ferguson, ed., *Virtual History: Alternatives and Counterfactuals* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

¹⁰ Michael L. Morgan, *The Cambridge Introduction to Emmanuel Levinas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

opment; or in a Hegelian strain; with his reason. For indeed, as Hegel has said “One can also know falsely.” That is to say that a collective human self-understanding can be dangerously off the mark for our very own survival and can only be corrected (if it can) by historical or actual demonstration. Human beings must actually see to start to believe. Reason must be challenged by reality. Absolute war *can and did* lead, in the end, to a kind of global peace.

So when we offer the phrase “Auschwitz rebound” we are not offering a new theodicy. We are not saying that the suffering of Auschwitz is redeemed by the somewhat more enlightened (chastened) position of humankind, at all. We are just stating the brutal, disconcerting fact (and it would have been so for Hegel as well) that what we perceive as great evil often has the opposite historical effect; it works as a corrective.

In a sense, since we do not believe in ‘freedom’ and ‘moral choice’ we are saying something far more radical and perhaps bleak; very far from any theodicy. That humanity has a path which it follows based on desire for freedom and recognition and that these paths can, at times, lead through what we would call with Kant, “radical evil” but were, alas, factually necessary.¹¹ Thus we are not saying that the ‘sacrifice’ of ‘Auschwitz’ was ‘necessary’ to ‘save’ modern humanity; all we are saying is that it turned out that way necessarily but without moral judgment. Admittedly, it is a bleak view of the world.

According to this view then; nothing can ‘redeem’ Auschwitz. And thus we are not looking for redemption. We are not seeking to put an historical value on the faces of the millions of victims. They are victims and will remain so till the end of time. Yet, what we *are* saying is that their victim-hood and historical experience did, as *an historical fact*, awaken humankind to the question and the practice of genocide for the first time and made it at least problematic, if not completely eradicable.

Human beings only live their self-understanding of their particular moment in time. This again we have learned from Hegel. There are no excuses; there is just this self-understanding. And this self-understanding is always changing, shifting with our confrontation with our own self-motivated historical acts however dimly aware of them we might be.

¹¹ George R. Lucas Jr., ed., *The Social Authority of Reason Kant's Critique, Radical Evil, and the Destiny of Humankind* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005).

We have already mentioned Levinas. We mentioned him in our refutation of what he might have said relative to our position of the necessary nature of human historical development; that we are constructing a new theodicy. We have already emphatically denied the charge. Indeed, we would say that Levinas' own species of thinking is an outcome of that historical necessity. For in as much as the world pre-1945 discounted the 'other,' Levinas goes to the other extreme and absolutizes the 'other.'¹²

Levinas, as we ourselves are, is transfixed by the genocidal events of the twentieth-century. Levinas built an ethic out of the ashes of these events. His philosophy as he himself says is a "First Philosophy" in which human being relates to human being as a fundamental way of existence. The "Other" and our responsibility towards him becomes absolute and never completed. We are, in a sense, morally enthralled to the other; to our duty towards him. Thus, it should come as no surprise that a completely opposite reaction should have come about, particularly in defeatist and defeated France, towards the Western relationship to the other. That the Other should have risen higher than our own selves in an expiating sense; in a deep search for historical atonement as it were. The Other in the hands of Levinas has almost become an ersatz God to whom we should do humble service. It is an impossible ethic; similar to Christianity's more stringent requirements; but understandable once viewed in terms of the 'negation of the negation'; of what we tentatively call 'the Auschwitz Rebound.'

We have discussed aspects of freedom for Kant, Hegel, and our ourselves. But there is another aspect of freedom which we have left out but which has accompanied our discussion like a shadow and that is freedom as understood by Spinoza, something which had a profound influence on Hegel and others.¹³ Put briefly, for Spinoza, there is no escape from causality/necessity save except for one; understanding/knowledge. It is through an increase of knowledge both of the external world and ourselves that we achieve anything like freedom; for we

¹² Emmanuel Levinas, *Entre Nous Thinking-of-the-Other*, trans. Michael B. Smith (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

¹³ See the stimulating slim volume of Pierre Macherey, *Hegel or Spinoza*, trans. Susan M. Ruddick (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011). And Baruch Spinoza, *Spinoza: Complete Works*, trans. Samuel Shirley (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2002).

understand what is happening around us and to us. Understanding opens the door to more understanding and, in a sense, makes wider our ability to act. We have more information and thus we are better informed as to our next steps. In this, and only this way, can we said to be free. Knowledge is the true liberation.

Knowledge and perhaps imagination. To be more specific the radical imagination of Cornelius Castoriadis.¹⁴ According to him, the philosophical tradition has long neglected the power of the imagination and its ability to change our social circumstances. On the face of it, the power of the imagination to institute new social significations is appealing. However, I think it suffers from the same flaws as Kant's attempts to institute freedom as spontaneous and non-caused. Indeed, I think that we can almost interchangeably use Castoriadis' "imagination" with Kant's "freedom."

Where does the imagination come from if not from concrete events in the natural and social world? Can the imagination truly be spontaneous like Kant's freedom? We have already touched upon this argument. At best, I can say that we somehow meld Spinoza's position with Castoriadis. How? Well, we can say that in achieving more knowledge about ourselves and our situation (Spinoza) this allows us the ability to propose new and novel ways forward (Castoriadis' "Imagination"). In this way, I can see how we can 'imagine' our way forward towards new historical paths.

More novel, however, is Castoriadis' insistence that society is nothing but an institution of social meaning; a premise with which we partially concur. For instance, there is nothing that says we should continue with the discourse of Carl Schmitt and his insistence of viewing the world in terms of friend/enemy.¹⁵ We can adopt a new course and attempt to see/interpret the world in a new light. In the same way, there is nothing that says we should continue to view the world in racist, xenophobic, adversarial ways at all. Of course, I write these lines many decades after 1945 and a century after 1914; it would be perverse, and a species of historical and factual dementia, if I were to think differently. Hence, once again we are trapped or liberated by the historical boundaries in which we find ourselves.

Yet going back once more to Kant, we could say that within the con-

¹⁴ Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998).

¹⁵ Carl Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2015).

text of our own contemporary times it would not be too far fetched to call, as did Adorno, for a new contemporary categorical imperative which stated that the politics of the earth should be so orientated so as to eliminate the possibility of the act of genocide, barring totalitarian methods such as despotic world government (this caveat is important I think). The question of course is implementation. Who decides when genocide takes or is about to take place; who decides on what kind and how much force is to be used against the perpetrators; and then how does one "clean up" after the operation has been complete; establishing the appropriate punishments for the victimizers and the appropriate relief for the victimized? At the end of the day, all of these questions are for the jurists and politicians to decide; preferably under the aegis of the United Nations.

Importantly, it should be remembered, that Genocide as a crime was only brought forth in human consciousness in the 1930's and 1940's; indeed it was a lack of this kind of consciousness that, in part, emboldened Hitler in his own plans ("Who remembers the Armenians?"). Yet we are the heirs of genocide and the citizens of the bomb. We have a duty to check the first and respect the lessons of the second.

We have now reached the moment where we must take stock of our general intellectual voyage and specific thesis. We have said that genocide is an ancient possibility of human behavior, more often than not correlated with the existence of war. We have noted the crucial role, imperialism and colonialism and some of its adjacent ideologies rooted in Nietzscheanism and Darwinism had played in the outcome of modern genocides. We have stated that modernity, in itself, was not to blame, but rather a radical rejection of modernity, particularly political and social Enlightenment. We have argued that the experiences of late nineteenth century, early twentieth-century Europe marked a transition phase of humanity's consciousness of itself and a violent mediation of its own growing powers of technology versus its social and political contradictions veering towards a more modern resolution of the latent desire for more political freedom and social recognition among a wide swath of society. We have noted that the second half of the twentieth-century represented the resolution of these contradictions of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth-century emerging in a liberal American led global political hegemony very similar to the one once envi-

sioned by Kant in his work *Perpetual Peace*.¹⁶ And finally we have come around to the view that it was neither Modernity nor Enlightenment that was the cause of modern barbarity in the midst of European civilization but rather its partial rejection and attempted negation of the political, social, and moral elements of Enlightenment thought as ably depicted in the celebrated works of Jonathan Israel.¹⁷ In a deep sense, then, modern Genocide was an outcome of the rejection of the political revolution offered by Thomas Paine for the aristocratic-anarchic rebellion of Friedrich Nietzsche.¹⁸

Indeed, what is genocide if not the human denial of freedom, respect, dignity, and, in the final instance, life to another human being. In this, it is closely tied to the scourge of war. In this, it is also tied to insidious ideologies denying humanity to certain groups of people. And, historically, it should never be forgotten that it was also, as Hannah Arendt never tired of reminding us, closely tied to the practices of colonialism and imperialism of the nineteenth century.¹⁹

If Julien Benda rightly lamented late nineteenth and twentieth-century intellectuals particular participation in "organizing political hatreds" it is, in my view, the duty of the twenty-first century intellectual to organize peaceful and friendly solutions to the earth's current problems. To be guided by a rational ethic of love for one's neighbor if not *as oneself* than *for oneself*. For if anything is clearer in the present century is that we all share the same planet and thus all share at least a modicum of responsibility to remember the atrocities of genocide of the twentieth-century and to make sure they never happen again.

¹⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History*, trans. David L. Colclasure (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

¹⁷ Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). And see also, Jonathan I. Israel, *A Revolution of the Mind: Radical Enlightenment and the Intellectual Origins of Modern Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

¹⁸ See in particular Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of The Idols and Anti-Christ*, trans. Michael Tanner (London: Penguin Books, 1990). See Thomas Paine, *Collected Writings*, ed., Eric Foner (New York: Library of America, 1995).

¹⁹ Arendt's "Boomerang Thesis" is laid out in her classic Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1973).

Gadamer and Levinas on the topic of Sociality

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Abstract

Students of Heidegger, both Gadamer and Levinas present positions on sociality which emphasise care for the other—not only being-in-the-world but being-*with* others. Both philosophers depart from Heidegger in their stress on responsibility to the other, for the subject always finds himself under a claim. Whilst Gadamer, remaining within the realm of ontology, is concerned with understanding, Levinas moves away from grasping the other towards the very alterity of the other. Further, Gadamer draws particular attention to the *said*, whilst Levinas prioritises the *saying*. This paper, in comparing and contrasting these two positions, underlines Gadamer's emphasis on reconciliation as key to finding common ground between hermeneutics and fundamental ethics.

Article

The philosophical positions of Gadamer and Levinas can both be seen as radical departures from Enlightenment thought in their questioning of the privileged position of the subject. Where they differ is that for Gadamer the move is from epistemology to ontology, whilst for Levinas, from ontology to fundamental ethics. Gadamer, following Heidegger, departs from Cartesian assumptions by stressing that the subject cannot be isolated from the world in which it is thrown. Understanding—which is the very way of being—is thus inextricably linked with history. Nonetheless, Levinas accuses Gadamer and Heidegger alike of remaining too concerned with identity and *mineness*, and thus failing to rid phenomenology of the Husserlian obsession with the transcendental ego. Levinas radically decenters the subject in his move away from understanding and totality, and towards alterity. In this paper I shall compare and contrast Gadamer's hermeneutics and Levinas' ethics, specifically with regards to their views on the topic of sociality.

Heidegger's account of facticity and the characterisation of our relation to the world in terms of habitation proves to be fundamental for both Gadamer and Levinas. Dasein is not only a being-in-the-world but a being-with others. Further, the relation is not one of disinterested regard, but rather one of concern or care. It is precisely the proximity of the world and others that demands a necessarily intimate relation to it. Levinas accuses Heidegger of repressing the ethical dimension in favour of a concern for ontology and unity of being. For Heidegger, the necessary relation of being-for-others must be overcome in order for Dasein to live authentically. Levinas reverses this interpretation of being-for-the-sake-of-others in order to replace the Heideggerian focus on ontology with fundamental ethics. Rather than the face-less other beckoning me away from my desire for authenticity, the call of the naked face of the other is precisely what defines what it is to be human. Being human, according to Levinas, does not first stem from one's consciousness and self-reflexive freedom, but rather out of a position of responsibility for the other. It is in being-for-the-sake-of-others that human existence is given its meaning as transcendence. Moreover, the demand of the other is inescapable: "To be dominated by the Good is precisely to be excluded from the very possibility of choice."¹ Similarly, Gadamer, whilst emphasising the contingent, situatedness of our understanding of other people (or texts, or tradition), moves away from Heidegger in insisting that we always find ourselves under a claim—we are always being addressed—since we are essentially in a condition of exposure to what we desire to understand. Thus, since understanding always demands a call for action, Gadamer too holds that we are always and necessarily in a mode of responsibility.² The subject is thence depicted for both thinkers as the accusative "me" rather than "I".

According to Levinas, the encounter with the other means that I am now both vulnerable to and answerable for another. It is *me* who is here—not here

¹ Emmanuel Levinas, "Humanism and Anarchy," (1968), in: Emmanuel Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, trans. by Alphonso Lingis (Martinus Nijhoff Publishers: Dordrecht, 1987), 135

² Gerald L. Bruns, "On the Coherence of Hermeneutics and Ethics: An Essay on Gadamer and Levinas", in Bruce Krajewski, ed., *Gadamer's Repercussions: Reconsidering Philosophical Hermeneutics* (California: University of California Press, 2004), 31-2

I am. It is the passive form—I am for you; command me! Only then can there be communication with the other. For Levinas, unlike for Gadamer, this communication is not dialogical. He writes that it is “a passivity more passive than any passivity: filial, previous, pre-logical subjection, a one-way subjection which it would be wrong to understand on the basis of a dialogue.”³ The other is in a superior position to me; he is commanding me, moving me, and taking me out of my false progressive state. I am because of him. There is no dialogue as such, but only the command “thou shall not kill.” Levinas describes the subject as an irreplaceable *hostage* (not slave) to the other.⁴ I respond to the other (and response is inescapable for no one else can take my place) through care, and in doing so put myself in a lower position. Such is the transition to passivity. Pure passivity is “responsibility for the freedom of others. There where I might have remained a spectator, I am responsible, that is, speaking. Nothing is theatre any more; the drama is no longer a game. Everything is grave.”⁵ It is in this way that radical passivity requires the subject to answer even to his persecutor.

Levinas’ ethical subject is defined by an anarchic responsibility prior to rational deliberation; the good has chosen me before I have chosen it. In his 2010 paper, Bensussan describes this “having to respond” as “immemorial: it goes way back and precedes all questions I can ever ask myself concerning the reasons why I have responded or not.”⁶ The logic of this argument is found in Descartes’ *cogito ergo sum*: in doubting thinking, I am thinking; one cannot negate thinking. Similarly, one cannot negate responsibility, for trying to do so is itself a response, not only to the other but *before* and *for* the other. He pays attention to my moves, and so every action—or lack thereof—is already understandable to and has meaning for the other. In this way, Levinas describes the face-to-face relationship as the “impossibility of denying, a negation of negation.”⁷

³ Levinas, “Humanism and Anarchy”, 135.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 133.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 136.

⁶ Jerard Bensussan, “Ethics in an Extra-Moral Sense,” in Maria Dimitrova, ed., *In Levinas’ Trace*, (Sofia: 2010), 23.

⁷ Emmanuel Levinas, *Entre Nous: On Thinking-of-the-Other*, trans. by Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshav (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 34-5.

The relation between me and the other is, according to Levinas, a necessarily non-reciprocal face-to-face relation. It can be seen as the judge talking to the accused; he “is not yet speaking. It is true that the accused has a right to speak. But it is a speaking that precedes speaking; the accused speaks only to acquire a right to true speech. He is listened to, but also observed as he speaks. He is the accused—that is, already in a category. He is not an interlocutor in reciprocity.”⁸ As previously stressed, such is at odds with the dialogical subject of Gadamer’s hermeneutics. The dialogical subject is caught in a movement of question and answer with the other; he is open and exposed to what is said in the context of the event. We already have answers which we have to get rid of on the way to find and re-formulate the questions. What is first demanded of me is that I listen. The relationship with the other is a being-with; there is attunement and solidarity (if not friendship.) Furthermore, for the ethical subject, however, it is the face of the other—not what he says—which addresses me. The nakedness of the face is its vulnerability, which is necessarily prior to any expression, intention or aim.⁹ Levinas writes that “the subjectivity of the in-itself is thus like an obedience to an order being carried out before the order is heard—anarchy itself.”¹⁰ I am responsible for everything and everyone, but no one is responsible for me. The anarchy of this relationship is key—for my care is not a pre-justified responsibility nor a social contract: “It is despite myself that the other concerns me”¹¹

As Levinas takes the good to be a relation of non-aversion with the other, so too Gadamer’s concern is with the good in human life. Thus, we begin to see how the good as viewed by Gadamer is closely related to Levinas’ notion of a sense beyond being, taken not as an idea but as a movement. For Gadamer, in accordance with Plato, the desire for the good allows us to inhabit the world in the right way. Levinas emphasises that such a desire is not an expression of lack, but rather an act of gener-

⁸ Ibid., 34.

⁹ Emmanuel Levinas, “Ethics as First Philosophy,” (1989) in Richard Kearney and Mara Rainwater, eds., *The Continental Philosophy Reader* (London: Routledge, 1996), 130.

¹⁰ Ibid., 136.

¹¹ Ibid., 138.

osity, a movement inspired by the face of the other. He writes that the “desire for the other, sociality, is born in a being that lacks nothing, or, more exactly, it is born over and beyond all that can be lacking or that can satisfy him. In desire the I is born toward the other in such a way as to compromise the sovereign self-identification of the I, for which need is but nostalgia, and which the consciousness of need anticipates.”¹²

For Levinas and Gadamer alike, to be summoned by the good, by this responsibility beyond being and prior to any ethical norms, is what constitutes being human. Levinas writes that being-for-another “is subjectivity itself.”¹³ For Gadamer, the subject only exists within this realm of intersubjectivity and understanding. Accordingly, language is the foundation of our sociality. He claims that it is a sort of prejudice to think of language as an activity per se. Rather, it is a kind of connection with the other. It is not the transmission of information, but an *appeal* to the other. If we speak, we presuppose someone is listening and understanding our speech. If we listen, we have to understand and respond to the other. First comes the word, then the fulfilment of the word. The other is touched without any contact—there is no cause and effect. In language we are not objects, but subjects. Further, according to Gadamer, it is through language that we can escape face-to-face direct relationship.

For Levinas, I have a face for the other, not for myself. Only the other has a face for me, and I for them; it is non-symmetrical. It is possible to establish reciprocal relationships, but only in this community of face-to-face relationships, through the third. When the other plays the role of the third, language is responsibility. It is the relationship between freedoms who reciprocally affirm each other. Reciprocity in terms of respect is the condition for ethics.¹⁴ For Gadamer, too, the very model of interaction is a linguistic activity, an asymmetrical link, where one is speaking, the other listening. However, he emphasises that we can overcome this asymmetry through reversal, and conversation ensues.

According to both Gadamer and Levinas, the first act involves the

¹² Emmanuel Levinas, “Meaning and Sense,” (1972), in *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 94.

¹³ Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. by Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981), 111.
Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 35.

appeal to attention from the other. This is primordial and distinct from the appeal for attention from the object, which comes second and metaphorically. The other can respond to our appeal, whereas the object cannot. This response is precisely our humanity. Whilst it is inescapable that when I *see* an other in the horizon of the world, I see them like objects, we *hear* each other as persons. As previously stressed, if one is speaking, the other is listening, understanding and responding.

Where their positions greatly differ is that for Gadamer, a Levinasian conception of the ethical is ultimately too abstract; too purely ethical, and not sufficiently social and historicized. Understanding, according to Gadamer, is what establishes both the historical and the practical condition for all human relations (the ethical included.)¹⁵ Levinas holds that one encounters the third party—who through power and control allows both parties to be objectified and judged—and thus the call for justice, in the face of the other, who appears outside of the system, and seemingly without a history.¹⁶ However, Gadamer maintains that the ethical cannot stand outside of all context. Responsibility to and for the other, according to Gadamer, does not stop with the other, but rather entails responsiveness to contingent exigencies of social action. In this respect, the good is located in the here and now.¹⁷

A greatly important connection for Gadamer is that between language and time. Our past is not only our personal past, but rather every culture with which we identify makes up our history. Furthermore, our history somehow exists for us in the present. Language is what makes both the past and the future possible, for it brings together common meanings and enables us to constitute alternative worlds. Indeed, all the worlds of our culture—be it the world of art, science or philosophy—are created by language. For Gadamer, the past and future have double meanings. We usually think that our future is our imagination, situated in the present, and that our past is only to distinguish something as not present. However, the now is constantly moving, and *this* is time. Thus, there is no now, and so it is difficult to see how we can think about the future and the past. The future is constituted as a world by language.

¹⁵ Bruns, “On the Coherence of Hermeneutics and Ethics,” 48.

¹⁶ Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 34.

¹⁷ Bruns, “On the Coherence of Hermeneutics and Ethics,” 49.

Whilst animals live in a constant present, it is because we have language that we are in a position to have a future; we see and hear the world very differently from animals. Similarly, we cannot relate to the past without representations—without language. Nor could the present moment exist without language—as *now* is no more than the contrast of the past and the future. The world connected with the here and now is reflected in language. Language, then, can be seen as the sum of these general meanings by which we relate to the objects and the world. Through identification, we unite different experiences as a whole. As Husserl insists, every unity is possible only because of language—and so, only because of time. We even relate to our younger selves through language, and so also through time. The most important principle of our communication is that the purpose is one, that is, the future is one. Indeed, the future—which is the purpose—is created by language. Whilst we may think that we follow my, or our common purpose, the future of the one is actually produced by the other. Such is at odds with Heidegger's position that the future is *mine*. Whilst I can try and implement my possibilities of my future in my present, what is important is that there is an other before me. Indeed, Levinas too holds that the other is the future, for ethical actions are directed beyond one's death. He writes that "there is a vulgarity and a baseness in an action that is conceived only for the immediate, that is, in the last analysis, for our life. And there is a very great nobility in the energy liberated from the hold of the present. To act for far-off things...is no doubt, the summit of nobility."¹⁸

Language, according to Gadamer, is a kind of heritage. It presupposes the present and the past of the other—we must *learn* how to speak it. Our future purposes, then, are to a great extent defined by the past—and this past is essentially connected to the other. We are given these purposes, possibilities, this future by the other through language. Thus, the connection of time is not only my own. Time is created by language, and then neutralised by past, present, intentions and future. Our motivations cannot be shared without language; they present a combination of my future and what has already passed. This is the present, the world, which is given to us by language.

¹⁸ Emmanuel Levinas, "Meaning and Sense", (1972), in: Levinas, Emmanuel, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 93.

As previously stressed, whilst Gadamer's hermeneutics entails a practical understanding of itself through language within the whole of the human life-world, for Levinas the relation to other as such stands beyond, detached from any and every context. This relation with the other is what entails Levinas' treatment of the good: "The exceptional, extra-ordinary transcendent character of the good is due to just this break with being and history. To reduce the good to being, to its calculations and its history, is to nullify goodness."¹⁹ The reason Gadamer maintains to the contrary that breaking with tradition is unintelligible is that, for Gadamer, my horizon is a fact of human finitude. Thus my encounter with the other will always be within the horizon I happen to find myself. To a great extent these differences come down to a difference in the views of Levinas and Gadamer regarding what history is. For Gadamer, history is incompatible with totality—it cannot be orders, due to the limit of reason. The so called *fusion of horizons* is not a unification of perspectives but rather a *dialogue* which presupposes the ethical existence—which is one's horizon—as defined by the proximity of others. Everyone has their own perspective of the world because we understand language, which is the world. According to Gadamer's position, through our sociality we can reach something more—*this* is the fusion of horizons. Through dialogue, we find a common horizon in order to develop our culture. Therefore, any language in which we live is infinite in that the infinite dialogue is opened by the truth of our own finitude.²⁰

For Levinas, whilst there is nothing outside of time and history, there is more to time and history than the epochal history of being. Ethical actions are for a world to come; they extend beyond our epoch. Indeed, we saw how he pronounces acts concerned only with the immediate as vulgar and base, whilst those concerned with beyond are noble. Levinas describes ethical acts as being-for-beyond-my-death, in contrast to Heidegger's being-toward-death, which he criticises as being too concerned with the anxiety of confronting one's own death (which will always be premature.)²¹ The move towards ethics as the first philosophy

Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, 8.

²⁰ Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Hermeneutical Problem," (1976), in: Kearney and Rainwater, eds., *The Continental Philosophy Reader*, 120.

²¹ Levinas, "Ethics as First Philosophy," (1989), in: Kearney and Rainwater,

prioritises one's responsibility for the death of the other—who transcends my temporal existence. It is a move beyond the ontology of Dasein. Levinas writes that “to renounce being the contemporary of the triumph of one's work is to envisage this triumph in a *time without me*...a time beyond the horizon on my time.”²² It is in precisely this way that the movement of the one-for-the-other is to be seen as a movement towards transcendence, towards the time of the other; it is eternity. The meeting with the other is the first proof that something beyond the world exists. In her 2010 publication, Dimitrova describes how in meeting the other “I become aware of infinity and in this way I am made to realise my own finitude.”²³

Although Gadamer's conception of the fusion of horizons, in which finitude is the limit, is not entirely incompatible with Levinas' idea of transcendence, we arrive at different consequences with regards to our sociality. For Gadamer there is a phenomenological reduction of the alterity of the other in order to achieve an anonymous objectivity. According to Levinas, however, transcendence means a parting from the contingent world—my encounter with the other is not a movement of recognition within my world, but rather a movement towards the other as *non-identical*. The other is no mere reflection of my own self-consciousness.²⁴ The other comes to me from beyond the borders of my world, beyond my horizons—his transcendence is almost God-like. In this way, sensibility is taken not as a relation of knowing as seen in Husserl, but of proximity, since the other is outside every reference. Gadamer, then, remains within the realms of ontology. Echoing Heidegger, we respond to the call of Being. For Levinas, however, the call to which we respond is that of the other; it is *human*. Knowledge, then, is not ontological but ethical.

This being said, the other, according to Levinas, is present in and brought to light by a cultural whole (as a text is by its context). In this way, it is possible to describe the understanding of the other as a kind of

eds., *The Continental Philosophy Reader*, 129.

²² Levinas, “Meaning and Sense,” 92.

²³ Maria Dimitrova, “Do We Have to Let Ourselves Be Doomed to Morality?”, in Dimitrova, ed., *In Levinas' Trace*, 35.

²⁴ Levinas, “Ethics as First Philosophy,” 132.

hermeneutics. Where this hermeneutics differs with Gadamer's is that, for Levinas, there is a relation to the other as such which stands beyond the hermeneutical life world. He writes that "concentration on the hermeneutical structure of language and on the cultural effort of the incarnate being that expresses itself, forgets a third dimension...the dimension toward the other, the interlocutor—he to whom expression expresses."²⁵ Levinas defines the other as sense primordially—by this he means prior to, or on the hither side of any epoch of meaning. "The other comes to us not only out of the context, but also without mediation; he signifies by himself."²⁶ Perhaps it could be interpreted as a hermeneutics which includes the transcendence of tradition. For Gadamer, however, the claim of the other is not only ethical but also a truth claim, where my responsibility takes the form of understanding rather than ethics. He writes that "Hermeneutical conversation, like real conversation, finds a common language, and that finding a common language is not, any more than in real conversation, preparing a tool for the purpose of reaching understanding but, rather coincides with the very act of understanding and reaching agreement."²⁷

Importantly, Gadamer and Levinas both agree with Heidegger with regards to his replacement of the autonomous ego by an openness, receptiveness and responsiveness to the world. According to Gadamer, understanding is a condition of belonging to the world, a mode of being, which is expanded through the fusion of what is other with what is at hand. Experience is first multiplied and then passed on. Whilst I cannot live your life, and you cannot live mine, we can speak about commonalities because we can transmit the *sense*, or meaning (the essence) of our experiences. Thanks to this transmission as such, we can enrich our culture. This being said, language cannot be defined according to its functionality—it is not merely an instrument or tool (in fact, we see how the words themselves prescribe the way in which we can put them to use).²⁸

²⁵ Levinas, "Meaning and Sense," 95.

²⁶ Ibid., 95.

²⁷ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London: Bloomsbury, 1989), 388.

²⁸ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Idea of Hegel's Logic*, (1971), Online version: <https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/ge/gadamer.htm> (accessed on 05/12/2015)

Gadamer agrees with Heidegger when he says that language is the whole of our life; the house of being: “language completely surrounds us like the voice of home which prior to our thought of it breathes a familiarity from time out of mind.”²⁹ We can live together, and because of our communication we can share meanings. With an emphasis on forgiveness, Gadamer writes that “only through reconciliation can the otherness—the insuperable otherness that divides man from man—be overcome, nay, raised up into the wondrous reality of the living and thinking in community and solidarity.”³⁰ Moreover, all understanding is self-understanding. It is this openness to the other which is necessary for the ethical encounter. The process by which the truth of a poem is exposed is in this way similar to the unconcealing involved in the ethical relation with the other. The subject is open to the truth of the other just as the interpreter is open to the interpretation of the poem.

Whilst Levinas agrees both that language belongs to the realm of ethics and that the ethical subject is characterised by an openness, Gadamer’s position that the claim of the other is also a truth claim is in stark contrast to Levinas’ call for the abandonment of Western philosophy’s insistence on the primacy of knowledge, understanding and truth. It is important to stress once again that for Levinas, rather than taking the other into my world of understanding, the ethical relation is a movement towards the other as *other*; towards the *non-identical*. For transcendence is the departure from the world of the known. Gadamer, on the other hand, maintains that to contrast *I* with *Thou* already assumes a preceding common understanding, from the very moment we address the other as “thou.” Neither can be understood in isolation. (Indeed, we know very well his accordance with Plato (and Hegel) that there are no single ideas, and it is the purpose of dialectic to dispel the untruth of their separateness.)³¹ He writes that “We all know that to say

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Culture and the World,” (1980), in: Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Praise of Theory: Speeches and Essays*, trans. By Chris Dawson (Yale University, New Haven: 1998), 15.

³¹ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Idea of Hegel’s Logic*, (1971), Online version: <https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/ge/gadamer.htm> (accessed on 05/12/2015)

‘thou’ to someone presupposes a deep common accord. Something enduring is already present when this word is spoken.”³² Nonetheless, it seems that the problem of this hermeneutical circle, whereby the whole and the parts determine each other, is that separation from the circle is not possible. In a totality created in which the other cannot be known as completely other—we try to grasp the other and pull him into our world. It does not allow the other to speak for himself. The ethical is thus beyond the ontological realm of the said.

The contrast, then, is most significant between Gadamer’s stress on reconciliation and Levinas’ insistence on the movement towards the other as other. As previously highlighted, whilst Gadamer’s hermeneutics is dialogical, Levinas’ ethics depicts communication as heteronomy. Nonetheless, both consider the approach of the other to be a disruptive event, which demands reinterpretation according to hermeneutics, and fulfilment of the ethical call according to ethics. Indeed, both require the subject to open to the demands of the other. Nonetheless, the hermeneutical subject is engaged in a mutual conversation, in which “one partner in the hermeneutical conversation speaks only through the other”³³; *both* subjects are necessarily altered in the raising up of something new. There is a co-determination of text and reader in which one’s hermeneutical reading of the text, whereby through the imagination of the hermeneutical consciousness the productive questions are exposed, necessarily contributes to its effective history. (Whilst it is clear that language has a telos, for Gadamer, unlike Hegel, there can be no absolute knowledge, nor end of history.) The ethical subject’s movement towards the other as non-identical, on the other hand, sees that whilst my subjectivity as subject is disturbed in my having to respond, the other remains unaltered. Rogozinski writes that “the I’s agonizing opening up to the other, its being skinned alive by him, thus would be answered by this enigmatic closure of the other, who would resist, close himself up to the suffering, to the distress of the I, while at the same time penetrating the I and eroding it into the depths of its flesh.”³⁴ Such is the potential

³² Hans-Georg Gadamer, “The Hermeneutical Problem,” (1976), in: Kearney and Rainwater, eds., *The Continental Philosophy Reader*, 114.

³³ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 387.

³⁴ Jacob Rogozinski, *From the Caress to the Wound: Levinas’s Outrageous-*

violence of the ethical.

To a great extent, Levinas turns the direction of the entire history of philosophy upside down. From Ancient Greece to Hegel and throughout modern discourse, the focus is on enriching oneself through the objectification of the other. For Gadamer too, it is *my* horizons which are opened through conversation. According to Levinas, to the contrary, the elevation of the other prevents me from thinking about my own interests. The placing of the other in the first place presents a shift of philosophical paradigms, for our whole sense of life is changed. This should not be confused with a kind of radical altruism, for it does not start from my own ego. The direction is not from me to the other, but rather first I must listen to the other's command, and then answer him. The passivity of the ethical consciousness precedes the formulation of metaphysical ideas about the subject—what is questioned is the justification of the position within being that grasped the here and now. Levinas writes that language is born in responsibility—for in order to say I in the first person, one must respond to one's right to be. This response is to be not only open to question but also to questioning.³⁵ Fear for the other is for all the violence my existing may cause—it is not fear of my own death, but reaches beyond my self-consciousness. It is fear of occupying someone else's place with the *Da* of my *Dasein*.³⁶

It is important to stress that Gadamer's hermeneutics is intentional; it is directed towards language, which is necessarily *in* the world. The project ultimately *aims* (at broadening horizons). It is teleological in this way (albeit not in the direction of moving *towards* the absolute as we see in Hegel.) Temporal distance alienates us from what's been said, and in order to move *away from* alienation, we must strive to go beyond our necessary underlying prejudices. Such, however, cannot be entirely bracketed through phenomenological reduction as proposed by Husserl. Rather, Gadamer agrees with Heidegger that it is our prejudices that constitute our being. They are the "biases of our openness to the world...they are conditions whereby we experience something—

ness." in Dimitrova, ed., *In Levinas' Trace*, 79.

³⁵ Levinas, "Ethics as First Philosophy," 130.

Ibid., 131.

whereby what we encounter says something to us.”³⁷ He describes our readiness to hear the new as determined by our prejudices. Thus, with the concentration being on the interpretation of historical text—that which we have on-hand—the other reveals itself as immanent.

The directedness of the Levinasian ethical relation—which is precisely the responsibility for the other—cannot be reduced to intentionality.³⁸ Here Levinas disagrees with Husserl. The face of the other is not just an object in our world; the revelation of the face is not a phenomena that can be described. He distinguishes the non-intentional consciousness from philosophical reflection. Philosophical reflection, according to Levinas, takes the transcendental ego as its object and *aims* at grasping the non-intentional lived experience. The Enlightenment is thus taken to be the project of bringing to light dull representations; of reducing intentional consciousness to clear data.³⁹ He describes the non-intentional pre-reflective ethical consciousness, on the contrary, as homeless: “One comes not into the world but into question.”⁴⁰ It is in directing his attention to the *said* that Gadamer attaches language to intentionality. The *saying*, however, is a *beyond of experience*.⁴¹ The ethical subject is opened to the other prior to any utterance. The said is described as insincere and contaminated, it forms a curtain between me and the other.⁴²

Despite these significant differences, certain elements of the moment of reconciliation which is so fundamental to Gadamer’s hermeneutics, (a moment in many ways similar to the concept of reconciliation in Hegel’s *Phenomenology*), are, to some extent, also at play in Levinasian ethics. Just as the examination of historical texts leads me beyond my own horizons, so too the ethical command both precedes my facticity revealing a time which was not mine—for the said is no contemporary for the saying—whilst projecting to an unrealised future in which I shall not dwell. However, this reconciliation is not in the form of forgiveness,

³⁷ Gadamer, “The Hermeneutical Problem,” 115.

³⁸ Levinas, “Entre Nous,” 71.

³⁹ Levinas, “Ethics as First Philosophy,” 127

⁴⁰ Ibid., 129

⁴¹ Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 71.

⁴² David West, *Continental Philosophy: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), 185.

as Gadamer holds, but rather is “to aim at time beyond the horizon of my time, in an eschatology without hope for oneself, or in liberation from my time.”⁴³ It seems that in the moment of forgiveness Gadamer seeks to understand—to grasp—what has been said in order to project towards the future—in this way, transcendence is made immanence. Levinas, however, describes the other as “both graspable and escaping every hold.”⁴⁴ As we have seen, the alterity of the other is not something I can understand without reducing the other to the third, which is inside the world. The ethical relation, revealed by the face in a present which is now past, transcends all tradition and experience. “Culture is neither a going beyond nor a neutralisation of transcendence; it is, in ethical responsibility and obligation toward the other, a relation to transcendence qua transcendence. It can be called love. It is commanded by the face of the other man, which is not a datum of experience and does not come from the world.”⁴⁵ It is in precisely this way that Levinas’ metaphysical ethical, as the first philosophy, is not ontological. The other is graspable only because the other is the future.

⁴³ Levinas, “Meaning and Sense,” 92.

⁴⁴ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 223.

⁴⁵ Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 161.

BOOK REVIEWS

**Donald Phillip Verene,
Vico's New Science:
A Philosophical Commentary, Ithaca
and London: Cornell University Press,
2015, 284 pp.**

Alexander L. Gungov (University of Sofia)

Vico's *New Science*—a treasure-house of historical erudition and philosophical insights—has long been in need of philosophical commentary, in particular for the last few decades of intensive studies of and increased interest in the legacy of the great Italian thinker. Donald Phillip Verene's splendid book is more than just a commentary; it is an indispensable introduction not only to Vico's *New Science* but to the entire intellectual world that Vico inhabited. Scholars devoted to the Neapolitan sage as well as those new to the study of his writings will appreciate this rich and instructive volume. I myself, after having toiled in the field for more than twenty-five years, have found many extremely helpful elucidations and suggestions in Verene's interpretation.

The commentary goes chapter by chapter through the whole of the *New Science*. The glossary of Italian terms is very useful even for those familiar with the language. The list of secondary literature on Vico, representing the most significant work published over the last hundred years, offers a reliable guide for further reading. Several illustrations are included in the volume: an engraving of Vico from the 1744 edition of *The New Science*, the frontispiece, *impresa*, and Chronological Table from the same edition, as well as the frontispiece of the 1730 edition and the Tablet of Cebes, all giving a unique flavor to the book.

The reader is soon immersed in the fascinating characters and stories of Greco-Roman myths guided by Vico's new critical art and Verene's clarifications of the original text; images of biblical history appear in a new light as they lead to the emergence of Vico's foundational giants after the universal flood; Homer is revealed as a poetic character

containing the ancient poetic wisdom before philosophers came on the public scene. The trifold development of all gentile nations passes through three ages: the age of gods, the age of heroes, and the age of humans. Accordingly, it consists of three types of customs, three types of languages, three types of characters, three types of jurisprudence, etc. The famous Vichian barbarism of reflection marks the period of decline of the *corso* of the ancient nations followed by a *ricorso*. Verene notes that Vico omits the question of what comes after the *ricorso* and suggests that an appropriate answer would be that yet another recourse follows the first and that the pattern of Vico's cyclical history could be described as "course and recourses."

Verene's book devotes special attention to the three principles of the *New Science*: religion, solemn marriage, and the burial of ancestors. Vico's method is discussed in detail as the collaboration of philosophy and philology, philosophy studying the universal and philology occupying itself with particulars, the latter depending on human choice. This genetic method is based on the common sense of the human race and operates by the means of narrative. Verene observes that *il senso comune* differs both from Descartes' usage of *bon sens* and the view espoused by the eighteenth-century Scottish common-sense school of philosophy. Actually, it is "communal sense," described in the *New Science* as "judgment without reflection," that conveys the presence of providence in all human affairs. Providence implants, behind the scenes, order in the human world and transforms the seemingly arbitrary sequence of events into an organized tendency in the divinely planned destiny of humanity. The historical course of all gentile nations is structured according to the pattern of ideal eternal history with the single exception of the Hebrews, whose social life develops under the auspices of sacred history and is not affected by profane turbulences. Common sense is an amalgam of the certain (particular) and the true (universal). The true is convertible into the made according to Vico's *verum factum* principle. Verene explains that "because the human beings make the certain of history, they can make the trues that govern history."

Thanks to its method, the new science is capable of presenting human history in a rational causal narrative. Vico's rationality has little in common with the Cartesian four-step method; it is rather an *oratio* in which *ratio* is joined by *narratio*. Its predecessor is poetic wisdom (discovered, along with ideal eternal history, by the new critical art) of the

fables relying on imaginative universals expressed through the tropes of metaphor, metonymy, and synecdoche. The fourth trope, irony, indicates that the transition to rational universals, i.e. concepts, occurs in the age of humans. Irony is a double blessing since it is a mark both of new intellectual opportunities provided by reflection and of eminent deception and manipulation that spring from the same source.

This first philosophical commentary on the *New Science* is indisputably an expert analysis on Vico's work, placing it in the perspective of Italian Renaissance Humanism, the tradition of ancient and modern rhetoric, as well as of the most significant achievements in the history of philosophy and in the history of culture in general. Donald Philip Verene is not only a connoisseur of all these fields; being an original philosopher in his own right makes his book on Vico a genuinely philosophical account.

Sergei S. Horujy, Practices of the Self and Spiritual Practices: Michel Foucault and Eastern Christian Discourse . Edited with an introduction by Kristina Stoeckl, translated by Boris Jakim. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015, 207 pp.

Stoyan Tanev (University of Southern Denmark), translated from Bulgarian by Blagoja Petrovski

Sergey Sergeevich Horujy is perhaps one of the most famous Christian philosophers in Russia today. Born in 1941, he studied physics at Moscow State University and became a doctor of physics and mathematics in 1977. After that, he became a professor of mathematical physics at the Steklov Mathematical Institute at the Russian Academy of Sciences, where he worked until 2006. During his scientific career he published numerous articles and books in the field of mathematical physics. During his scientific career, he never accepted the terms of the anti-religious Soviet communist regime. In the 1970s he engaged with Russian Orthodox religious philosophy and theology, becoming part of the dissident circles of religious intellectuals in Moscow. He wrote a number of philosophical works, none of which appeared publicly before 1991. In addition, Horujy was actively involved in literary criticism and translation, being, for example, the first translator of James Joyce into Russian. After the democratic changes in Russia, Horujy emerged as one of the leading figures in the process of renewal of religious philosophy in post-Soviet Russia. In fact, one can say that it was Horujy who initiated an “anthropological” turn in Russian religious philosophy. Today, he is a professor of philosophy at the Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Sciences, as well as founder and director of the Institute of Synergistic Anthropology.¹ Sergey Horujy travels frequently and

¹ <http://synergia-isa.ru/>

lectures both in Russia and abroad. Many of his philosophical essays have been translated into English. His book *Practices of the Self and Spiritual Practices: Michel Foucault and Eastern Christian Discourse* is his first book-length publication in English.

*There is but one Big Theme of modern reflection on man and his situation: profound tectonic shifts that take place in the human being, in structures of his personality and his relation to himself, in his position and strategies in social, technological, environmental reality, and so on. These shifts represent a strong challenge to this reflection: they generate the crisis of old anthropological theories and imply the necessity to create new ones. The whole fund of old anthropological views, ideas, and conceptions needs global revision and reappraisal. One should answer the question: How should man apprehend his present self and his situation, which has changed radically and continues to change? How should he act and how can he achieve his full self-realization in this situation?*²

These are the questions posed by Sergey Horujy in the preface to his book in English, which is actually a translation of the latter part of one of his most significant works published in 2010 in Russian, *The Lantern of Diogenes: A Critical Retrospective Review of European Anthropology*.³ In this new English edition, Horujy provides an in-depth comparative analysis of his own understanding of spiritual practice in the Orthodox ascetic tradition of Hesychasm and Michel Foucault's theory of the practices of the self, looking for similarities between these two radical approaches to contemporary anthropology. In what way, according to Horujy, does this radicalism appear?

Horujy distances himself from the canon of Russian religious philosophy and discovers the insights of the neo-patristic synthesis of twentieth-century Orthodox theology. "Neo-patristic synthesis" is a term introduced by Georges Florovsky, who emphasizes the need to restore the patristic theological legacy and rediscover the spiritual and existential

² *Practices of the Self and Spiritual Practices: Michel Foucault and Eastern Christian Discourse*, xvi.

³ С. С. Хоружий. *Фонарь Диогена. Критическая ретроспектива европейской антропологии*. М.: Институт философии, теологии и истории св. Фомы, 2010, 688 с.

commitment of Orthodox theology. The term has a certain polemical overtone that reflects the reaction by Fr. Georges Florovsky and Vladimir Lossky against some of the key features of the Russian religious revival of the 1930s, which culminated in the critique of the Sophiology of Sergei Bulgakov and the accusation of heresy by the Moscow Patriarch. The program of the neo-patristic synthesis aimed to help Orthodox theology to recover from the “pseudomorphosis” of Orthodox thought in Russia and in general to escape its “Babylonian captivity” by Western scholastic theology associated with the influence of Vladimir Solovyov.⁴ According to Florovsky, the road to recovery is one of a “prayerful entry into the Church, fidelity to Revelation, a return to the Fathers, a free encounter with the West ...”⁵

The neo-patristic synthesis is also associated with the rediscovery of the themes of the personal and existential nature of the experience of God and Deification in modern Orthodox theology. According to Horujy, the main intellectual achievement of the Russian diaspora after the first thirty years of the twentieth century (mainly the contributions of Fr. Georges Florovsky, Vladimir Lossky and Fr. John Meyendorff) should be examined in the context of theology and, in particular, in the context of the rediscovery of the existential dimensions of the theology of St. Gregory Palamas and Hesychasm, which enabled the emergence of a new discourse that was different from the one used in Russian religious philosophy.⁶ This new discourse is based on the dogmatic insights and the practical spiritual and ascetic experience of Eastern Christianity. A large part of the work of Horujy after his career in the natural sciences is devoted precisely to the anthropological, spiritual and ascetic aspects of Hesychasm.

⁴ Andrew Louth, “The Patristic Revival and its Protagonists,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology*, ed. Mary B. Cunningham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 188-202.

⁵ Archpriest Georgii Florovsky, *The Ways of Russian Theology* (Paris: YMCA Press, 1937). The most recent Russian edition is: Флоровский, Г. Пути русского богословия (Париж: YMCA Press, 1981).

⁶ S. Tanev, *Thou, Who Art Everywhere Present and Fillest All Things: Essence and Energy in Orthodox Theology and Physics* (Sofia: Sofia University Press, 2013). (In Bulgarian: С. Танев, *Ти, който си навсякъде и всичко изпълваш: същност и енергия в Православното богословие и във физиката*, София, Университетско издателство „Св. Климент Охридски“, 2013).

In his book Horujy presents the ideas of Michel Foucault, and then analyzes them critically in the light of the anthropological and ascetic teachings of the Hesychastic tradition. Here, by "anthropology" should be understood philosophical anthropology and, in this sense, in the words of Horujy, his monograph provides a critical retrospective of the development of philosophical thought from the first more systematic understanding of man in Aristotle to the theory of practices of the personal self in Michel Foucault. After a brief discussion of the earlier stages of European anthropology, the book focuses on discussing "anti-anthropomorphism" in the classical metaphysics of Descartes and Kant, namely, the transformation of philosophical discourse in a way that excludes the direct presence of the human person. In the light of this perspective, Hegel's philosophical system represents an extreme position with respect to the philosophy of his opponent, Søren Kierkegaard, who enabled a reversal of the trend by advocating a necessary return to man. The anthropological perspective proposed by Michel Foucault in his *Hermeneutics of the Subject*⁷ appears to offer the highest expression of the new anthropological trend. That is why it occupies such an important part in Horujy's book.

Horujy focuses on the last four years of Foucault's life and work, where he discerns the emergence of a new philosophical project with a distinct alternative to the classic anthropological model. A careful reading of *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* would demonstrate how Foucault shifted his focus from the practices of power to the practices of the self.⁸ Foucault actually talks about four types of practices or technologies:⁹

⁷ Michel Foucault. *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France 1981—1982*, ed. Frédéric Gros, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

⁸ Recently I had to discuss this topic with engineering students in my classes on the theories of technological innovation. The idea was to find definitions of technology that would enable an understanding of technology that would go beyond the science and engineering domains. In the discussion we used an article by David Rooney, "A Contextualising, Socio-technical Definition of Technology: Learning from Ancient Greece and Foucault," *Prometheus: Critical Studies in Innovation* 15:3 (1997), 399-407.

⁹ Michel Foucault, "Technologies of the Self" in *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, ed. Luther H. Martin, Huch Gutman, Patrick

technologies of production, technologies of sign systems or semiotic technologies, technologies of power and technologies of the self. Horujy focuses on the practices or technologies of the self. Foucault wonders whether there are other possible forms of human existence in addition to Descartes' way of the subject as sovereign master of his words, thoughts and life. He finds such forms of existence in the ancient Greek philosophy of Plato and Epicurus, in the Stoics, and also in early Christianity. According to Foucault, however, there is a gradual abandonment of spiritual practices as the process of knowing the truth, resulting in a situation in which modern philosophy and theology have detached themselves from real life concerns to become merely speculative activities:

The work of disconnecting, on the one hand, the principle of an access to truth accomplished in terms of the knowing subject alone from, on the other, the spiritual necessity of the subject's work on himself, of his self-transformation and expectation of enlightenment and transfiguration from the truth, was underway long before.¹⁰

It is true that theology in the medieval universities became a practice of acquiring knowledge of God often completely separated from the context of spiritual practices. The emphasis on this fact, however, does not reflect the insights of the religious and spiritual experience in Eastern Christianity, which has never lost its deeply personal spiritual and practical approach to the Truth. "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me," says Jesus Christ in the Gospel of John (14:6). The human relationship with the Father through the Son is the foundation of Christian anthropological ontology. The only image of the Father is the image of His Son, and we are created in God's image, i.e. the image of the image of the Father. So, human anthropology acquires its authentic meaning only in the light of the person of the God-Man Christ. According to Berdyaev, a proper hermeneutics of personality can follow only from an authentic Christian theology.

Horujy clearly shows the shortcomings of Foucault in his reconstruction of the Christian ascetic model. For Foucault, the Christian practices of

H. Hutton (London: Tavistock Publications, 1988), 16-49.

¹⁰ Michel Foucault. *The Hermeneutics of the Subject. Lectures at the College de France, 1981-82*, op. cit., 26.

the self do not really offer any alternative or any way out of the crisis of the European understanding of the subject. According to Horujy, Foucault simply remains captive to the Hellenistic model of man which preaches the aesthetics of existence.¹¹ And this is because, on the one hand, Foucault apparently did not have a chance to touch on some of the authentic sources and anthropological insights of Christian theology and, on the other hand, failed to see this difference between the spirituality of the Christian East and the Christian West. The inability to see the difference is a typical problem for many intellectuals in the West who, when speaking of religion and theology, understand only Catholicism or Protestantism. Furthermore, in Foucault there is a certain multi-faciality or multi-imagery of the subject because its uniqueness emerges virtually as a function of discourse, which is a manifestation of power and has its own characteristic modes of relationship between power and knowledge.¹² For Foucault, the subject is not a stable and universal formation but a function of discourse which constructs and constitutes it. In this sense, Foucault is similar to Lyotard for whom “the relationship with the other is not just a meeting and discourse involving two autonomous and free subjects, but a movement in the infinite diversity of language games, and because they are endless, unstable and internally encapsulated, they tend to generate multiple identities. So, language games turn the Self into a player with multiple faces.”¹³ Independently of this external multiplication of personal being, Foucault sets the stage for a new kind of philosophical anthropology, which gives meaning to the human subject not just as an abstract essence or substance, but in terms of its actual contextual practices. The awareness of these dynamics of the subject provides a parallel that helps Horujy to outline the boundaries of his own philosophical project focusing on synergistic anthropology.

Synergistic anthropology provides a real alternative to Descartes' subject because the spiritual experience of the Orthodox tradition, i.e. the experience of Deification or *Theosis*, remains inaccessible to Cartesian metaphysics. This experience is described in the ascetic literature of

¹¹ Kristina Stoeckl, “Introduction,” in Sergey S. Horujy. *Practices of the Self and Spiritual Practices*,. xii.

¹² A. Doncheva, *The Self and the Other in 20th Century Western European Culture* (Sofia: Iztok-Zapad, 2014), 208. (In Bulgarian: А. Дончева, *Азът и другият в Западноевропейската култура на XX в.* София: Изток-Запад, 2014).

¹³ Ibid.

the Church Fathers and acquires its highest expression in the theology of Hesychasm. Horujy describes in detail the nature, the specifics and the different levels of this experience, as well as the reasons for the need of a new anthropological discourse. Unfortunately, the purpose and scope of this review do not allow us to enter more deeply into the details of his reasoning. According to Horujy, however, the key element of this experience is “the understanding that man exists vis-a-vis another form of being and that a transformation of human being in view of this ‘Other-being’ is possible.”¹⁴ Horujy repeatedly emphasizes that assuming the anthropological reality of mystical experiences and spiritual practices will inevitably require a revision of the classical anthropological paradigm of man as autonomous, self-centered subject. Man is not just a distinct essence or center of action, but an energetic constellation and a being with multiple existential horizons endowed with multiple open borders. The main points here are, first, that these borders are not closed and, second, they interfere in a way that forms the interface enabling the interaction with the “Other-being.” Horujy calls the process of human interaction with the energies of the Other “unlocking” (*размыкание*). Thus, there is a shift from an “anthropology of the border” to an “anthropology of unlocking,” or a synergistic anthropology.

Kristina Stoeckl, the author of the introduction to the book, and who pressed for its publication in English, emphasizes that the real contribution of Horujy is actually a philosophical anthropology that is open to, but not limited to, the ascetic-spiritual experience. According to her, this is a philosophical anthropology in which there is room for religious experience, but it is not in itself a religious anthropology. For Stoeckl this is probably the most important yet most difficult moment for understanding Horujy’s project: synergistic anthropology emerged and was articulated on the basis of a deeper understanding of the Eastern Christian Hesychastic tradition, but at some point, due to its understanding of the virtually open borders of interaction with “the other,” it actually surpassed that tradition and became a universal anthropological model. This universalization can be seen as an attempt to radicalize the Hesychastic tradition. This might be the reason for the sometimes contradictory receptions of Horujy’s anthropology in Orthodox philosophical and

¹⁴ Kristina Stoeckl, “Introduction,” op. cit., xiii.

theological circles. The reservations regarding his philosophical and theological ideas might be connected to the fragile or rather unarticulated relation between nature and person – a relation that has been intensively discussed by Orthodox theologians over the last twenty years. This fragility shows up, for example, in Horujy's understanding of the human subject as a constellation of actions and energies on the basis of which the emergence of personhood could be seen as resulting from a kind of constructive interference of the different nodes in the network formed by the multiple natural actions and energetic manifestations of the human being. This understanding, although original, has no direct analogue in the Eastern Orthodox tradition. It looks at the person not in terms of essence, but in terms of manifestations, as energy and potentiality vis-a-vis an "Other."¹⁵ Nevertheless, with his synergistic anthropology, Sergey Horujy has contributed significantly to the discovery of the interdisciplinary potential of Eastern Christian philosophical theology.

¹⁵ Ibid., xiv.

**Marc Lombardo, Critique of Sovereignty, Book
I: Contemporary Theories of Sovereignty,
Brooklyn, NY: punctum books,
2015, 112 pp., \$17.00**

John de Geus (University of Sofia)

Introduction

This book is the first in a series of four dedicated to the philosophical examination of the concept of sovereignty. As the title states, a number of contemporary theories of sovereignty are presented and commented upon by Marc Lombardo. He contends that various political events occurring in the United States in the early twenty-first century have demonstrated an absolutist logic of sovereignty which has changed little since this interpretation of the concept was first introduced by Jean Bodin in 1576. Lombardo goes on to assert that our orientation towards political events is generally driven by an implicit understanding of a particular metaphysical horizon. An explicit interpretation of the metaphysical presuppositions underpinning political events would therefore have various practical political implications. With his *Critique* Lombardo aims to contribute to this project by providing an account of the concept of sovereignty. To this end, Lombardo seeks to present a genealogy of the evolving relationship between sovereignty and thought. In Book I, Lombardo begins by establishing a preliminary demarcation of the concept of sovereignty which is more metaphysical than real, and then goes on to present five separate theoretical accounts of the concept of sovereignty offered by influential Continental political philosophers of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries: Maritain, Foucault and Derrida, Schmitt, Agamben and, finally, Hardt and Negri.

Preliminary Demarcation of the Concept of Sovereignty

Lombardo presents the simplest present-day definition of sover-

eignty as “the supreme authority within a territory.”¹⁶ This is quite similar to the definition of sovereignty provided in 1576 by Jean Bodin, which states that sovereignty is “the absolute and perpetual power of a commonwealth.”¹⁷ Bodin immediately sets a limit to this absolute power, asserting that even the sovereign Prince must obey God.

According to Lombardo, both the defining terms “supreme authority” and “absolute power” must be considered to be primarily metaphysical instead of real, since there is no actual entity that is accurately described by either of these terms. Lombardo uses the term “referential nullity” to refer to this idea that the concept of sovereignty, as defined above, does not refer to any actually existing entity. It is here that Lombardo makes the important assertion that “the concept of sovereignty can only be used to describe entities observable in the real, physical world by including descriptions of specific limitations concerning the functional abilities of such entities.”¹⁸ He goes on to posit that “the greater detail with which a ‘sovereign’ entity is described, the less sovereign it becomes”¹⁹ and “the degree to which a given entity appears sovereign is the degree to which it is vague.”²⁰ In this interpretation sovereignty is thus considered to be a function of the concrete limitations of observation. Although sovereignty is thus unattainable in the real world, it is nevertheless pursued in political practice.

Jacques Maritain

The Thomist philosopher Jacques Maritain rejects the concept of sovereignty altogether because it is unable to do justice to the inherent dignity granted to all the children of God. Maritain contends that the concept is intrinsically incorrect and misleading, and therefore has no place in political philosophy.

¹⁶ Philpott, Daniel. *Revolutions in Sovereignty: How Ideas Shaped Modern International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

¹⁷ Bodin, Jean. *On Sovereignty: Four Chapters from the Six Books of the Commonwealth*, ed. Julian H. Franklin, trans. Julian H. Franklin (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

¹⁸ Marc Lombardo. *Critique of Sovereignty, Book I: Contemporary Theories of Sovereignty* (Brooklyn, NY: punctum books, 2015), 5.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

An important “false connotation” of the concept of sovereignty is the notion that authority can be transferred (for example, from a person to a ruler). Maritain argues that authority is inalienable. Individuals do not have the authority to transfer authority to someone else; furthermore, authority that can be given to another cannot really be yours to begin with. A second false connotation of the concept of sovereignty is the notion that authority and action can be legitimately distinguished from one another. According to Maritain, the people cannot decide not to act, and the ruler cannot act without deciding. This is a fundamental contradiction within the concept of sovereignty. Maritain goes on to assert that the aforementioned false connotations of the concept of sovereignty, by conceiving of the fundamental nature of the human being as something that can be exchanged or divided, directly violate the inherent dignity of humanity. For every individual, the ability to act for oneself is given to him or her by God, and only God can take this ability away. Because it violates human dignity, Maritain believes the concept of sovereignty should be completely removed from the human world. Ironically, the only way to do this would be to reassert the sovereignty of God.

Lombardo agrees with Maritain that authority cannot be transferred, and that authority and action cannot be legitimately distinguished from one another. This standpoint calls into question all the existing theories of the sovereign state, which all presuppose either a transfer of power or a separation of powers. Based on Maritain’s arguments, Lombardo formulates a new definition of sovereignty as “a volition wholly transferable without either compromise or remainder.”²¹ In this definition sovereignty entails the power to act without being acted upon, and Lombardo contends that such a situation does not occur in the real world, only in fantasy. Moreover, this fantasy of sovereignty persists precisely because the desire for sovereignty is impossible to realize.

Foucault and Derrida

Michel Foucault opposes the concept of sovereignty because, in his view, it does not adequately describe the actual functioning of power in the modern era. To him, the concept exhibits a kind of circularity in that it contains a series of interrelated claims which all rely on a form of their conclu-

²¹ Ibid., 15.

sion as a premise. The logical structure of sovereignty is therefore that of the fallacy of “begging the question,” also known as *petitio principii*. According to Foucault, sovereignty assumes the existence of three elements: “a subject who has to be subjectified, the unity of the power that has to be founded, and the legitimacy that has to be respected.”²² All three elements specify redundant actions which correspond to the fallacy of *petitio principii*. If there is already a subject, why must this entity be subjectified? If power is already unitary, why must it still be founded? If power is legitimate, why must it need to demand respect? Therefore, neither a subject, a unitary power nor a legitimate power exists; there are only processes of subjectification, founding and legitimation.

Foucault hypothesizes that in modernity, power is structured in such a way that no actual existing situation may be accurately described as meeting the conditions of sovereignty. However, at various times in the past, the concept of sovereignty performed four different roles. Initially it referred to the actual power mechanism of the feudal monarchy. Later the concept was used to establish and justify monarchical administrations. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it was used as a weapon to both restrict and strengthen royal power. Finally, in the eighteenth century it was used to construct the model of parliamentary democracies. To Foucault, the concept of sovereignty thus stands for all the things that are no longer essential for the operation of power.

Jacques Derrida likewise asserts that sovereignty has a circular nature. The model of democracy, in which the ability to rule is shared among various parties by taking turns, acts as a model for the circularity of sovereignty. Derrida furthermore claims that democracy and sovereignty, in this circular structure of alternating rule, are inextricably linked through their mutual implication. According to Derrida, a consequence of the circularity of sovereignty is that any attempt to rule, which entails the attempt to secure its legitimacy, automatically raises the possibility that its legitimacy may be contested. Therefore, while sovereignty is generally defined by the unconditional nature of the ability to rule, this unconditionality and the ability to rule are actually irreconcilable. However, renouncing this unconditionality does not put an end to

²² Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège De France*, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), 44.

the notion of sovereignty; instead, this merely supports the notion of sovereignty's circularity. Derrida refers to this effect as "autoimmunity."

To Lombardo, the notion of sovereignty's circularity is key to understanding why the concept of sovereignty endures in the modern era. Foucault's three elements of sovereignty (subject, foundation and legitimacy) all lack a concrete point of origin and can therefore be endlessly pursued in a circular manner. There can be no subject without a non-subject, no founding without destroying and no legitimacy without illegitimacy. Lombardo asserts that there is therefore no legitimate basis for the existence of sovereignty. It is exactly this lack of a legitimate basis, however, that allows the concept to endure; the absence of true sovereignty continues to inspire people to seek it.

Carl Schmitt

Rather than follow the traditional course of political philosophy, which seeks to ground the concept of sovereignty in the exercise of politics, Carl Schmitt grounds the concept of the political in the exercise of sovereignty. He thus considers the exercise of sovereignty to be more fundamental than the exercise of politics. In Schmitt's view, the concept of the political depends on the juridically defined notion of the exception. There are facts in any given legal case that stand out as exceptions to the particular law in question, and to the body of law as a whole. Crucially, a decision must be made regarding the exceptional aspects of a case before the law can be enforced. This *a priori* decision is itself thus not "legal," as it comes before the application of the law. As every case is in some way an exception, the exercise of law presupposes an act of decision that is outside the law, i.e. "extra-legal." Schmitt applies this juridical concept of the exception requiring an extra-legal decision to the rule of states: the executive has unique power in a constitutional state to suspend the constitution in times of exceptional emergency. Schmitt thus defines the sovereign as "he who decides upon the exception."²³

For Schmitt, all classical political problems, such as representation, separation of powers and the authoritative element in a regime, are all grounded in the fundamental political antagonism between friend and

²³ Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1985).

enemy. A distinction between friend and enemy must be made before the political can be constituted. In other words, it is necessary to make a decision whether another party is to be considered as either a friend or an enemy before any reasons for considering this party either a friend or an enemy can be formulated. Phenomenologically, the sovereign decision comes before any deliberation. Schmitt then defines the concept of the political as the concept of sovereignty; in this view the political does not include any form of deliberation, only decision. From this Lombardo concludes that in Schmitt's view, "there is no outside sovereignty."²⁴

Giorgio Agamben

Giorgio Agamben introduces the concept of *homo sacer*, which can be viewed as being the corollary of Schmitt's idea of a sovereign ruler with the power to make extra-legal decisions. *Homo sacer* is defined as he who "anyone can kill but no one can sacrifice."²⁵ Having no legal standing, *homo sacer* can be considered an absolute victim who does not even have the possibility to be recognized as a victim. According to Agamben, "the sovereign is the one with respect to whom all men are potentially *homines sacri*, and *homo sacer* is the one with respect to whom all men act as sovereigns."²⁶

Following the introduction of Agamben's work, a strongly critical description of contemporary (American?) society in the era of biopolitics is presented, apparently in a bid to illustrate the supposed victimization of ordinary citizens. In this description assertions are made, among others, that the public space is a zone for "unimpeded corporate-governmental surveillance,"²⁷ that the stripping of constitutional rights is a basic feature of society²⁸ and that banks depend on illegal drug money as a source of cash.²⁹ Somewhat further on in the chapter, in a similarly critical vein, the United States is indirectly referred to as a

²⁴ Marc Lombardo, op. cit., 43.

²⁵ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

²⁶ Ibid., 53.

²⁷ Marc Lombardo, op. cit., 48.

²⁸ Ibid., 49.

²⁹ Ibid., 49.

“slave state.”³⁰

Lombardo goes on to discuss at length whether the concept of *homo sacer* is a description or a limit case. As a description, *homo sacer* does not, in Lombardo’s view, describe any past or existing case in the real world and therefore, like its corollary sovereignty, exhibits referential nullity. The concept of *homo sacer* must then be a limit case, which is potentially real but in practice never attained. One can initially identify a person as being a *homo sacer*, but if one examines the situation it will be evident that that person has not yet reached the point of being *homo sacer*. The potentiality of becoming *homo sacer* always remains, however.

Hardt and Negri

According to Hardt and Negri, the concept of sovereignty has never been an accurate description of political reality, since the actors involved in actual events have always been constrained to some extent. Moreover, the increasingly global nature of political phenomena implies that the concept of sovereignty is less and less applicable. Hardt and Negri contend that a new mechanism of global imperial power has replaced sovereignty in the contemporary era. This new imperial power, which they christen “Empire,” has no identifiable center and does not derive its power in the way that sovereignty does. Instead, its power lies in the “goes-with,” which never directly opposes cultural traditions, systems of governance or business practices but instead simply assimilates them into Empire. Nevertheless, Empire utilizes sovereignty as well in situations where it exploits the vulnerable position of large groups of people whose lesser status has been determined by sovereign boundaries. Such groups of people together form what Hardt and Negri call the “multitude.”

In different ways, the concepts of Empire and multitude both contest the connection between authority and territory, a crucial defining factor of the concept of sovereignty. Lombardo asserts that the identification of the multitude with sovereignty immediately brings with it the possibility of sovereignty’s undoing. This is because the multitude can only participate in sovereignty when it is given a determinate boundary; however, the multitude is by its very nature something without boundaries. Therefore, when associated with a boundary, the multitude will be

³⁰ Ibid., 55.

that boundary's undoing. In this manner the multitude breaks the connection between authority and territory.

Lombardo asserts that the contemporary legal definition of sovereignty is an erroneous anachronism because determinate physical territory continues to be a necessary condition of this definition. As an alternative, Lombardo posits a "metaphysically correct definition of sovereignty as consisting in authority bounded by a defined sphere of influence. Only through this redefinition of sovereignty can a true, sovereign international community come into being.

Hardt and Negri take the position that nation states should not exist. Lombardo disagrees, pointing out that nation states have, on occasion, been effective at providing benefits to their citizens, even if the sovereignty of these nation states has been based on an erroneous definition which includes the criterion of physical territory. Citing the separatist Lakota nation as a positive example, Lombardo suggests that although the sovereignty this nation claims can be a means to the positive transformation of social institutions, it nevertheless also comprises a clearly defined physical territory.

Lombardo concludes his work by suggesting an alternative global framework consisting of all manner of sovereign bodies not necessary bounded by physical territory. If such a body were to be shown neglecting the interests of the people that it was supposedly committed to serving, these interests would then be transferred to a different sovereign body. The interests of each people would thus be served by the entity able to serve their interests most effectively. Referential nullity notwithstanding, the concept of sovereignty would thus become a framework for assigning responsibility to a particular body for a given set of interests.

Comments

Book I of *Critique of Sovereignty* assumes considerable prior knowledge of political philosophy. In each chapter Lombardo combines the work of a particular philosopher or philosophers with his own philosophical examination. Unless one is already familiar with the work of the philosopher in question, one encounters passages where it is unclear exactly whose viewpoint is being presented. One might wonder whether particular statements are expressing the views of the philosopher in question or of Lombardo himself. Generally this is not an issue with regard to the development of one's understanding of the concept of sover-

eignty; indeed, the synthesis of philosophical views provides valuable, novel insights. However, for some of the more controversial assertions, the uninitiated reader may be left wondering who is making the assertion and on which premises that assertion is based.

In conclusion, Book I provides a noteworthy and informative overview of contemporary philosophical thought regarding the concept of sovereignty. One can look forward to the further elaboration of Lombardo's genealogy of the evolving relationship between sovereignty and thought in the forthcoming Books II, III and IV of *Critique of Sovereignty*.

Andrew Mitchell, *The Fourfold: Reading the Late Heidegger*, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2015, 392 pp.

Hans Krauch (University of Sofia)

This text takes a closer look at Heidegger's work after the Second World War. The book has its origins in the Andrew Mitchell's dissertation, so I see this work as an admirable reflection of the purpose of that exercise: that it marks one's first steps into the world of the academy and sets the later direction pursued one's chosen field. Space is limited so I will try to cover only the main points covered. This text is not just useful for scholars of Heidegger. Anyone who is interested in the field of ontology or phenomenology will find some enlightening points of view. I certainly plan on keeping it nearby as reference in my future work.

Introduction

We begin by acknowledging that we are finite beings and must therefore think like a finite being. Our limits are how far outside ourselves we can reach. Such a thing can be (and likely is) interpreted in all kinds of interesting and bizarre ways. I would prefer to take a safer route and assume it is to mean a greater awareness of what is beyond ourselves – be it a flower, a distant mountain or another galaxy. The “limit” is our ability to be aware of otherness, also known as a “medium.”

Mitchell is interested in how things interact and relate to each other. Through understanding these relations we can begin to discover (I would argue – to create) meaning in them. It is interesting to note of technology that it seems that its application changes things into technology itself. Contemporary concepts regarding the replaceable, obsolescence, fixed statistics and limits can be understood in this sense.

Death is something we experience ourselves but can never draw out an exact meaning from such an experience. Therefore, experience plus reflection/meaning is outside ourselves and through others we achieve meaning and growth. Death (as I understand it) is merely a permanent loss of consciousness, so without consciousness we cannot

interact with the outside world nor are we aware of its influences on us.

Things are not simply lumps of matter, but the active relationship of everything in the world. The extent of a thing is not in itself, but as far as its range of relationships. How far is that exactly? It all depends on the lump of matter that forms the physical thing. Think of it like a stone being thrown into water – the “thing” is the stone, but it is not just the rock itself. The stone is the splash, the ripples in the water, the unsettled mud at the bottom of the lake. The stone is all of the relationships and effects on the outside world.

We finish the introduction noting that, with some external encouragement, the late Heidegger’s philosophy was found to lose some of its pro-fascist sentiments. The focus of his philosophy changes when he reaches the beginning of his “old age,” defined as age 60 – so any time after 1949.

Chapter One – The Technological Challenge to Things

As stated earlier, technology is seen as transformative – making people into technology and thus turning them into disposable bits. People are now a commodity to be bought, used, sold or thrown away. The term “standing reserve” is used here and it is explained as “how things show themselves in an era of circulative replacement.”³¹ This stands in contrast to “the thing.” Both are united; however, this alliance is shaky at best. The atom bomb really made Heidegger re-evaluate technology because such a thing can annihilate entire cities or even the world itself. It would seem that the quicker something can kill us the more we fear it, generally speaking.

The term “abandonment” is understood as “the relations between being and beings. Being abandons them.”³² Heidegger loves using terms and definitions in his work. As I cannot give you all of them, I will stick to the main ones. The standing reserve is seen as the commodity. It is a different way of looking at objects, as they are now consumable and disposable. What gives them value is what can be extracted from them. There is no mediation and they are immediately available, orderable (de-

³¹ Andrew Mitchell, *The Fourfold: Reading the Late Heidegger* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2015), 25.

³² Ibid., 26.

liverable as requested). Things are recycled, reused, reordered and repurposed by virtue of their circulating/rotating positionality.

You are what you consume: “There is no end to replacement, never a final exchange of item for item, only this unending slippage and dispersal.”³³ By consuming commodities you become one yourself. Culminating this consumption is the theory of special relativity, where everything in the universe is understood as energy. Anyway, the fourfold is simply a contemporary take on the concept of the four elements – earth and sky in addition to gods and mortals.

Chapter Two – Earth, Bearing and Fructifying

Heidegger describes the earth as “the necessary attendant of worldly appearance.”³⁴ He spends much time on the earthly notions of grounding, the grounded and groundlessness. The earth is tied to the sensible. The physical world is the earth (as we experience it) and is conceptualized as relational as well. Inanimate objects are seen as world-less. Language permeates us – for example, stones teach pain and hardness. He [Mitchell? Heidegger?] discusses what each of these natural elements mean to each of us, like rivers represent the home, human dwelling – our openness to accept the gifts of nature. Plants represent growth and life, animals represent death. Animals are seen as something that have no real connections with the world, but simply manifest innate behaviors.

We cannot talk about Heidegger without mentioning Dasein, described by Mitchell as “analogous to a fruit, but most distinct from it at the point of the fruit’s culmination. Dasein is not subject to any necessity to ripen and end.”³⁵ Mitchell touches briefly on concepts of death by saying that mortality is not inherited but earned by rejecting our animality. He mentions that planning the future ensures that such a future never comes to fruition.

We finish with the earth with a note that this grounds us in objective reality: “Thanks to the bearing of the earth, the thing is able to enter the between and remain connected with the earthly nature all around it.”³⁶

³³ Ibid., 60.

³⁴ Ibid., 72.

³⁵ Ibid., 104.

³⁶ Ibid., 115.

Chapter Three – The Sky, the Weathering Medium of Appearance

The sky is something constantly in a state of change, it is something we cannot really touch but can observe. It incorporates our notions of motion, change and time. The between is a boundary starting and ending somewhere – it is a type of thinking. In a roundabout way, the between is Dasein or its character/relations.

According to Mitchell, the sky is a living, active medium: “The sky gives us something to talk about: the weather.”³⁷ I am sure it does more than that, but we see Heidegger’s point. Mitchell also takes time to reference the term “aether” – which is basically the make-up of the sky. Still, what follows is a rather meteorological overview of human experience having equal meaning and explanation with its associative environment. The clouds, weather, the color of the sky – all have meaning for us.

These analogies are how Heidegger explains his philosophy, or perhaps (more likely) he uses them as inspiration for his philosophy. How we experience nature is part and parcel of how we experience all things, as Heidegger interprets Hölderlin’s poetry.

We are “thrown” into this world, into this existence, and the nature of where we find ourselves is necessary in and of itself. We are put here in this world and, coincidentally, the rules and structure of this world provide the necessities of existence in this world.

The world is not perfectly adjusted to our liking, but the bare necessities are here – which are basically nothing other than temporality and physicality. From this basis, we acquire meaning in our lives. Why, I am not sure, I suppose no one is. Suffice it to say that meaning is a need we all share.

Chapter Four – The Divinities, Suggestive Messengers of Godhood

The general concept of God is understood within the medium (in the realm perhaps?) of “the holy.” The Christian God is in a constant state of arriving somewhere (the second coming, in the Eucharist, etc.). Mitchell goes on to discuss the fundamentals of language like words,

³⁷ Ibid., 128.

gestures and that sort of thing in depth here.

Basically, this chapter gives us a very good overview of the late Heidegger's philosophical method of decrypting and translating the various overlapping terms and concepts used by him and his contemporaries. This goes to show just how familiar and good a grip Mitchell has on in this material.

Mitchell goes on to describe attributes of the divine, like "holy" and Godhood – that sort of thing. Divinity (the gods) help us participate in that which we thought was not possible. Indeed, much progress occurs because of a journey into the unknown and it is this concept of divinity that gives us the courage to make that plunge from security.

Chapter Five – Being-in-Death

This is the last part of the fourfold. Here Mitchell discusses Nietzsche's Übermensch and the works of Rilke and Jünger. He discusses the general concepts of the next evolution of mankind, and at the same time what it means for us to die – to be truly mortal. Indeed: "To be mortal is to 'belong' to the world without 'being' in the world ..." ³⁸

Death ties us to the world. For experience to have any meaning in it, it requires reflections and cross-reference to other experience. Death doesn't allow that. It is the end of time for Being. So, if we accept death as already with us always, we can accept that we are already dead. Once we lose this strangeness with death can we embrace that which most of us are already most estranged from already – life. This is why most of us feel like zombies – shambling around mindlessly doing our daily routine. To embrace life one must first accept death. Although this is the final fold in Heidegger's philosophy, it ought to be the first. Then again, we ought to save the best for last.

As a nihilist, this makes perfect sense. Since there is no hidden or supernatural purpose, in order to accept death or life, it takes no further action than simply accept it is there. Indeed: "The world is death. This world is our death." ³⁹ This chapter finishes with the real meaning of language.

³⁸ Ibid., 223.

³⁹ Ibid., 230.

Chapter Six – The Slight and Abiding Thing

This chapter mostly covers things, thingness, and thinging – all entertaining and practical generalities regarding the stuff that makes something that particular thing. All finite existence falls into this category and Mitchell explains the Hegelian philosophy of being and how Heidegger picked that up and completed it. We can say that the fourfold is a moving, squared and dialectical system of relationships which helps us understand the construction of existence all due to necessity.

Conclusion – There have never been Things

Why is this so? Because “the thing is not something that could ever simply be. It is more relation than entity.”⁴⁰ Things are not things because we have mistaken the definition of things. I must wrap this text up here – suffice it to say that I cannot give the book the review it deserves in a small place. The writing was well done and easy to understand for those uninitiated into the peculiar vocabulary of Heidegger. It is a must-read for any scholar of Heidegger, and I recommend it for anyone who wishes to know more about phenomenology or ontology.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 310.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Master's and Doctoral Studies in Philosophy Taught in English at Sofia University

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MASTER'S PROGRAM IN PHILOSOPHY TAUGHT IN ENGLISH

The MA Program in Philosophy taught in English provides instruction in all major areas of Western Philosophy. In addition, the master's thesis can be written on a topic from Eastern Philosophy - an expert in this field will be appointed as the supervisor. The program is structured, yet leaves enough room for student's own preferences. The degree is recognized worldwide including in the EU/EEA and Switzerland, the US, Canada, Russia, Turkey, China, Indian Sub-Continent, Latin America, and the Middle East.

Courses offered: Philosophical Anthropology, Ethics, Axiology, Philosophical Method, Truth and Meaning, Philosophy of Intercultural Relations, Social Philosophy, Continental Philosophy, Philosophy for Children, Philosophy of Culture, Logic in the Continental Tradition, Theories of Truth, Existential Dialectics, Philosophy of Subjective Action, Phenomenology, Renaissance Philosophy

Faculty Members: All faculty teaching at the program are approved by the Bulgarian State Highest Assessment Commission. They feature successful teaching experience in this country and abroad and are well published in Bulgarian and English.

Duration of Studies: two semesters of course attendance plus a third semester for writing the master's thesis; opportunities for distance learning.

Admission Requirements: Bachelor's degree in any field of humanities, social science, science, or professional disciplines. No tests or application fee are required (for citizens of EU/EEA and Switzerland applying for a state scholarship €16 fee is charged and an interview is

held). No previous degree in philosophy is needed.

Tuition fee:

- 1) citizens of EU/EEA and Switzerland – €815 per school year
- 2) international students - €3 850 per school year

Financial aid:

A) ***Citizens of the EU/EEA and Switzerland*** are eligible for state scholarships carrying a 75% tuition waiver plus a monthly stipend beginning from the second semester.

B) Fulbright Graduate Grants are offered to ***American citizens*** as a form of very competitive financial aid; for more information see www.fulbright.bg. Furthermore, American applicants are eligible for Federal Loans; please check for more details at the Education Department web site, <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSFAP/DirectLoan/index.html>; at Sallie Mae, <http://www.salliemae.com/>, and at the Student Loan Network, <http://www.privatestudentloans.com> and <https://www.discoverstudentloans.com>. It is possible for the American citizens to use some other sources of government financial assistance (please contact the Program Director for details).

C) Financial aid to ***Canadian nationals*** is provided in the form of Government Student Loans by the Province where they permanently reside.

D) ***The Western Balkans citizens*** are welcome to apply for Erasmus Mundus/BASELEUS Project scholarship carrying full tuition waiver and monthly stipend, <http://www.basileus.ugent.be/index.asp?p=111&a=111>.

E) ***Students from Turkey*** can receive financial aid within the Erasmus Student Exchange Program.

F) Financial aid for ***Chinese students*** is available within the bilateral Chinese-Bulgarian Cultural Agreement. Please contact the Chinese Ministry of Education for more information.

H) ***Students from Russia*** (Financial aid for ***Russian students*** is available within the bilateral Russian-Bulgarian Cultural Agreement. Please contact the Russian Ministry of Education for more information). ***Students from the Ukraine, Belarus, and the other CIS countries, the Indian Sub-Continent, Latin America, and the Middle East*** receive financial aid in the form of inexpensive dormitory accommodation (about

€50 per month including most of the utilities) plus a discount on public transportation and at the University cafeterias. The same type of financial aid is available for *the citizens of EU/EEA and Switzerland, American citizens, Canadian nationals, Western Balkans citizens, students from Turkey, and Chinese students.*

Application deadline: September 30, to start in October; January 31, to start in March.

Student Visa Matters: Sofia University in cooperation with the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science provides the necessary documents for student visa application to all **eligible** candidates outside the *EU/EEA and Switzerland*.

Cultural Life and Recreation: Being the capital of Bulgaria, Sofia features a rich cultural life. In most of the cinemas, English language films can be seen. There are a number of concert halls, dozens of art galleries, and many national and international cultural centers. The streets of Sofia are populated by cozy cafés and high quality inexpensive restaurants offering Bulgarian, European, and international cuisine. Sofia is a favorable place for summer and winter sports including skiing in the nearby mountain of Vitosha. More about Sofia and can be found at <http://www.sofia-life.com/culture/culture.php>. You can follow Sofia and Bulgarian news at <http://www.novinite.com/lastx.php>.

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DOCTORAL PROGRAM IN PHILOSOPHY TAUGHT IN ENGLISH

The Ph.D. Program in Philosophy taught in English, besides studies in residence, offers an opportunity for extramural studies (extramural studies is a Bulgarian version of distance learning). This Program provides instruction in all major areas of Western Philosophy. In addition the doctoral dissertation can be written on a topic from Eastern Philosophy - an expert in this field will be appointed as the supervisor. The program is structured, yet leaves enough room for student's own preferences. The degree is recognized worldwide including in the EU/EEA and Switzerland, the US, Canada, Russia, Turkey, China, Indian Sub-Continent, Latin America, and the Middle East.

Courses offered: Psychoanalysis and Philosophy, Philosophical Anthropology, Applied Ethics, Epistemology, Philosophy of Science, Social Philosophy, Philosophy of Intercultural Relations, Philosophical Method, Continental Philosophy, Philosophy for Children, Philosophy of Language, Philosophy of Culture, Time and History.

Eligibility Requirement: Master's degree in any field. No previous degree in philosophy is needed.

Checklist: CV, two letters of recommendation, standardized tests scores are NOT required. No application fee (for citizens of EU/EEA and Switzerland a €32 fee is charged and an entrance exam is held).

Tuition fee:

1) citizens of EU/EEA and Switzerland – €1450 per school year; extramural: €2440 per school year

2) international students - in residence: €6 500 per school year; extramural: €3 300 per school year

Dissertation defense fee: €950

Duration of studies: in residence – 3 years; extramural – 4 years; opportunities for distance learning.

Financial aid:

A) *Citizens of the EU/EEA and Switzerland* studying in residence are eligible for state scholarships carrying full tuition waiver and waiver

of the dissertation defense fee plus a significant (for the Bulgarian standard) monthly stipend. For extramural studies only tuition waiver and the dissertation defense fee waiver are available.

B) Fulbright Graduate Grants are offered to *American citizens* as a form of very competitive financial aid; for more information see www.fulbright.bg. Furthermore, they are eligible for Federal Loans; please check for more details at the Education Department web site, <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSFAP/DirectLoan/index.html>; at Sallie Mae, <http://www.salliemae.com/>, and at Student Loan Network, <http://www.privatestudentloans.com> and <https://www.discoverstudentloans.com>. It is possible for the American citizens to use some other sources of government financial assistance (please contact the Program Director for details).

C) Financial aid to *Canadian nationals* is provided in the form of Government Student Loans by the Province where they permanently reside. This type of aid is usually unavailable for extramural studies.

D) *The Western Balkans citizens* are welcome to apply for Erasmus Mundus/BASELEUS Project scholarship carrying full tuition waiver and monthly stipend, <http://www.basileus.ugent.be/index.asp?p=111&a=111>.

E) *Students from Turkey* can receive financial aid within the Erasmus Student Exchange Program.

F) Financial aid for *Chinese students* is available within the bilateral Chinese-Bulgarian Cultural Agreement. Please contact the Chinese Ministry of Education for more information.

H) *Students from Russia* (Financial aid for *Russian students* is available within the bilateral Russian-Bulgarian Cultural Agreement. Please contact the Russian Ministry of Education for more information). *Students from the Ukraine, Belarus, and the other CIS countries, the Indian Sub-Continent, Latin America, and the Middle East* receive financial aid in the form of inexpensive dormitory accommodation (about 40 € per month including most of the utilities) plus a discount on public transportation and at the University cafeterias. The same type of financial aid is available for *the citizens of EU/EEA and Switzerland, American citizens, Canadian nationals, Western Balkans citizens, students from Turkey, and Chinese students*.

Application deadline: September 30 (for state scholarship applications--September 15), to start in October; January 31, to start in March.

The citizens of EU/EEA and Switzerland please check with the Program Director about the state scholarship deadline.

Student Visa Matters: Sofia University in cooperation with the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science provides the necessary documents for student visa application to all **eligible** candidates outside the ***EU/EEA and Switzerland***.

Cultural Life and Recreation: Being the capital of Bulgaria, Sofia features a rich cultural life. In most of the cinemas, English language films can be seen. There is a number of concert halls, dozens of art galleries, and many national and international cultural centers. The streets of Sofia are full of cozy cafés and high quality inexpensive restaurants offering Bulgarian, European, and international cuisine. Sofia is a favorable place for summer and winter sports including skiing in the nearby mountain of Vitosha. More about Sofia and be found at <http://www.sofia-life.com/culture/culture.php>. You can follow Sofia and Bulgarian news at <http://www.novinite.com/lastx.php>.

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