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Voting for hope

Elections in Haiti

Peter Hallward

Late in the night of 29 February 2004, after weeks of confusion and uncertainty, the enemies of Haiti's president Jean-Bertrand Aristide forced him into exile for the second time. There was plenty of ground for confusion. Although twice elected with landslide majorities, by 2004 Aristide was routinely identified as an enemy of democracy. Although political violence declined dramatically during his years in office, he was just as regularly condemned as an enemy of human rights. Although he was prepared to make far-reaching compromises with his opponents, he was attacked as intolerant of dissent. Although still immensely popular among the poor, he was derided as aloof and corrupt. And although his enemies presented themselves as the friends of democracy, pluralism and civil society, the only way they could get rid of their nemesis was through foreign intervention and military force.

Four times postponed, the election of Aristide's successor finally took place a few months ago, in February 2006. These elections were supposed to clear up the confusion of 2004 once and for all. With Aristide safely out of the picture, they were supposed to show how his violent and illegal expulsion had actually been a victory for democracy. With his Fanmi Lavalas party broken and divided, they were intended to give the true friends of pluralism and civil society that democratic mandate they had so long been denied. Haiti's career politicians, confined to the margins since Aristide's first election back in 1990, were finally to be given a chance to inherit their rightful place.

What actually happened in February seems to have taken these politicians and their international backers by surprise. This is itself surprising, since both the conduct and the outcome of these elections were squarely in line with all three of the most salient features of Haitian politics in recent years.

Aristide

The first and most obvious feature is that ever since 1990, presidential elections in Haiti have been won either by Aristide or by the person Aristide chose as his first prime minister, René Préval – a man who, though far from a mere acolyte, is still widely and fondly known as the *marassa* or twin brother of Aristide. Aristide won 67 per cent of the vote in 1990. Préval won 89 per cent of the vote in 1995. After his Fanmi Lavalas party swept the legislative elections in both houses of parliament in May 2000, Aristide was re-elected with 92 per cent of the votes cast in the presidential election of November 2000. And in February 2006?

After a limited, last-minute campaign in a crowded field, Préval won another outright majority. The official count gave him 51 per cent, though most credible observers estimate that his actual tally was more like 60 per cent. His closest rivals, the academic Leslie Manigat (a prominent member of the elite Democratic Convergence that led the campaign against Aristide in 2001–03) and Charles Baker (a maverick white business-

man with powerful international connections) won 12 per cent and 8 per cent respectively. Guy Philippe, the US-trained leader of the disbanded soldiers whose uprising eventually toppled Aristide, also stood as a candidate. Along with Jodel Chamblain, Jean Tatoune and other convicted killers, in March 2004 he was hailed as a hero and a 'freedom fighter' by the man the USA chose to run Haiti's post-Aristide government, Gérard Latortue. In February 2006, Philippe won less than 2 per cent of the vote.

It is not hard to figure out why Aristide and Préval are so much more popular than their rivals. In the eyes of most people, they continue to represent the aspirations of the extraordinary mobilization that first brought democracy to Haiti in the late 1980s, the mobilization that Aristide dubbed the *Lavalas*, or flood. As the American activist and doctor Paul Farmer explained in 2005: 'everybody knows that Aristide was bad. Everybody, that is, except the Haitian poor – who are 85 per cent of the population.' Although support for Lavalas appears to have subsided somewhat among the peasantry over the last few years, so far as I could tell when I visited the poorer neighbourhoods of Port-au-Prince over several weeks in April 2006, enthusiasm there for Aristide and for the Lavalas project more generally remains undiminished. I met with community leaders and interviewed dozens of people at random. Virtually all of them said they continued to support Aristide or his party, and most told me they supported him less on account of what he managed to achieve than because of what he symbolized and said.

Despite massive cuts in international support, Préval and Aristide built more secondary schools than in the whole previous history of Haiti. They opened thousands of literacy centres and with Cuban assistance established or renewed hundreds of health clinics. They invested in transport and infrastructure. In the oppressively crowded neighbourhoods of Port-au-Prince, they created dozens of new public squares. But more important than any of this, in the eyes of their supporters, is the simple fact that they spoke to and for the poor majority. They know that Aristide made mistakes, that he was too reluctant to crack down on reactionary dissent and too tolerant of the opportunists who forced their way into his entourage. But no other politician ever had anything remotely like his rapport with both the urban and the rural poor. Aristide was the first politician regularly to speak in Kreyol, to mix with people from the *quartiers populaires*, to recognize their religion and their values, to affirm them as genuinely political actors. He was the only significant politician of his time to address the reality of class



struggle, inequality and injustice in terms that made concrete sense to those who suffer their effects.

The people's investment in Aristide and his legacy remains the single most decisive and divisive element of Haitian politics. Ask someone in Haiti how they interpret this investment and you are likely to get a good sense of where they stand. Aristide's opponents, including left-leaning members of the intelligentsia who also oppose the USA, the IMF and the status quo, frame their interpretation in terms of delusion and betrayal: a manipulative and self-serving demagogue, Aristide wasn't worthy of the people's trust. He did not focus on institutions and procedures. He was more of a priest than an administrator. He made too many compromises with the USA. If you confront people in places like Cité Soleil or Bel-Air with this sort of objection, they tend to smile or shrug. Aristide helped us to organize ourselves, they say. Of course his own freedom of movement was limited, but he helped us to constitute ourselves as active participants in national politics, to gain the measure of our strength. Aristide loyalists cannot easily be portrayed as the dupes of a populist manoeuvre. Their investment is independent of its object, and it remains as resilient as ever. Again and again, they told me that they believed in Aristide less as a leader than as their spokesman.

The same goes for the popular investment in militant local leaders – veteran advocates like Father Gérard Jean-Juste, or younger activists like Samba Boukman, Moïse Jean-Charles, Amaral Duclona, William Baptiste, who continue, often at the risk of their lives, forcefully to articulate Lavalas demands. People like Duclona or Jean-Charles are the only political activists in Haiti today who can organize disciplined and massive political demonstrations, if need be at a moment's notice. At one point during the 2006 presidential campaign, for instance, the leading elite candidate Leslie Manigat advertised a major rally in the historically charged town of Vertières (site of the last major battle in Haiti's war for independence from France). According to Jean-Charles, the event was promoted in the press and on national radio for over a week, but only a tiny handful of supporters showed up. In order to demonstrate the real balance of forces, Jean-Charles and other Lavalas activists in the north of the country made a single fifteen-minute pitch on local radio, calling a counter-demonstration for the following day. It was attended by tens of thousands of people.

Wherever they stand on the political spectrum, most 'well-educated' critics of Aristide and Lavalas share similar values and priorities, and suffer from similar limitations. Their lack of popular appeal, their reluctance to work in the neighbourhoods where most people live, their contempt for what they call 'populism', deprives them of any significant political strength. The left-leaning critics of Aristide and Lavalas who work for media-friendly groups like PAPDA or Batay Ouvriye are now regularly cited as 'alternative' voices in the international press, but when they hold a sit-in or demonstration in Haiti's capital, no more than fifty to a hundred people are likely to attend.

For now and for the foreseeable future, no one will win an election in Haiti if they do not enjoy grassroots Lavalas support.

The elite: democracy reversed

The second and equally obvious feature of contemporary Haitian politics stands in acute contradiction with the first. If Lavalas remains the decisive electoral force, all significant social and economic power is still securely concentrated in Haiti's tiny ruling class. No other country in the western hemisphere is structured along such dramatically polarized lines. One per cent of Haiti's population controls around half of its wealth. While the great majority of the people subsist on one or two dollars a day, a tiny clique of wealthy and well-connected families continues to dominate the economy, the media, the universities and professions, along with what remains of the state. They alone dispose of the country's disposable income. They speak French and sometimes

English, in a country where the vast majority speak only Kreyol. They have university degrees, in a country where most children have little chance of getting to secondary school. They travel and often live abroad, in a country where most can move only as far as they can walk. They have far more in common with their corporate, diplomatic or intellectual colleagues in France and North America than they do with their compatriots in the countryside or the poorer neighbourhoods of Port-au-Prince. These are the people who interact with the UN and with foreign embassies, who are hired by and who profit from the chaotic and growing profusion of national and international NGOs that now provide around 80 per cent of Haiti's basic services.

The richest and most powerful among them – Brandt, Boulos, Apaid – maintain a monopolistic grip on industrial production and international trade. They are probably the only people to have profited from the US-imposed structural adjustment plans that have afflicted the country since the 1980s. The more Haiti's economy has slid from an impoverished self-sufficiency towards outright destitution and dependency, the richer and more powerful these magnates have become. Subsidized American imports now



undercut domestic production, driving thousands of peasant families to abandon their farms for the squalor of slums like Cité Soleil and Carrefour. Take the case of rice, the staple food for most of the population. In the 1980s Haitians grew almost all the rice they consumed. Today, American rice currently trades at 75 per cent of the price of local rice, and over the past twenty years Haitian rice imports from the USA rose from just 7,000 tons to more than 220,000 tons (out of a total market of around 350,000 tons). If you visit a market in Haiti, the first thing traders will tell you is

that the prices of rice and other foodstuffs have quadrupled over the last few years, as the Brandts and other importers began to capitalize on this collapse in local supplies.

Combine our first and second features and the third follows predictably enough. Since 1990, perhaps nothing has served to consolidate the ruling elite more than their paranoid and vitriolic hatred of Aristide and Lavalas. If Haiti's class structure is to be preserved, it is essential that whatever gains the popular movement might make through the ballot box be reversed in some other way – either by direct military action or through the more respectable but equally malleable channels of 'civil society'. In the early 1990s, in a hemispheric context still marked by the defeat of the Sandinistas and the final skirmishes of the cold war, the military alternative remained a viable option. The army duly sent Aristide into exile in September 1991, and over the next three years killed some four to five thousand of his supporters. But Aristide deprived the elite of its traditional mechanism for protecting the status quo when he disbanded this same army in 1995. When he won his second and still more resounding victory in 2000, consequently, it fell first and foremost to the leaders of civil society to discredit his government by any means necessary. A 'Civil Society Initiative' was cobbled together in late 2000 for precisely this purpose, followed in quick succession by the 'Democratic Convergence', the 'Haiti Democracy Project' and the 'Group of 184'. Financed and led by Boulos, Apaid and other private-sector magnates, in direct and generous cooperation with USAID and the International Republican Institute (together with their counterparts in Canada and France), none of these comically ineffectual vehicles for the 'democratic

opposition' ever stood the remotest chance of defeating Lavalas in an election. A combination of direct destabilization, economic aggression and paramilitary subversion was the only workable strategy.

As soon as the extent of the Fanmi Lavalas victory of 2000 became clear, Aristide's frustrated opponents condemned the elections on account of a minor technicality, concerning the method used in several Senate contests to calculate the number of ballots needed to win a seat in one rather than two rounds of voting. Although Lavalas candidates would certainly have won most of the contested seats no matter what counting method was used, the allegation of 'tainted elections' was used by the USA to justify an immediate and non-negotiable aid embargo, and became the most frequently cited (and most infrequently explained) criticism of the FL administration in the international press. The US aid embargo instantly stripped Aristide's government of around half its revenue, with predictable consequences; the US refused to lift it even when, in July 2001, Aristide forced the winners of the contested senate seats to resign. A US arms embargo further deprived the Haitian National Police of the means of defending itself and the population against increasingly murderous attacks launched by disgruntled ex-soldiers – ex-soldiers who later, in 2005, were publicly to admit the full extent of their close cooperation with the leaders of the Convergence and Group of 184.

Meanwhile, groups like Human Rights Watch and the blatantly partisan NCHR deprived the government of much of its moral legitimacy, by portraying Aristide as a latter-day Duvalier surrounded by lawless gangs of 'bandits' or *chimères*. To make such a portrayal convincing was no easy task, since during Aristide's second administration, reports from these same human rights groups suggest that perhaps twenty or thirty individuals may have been killed by people with some (often tenuous) connection to the FL – a number difficult to compare with the tens of thousands killed by the Duvaliers, to say nothing of the additional four or five thousand killed during Aristide's exile in 1991–94.

The interim government led by Latortue and imposed on Haiti by the USA after the second coup in 2004 immediately took up where the perpetrators of that first coup left off. Some of the most notoriously violent authors of the 1991–94 violence were set free on the very day of Aristides's expulsion. In the spring and summer of 2005, in a perversion of justice spectacular even by Haitian standards, Jodel Chamblain and his death squad colleagues were retrospectively exonerated of all charges. Conservative estimates of the number of Lavalas sympathizers killed over the last two years stand at two to three thousand; many more were forced into hiding or exile. Latortue's government has done nothing to prosecute those responsible for the most gruesome



killings, including the drowning of scores of victims in Cap Haïtien soon after the coup in 2004, the public execution under police supervision of at least twenty people at a football match in Martissant in August 2005, or the repeated slaughter, condoned (and more often conducted) by the police and UN troops, of hundreds of so-called Lavalas 'bandits' in neighbourhoods like Village de Dieu, Bel-Air and Cité Soleil. Instead, the police have packed the national penitentiary in Port-au-Prince with Lavalas sympathizers and residents of the pro-Lavalas slums. Built to house around 500 prisoners, the squalid penitentiary now holds more than four times that number. Of the 2,115 people imprisoned there as of mid-April 2006, only 81 had been convicted of a crime. The list of overtly political prisoners still includes Aristide's final prime minister Yvon Neptune and his interior minister Jocelyn Privert, among many others. After being held for more than a year without charge, both are accused, without any semblance of proof, of indirect participation in a deliberate 'massacre' at La Scierie in mid-February 2004 that no one apart from the head of NCHR believes ever took place.

The international community could not bring itself to send soldiers to defend Haiti's last elected government from paramilitary assault. The job of killing and intimidating Aristide's supporters in the slums, by contrast, has been zealously undertaken by some 7,000 heavily armed UN troops, who to this day go to great lengths to treat parts of Haiti's capital like a war zone. Meanwhile, although this same international community went along with USAID's Sharon Bean when she told journalists in 2002 that Aristide's inappropriately elected government would 'never receive a penny of foreign aid', Latortue's unelected government was treated rather more generously. \$1.2 billion was pledged at a donors' conference in July 2004, and early in 2005 the World Bank and IDP finally released millions of dollars promised in long-delayed loans. No doubt there is now more money available in the private sector too, since soon after taking office in 2004 Latortue suspended income tax payments for the next three years — thereby reversing a policy of Aristide's that had proved especially unpopular among the small minority of Haitians who have any income to be taxed. You would be hard pressed, however, to find much sign of this new money in Port-au-Prince or the countryside, apart from the temporary appointment of lavishly equipped and mostly foreign UN and NGO staff whose presence does little more than drive up rents and prices in the capital.

Critics of the Lavalas administration are no doubt entitled to claim that it did not do enough to benefit the poor. But the contrast is startling between what the defenceless and cash-starved FL government managed to accomplish — significant advances in health and education, investment in public spaces and social housing, the creation of thousands of new jobs for residents of the poorest neighbourhoods, the doubling of a grossly inadequate minimum wage — and the absence of any pretence of social investment under Latortue's incomparably better armed and better funded government.

Lespwa

Given all this, what was supposed to happen in February 2006 is clear enough. There should have been a smooth transition from the Latortue government to a similarly minded administration run by a tried and tested veteran of the Democratic Convergence like Professor Leslie Manigat. Aristide supporters were to be barricaded into a few forgotten slums. Fanmi Lavalas was either to be excluded from the process altogether or 'integrated' into the system like a more conventional political party. As it turned out, this last expectation was indeed partly, though only temporarily, fulfilled.

At a party conference in August 2005, the FL decided that it would only participate in the elections if it could run Aristide's close associate Father Gérard Jean-Juste as its new presidential candidate. Latortue's government imprisoned Jean-Juste on an absurdly implausible charge, thereby blocking his candidacy. Frustrated, the FL leadership then split into two camps. A couple of former senators were somehow persuaded to adopt

Aristide's old opponent Marc Bazin as their candidate. Two other formerly influential figures in the party decided to present themselves as candidates in their own right. The rest of the leadership, including all those who enjoy genuine grassroots support, decided that the party should boycott the election unless Latortue agreed to free the political prisoners and allow FL exiles to return. At the same time, however, these same leaders – including Jean-Joseph Joel, Moïse Jean-Charles, René Montplaisir, as well as Jean-Juste himself – joined progressive peasant groups in pressing René Préval (who relied on but never officially joined the FL itself) to make a last-minute candidacy. In the space of a few short weeks, Préval's supporters cobbled together an ad hoc political coalition they dubbed *Lespwa*, or 'hope'. This way, the FL party could officially abstain from the election, while encouraging individual members to vote for the *marassa d'Aristide*. Much to the horror of the traditional elite, the stratagem worked like a charm. Grassroots FL activists threw their full organizational power behind Préval's campaign, while the hapless Bazin went on to win just 1 per cent of the vote.

The interim government then did everything it could to avoid the inevitable. Whereas Préval's own government had provided over 10,000 voter-registration centres for the elections in 2000, Latortue set up less than 500, in sites carefully chosen to disadvantage pro-Lavalas neighbourhoods. In 2000, some 12,000 polling stations were distributed all across the country; in 2006, a much smaller number were concentrated in just 800 voting centres, again situated in such a way as to marginalize voters in politically active and well-organized places like Cité Soleil, most of whom would have to walk and queue for the entire day to cast their vote on 7 February. By 9 February, with 22 per cent of the votes counted and in keeping with reliable exit polls, it was announced that Préval was leading with 62 per cent, ahead of Manigat with 11 per cent. Two days later, however, the electoral council had lowered Préval's tally to just 49.6 per cent, and early on the morning of 13 February, it was estimated at a mere 48.7 per cent. This was about 22,000 votes short of the 50 per cent majority a candidate needs in order to win in a single round of voting. Around the same time, thousands of Préval ballots were found half-burned in a rubbish dump, and election officials started reporting exceptionally high numbers of null and blank ballots. Some 85,000 ballots (or 4.6 per cent of the total) were classified as blank, a number that veteran political journalist Guy Delva described as dramatically inconsistent with normal electoral practice.

In response, tens of thousands of Aristide and Préval supporters paralysed Port-au-Prince with demonstrations and barricades. On the afternoon of 13 February, thousands of angry voters streamed up from Cité Soleil to demand a recount from the electoral council at its headquarters in the exclusive Montana Hotel. (Several hundred demonstrators grabbed the opportunity to take a quick swim in the Montana's pool, before leaving the hotel and its rattled guests undisturbed.) Under pressure, the council eventually decided to fudge the issue, and divided the number of allegedly blank ballots proportionately among the candidates. This was just enough to nudge Préval's proportion over the requisite 50 per cent mark, giving him a marginal victory in the first round. It was also enough, no doubt, to leave the impression that this was again a 'tainted' or 'compromised' election, should the need for another corrective round of democracy-enhancement arise.

Préval is more pragmatic than Aristide, and a more accomplished administrator. He is more comfortable with the language of compromise and reconciliation. He may not risk taking decisive action on behalf of the poor majority if it is likely to stir up opposition from within the closed ranks of Haiti's 'civil society' and its international patrons. Even so, the imminent emergence of such opposition is almost a foregone conclusion. Even mildly progressive policies are sure to provoke a new campaign of 'democratic' and 'humanitarian' destabilization. The FL activists in the slums of Port-au-Prince anticipate it. And they are already preparing for another, more decisive victory in the elections scheduled for 2010.

Vocabulary of European Philosophies, Part 1

The publication in November 2004 of *Vocabulaire Européen des Philosophies: Dictionnaire des Intraduisibles* (Editions du Seuil/Dictionnaires Le Robert) was a major philosophical event, not only in France but for European philosophies as a whole. Edited by Barbara Cassin, composed over a twelve-year period by a group of 150 contributors, and weighing in at about one-and-a-half million words, the *Vocabulary* is both a massive work of historical and philosophical scholarship and a philosophical intervention in its own right. In the essay that follows, Howard Caygill provides a preliminary assessment of its importance as a philosophical dictionary. Here, I shall briefly register some of the *Vocabulary*'s most distinctive features and indicate something of the significance of the long entry 'Subject', which follows, in a translation by David Macey, edited by Barbara Cassin and Peter Osborne. English translations of the entries 'Gegenstand/Objekt', 'Object' and 'Res' will appear in Part 2 of this dossier, in the next issue of the journal, *RP* 139 (September/October 2006).

The *Vocabulary* is exceptional, first and foremost for its acknowledgement of the plurality of languages that constitute the European philosophical tradition. This acknowledgement is twofold. First, it has entries for terms in ten main European languages – four ancient (Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Arabic) and six modern (English, French, German, Italian, Russian, Spanish) – as well as occasional and sometimes surprising entries for others, such as the Basque 'Gogo', a distinctive reception of the Greek *anima*. An irreducible element of linguistic plurality is thus preserved in the structure of the project. Second, through its use of French as a metalanguage (the language of the *Vocabulary* itself), it endeavours to specify the conceptual differences carried by the differences between languages, not in a pure form, but via the fractured histories of translation through which European philosophies have been constituted. An irreducible element of translational commonality is thus also present. Maintaining this twofold, eminently dialectical stance is a self-consciously paradoxical task. It involves the utilization of a number of different strategies: an unusually high level of linguistic plurality within any particular entry, 'foreignization' in translation, and the

constant thematization of translation in the writing of the history of terms – to name but three. The use of the term 'untranslatables' in the *Vocabulary*'s subtitle, *Dictionary of Untranslatables*, marks this paradoxical stance. For while the plurality of languages registers the conceptually elemental status of language (this is a vocabulary – a history of words, not of concepts; or at least, conceptual history subjected to linguistic history), these terms are also thereby selected for translation. 'Untranslatable' here thus denotes the existence of an inevitable excess and remainder in translation, and hence the interminability of the process of translation – its inherent problematization and productivity – rather than any kind of reverence for an illusorily pure singularity of particular languages.

The *Vocabulary*'s strategic thrust is thus on two fronts simultaneously: against the allegedly uniquely philosophical significance of particular languages (a claim most commonly made on behalf of Greek and German); and against what the French call *globish*, a developing universal 'non-language of pure communication', for which read a certain English – although, disappointingly, the Englishness of *globish* is never directly confronted. (There is no entry for *globish*, presumably because it cannot yet be considered a properly philosophical term.)

In 'Subject', the translational history of philosophical words is deployed to devastating conceptual effect, to dismantle what has been the central narrative myth of modern philosophy for over two hundred years: namely, that modern philosophy is a 'philosophy of the subject' (in the sense of a self-grounding philosophy of reflexive consciousness) that begins with Descartes. Not only must this history be rewritten, with far greater importance attributed to developments both well before and after Descartes, it contends, but a second, parallel and contradictory history must be acknowledged: the history of the term 'subject' in its connotation of subjection or dependency. In the third part of 'Subject', written by Balibar, in which these issues come to the fore, we have a conspectus or skeleton of an unwritten book on the topic, which would catapult Balibar to the head of the trio of post-Althusserians now dominating the landscape of the Anglo-American reception of current French thought.

PO

From *Abstraction* to *Wunsch*

The *Vocabulaire Européen des Philosophies*

Howard Caygill

DICTIONARY Say of it: 'It's only for ignoramuses!' ... 'I'd rather die than use one!'

Gustave Flaubert, *Dictionary of Received Ideas*

The *Vocabulaire Européen des Philosophies** deserves a warm welcome from everyone interested in philosophy and its history. While connoisseurs of philosophical lexicography will take particular delight in many of the work's artful technical features and its often audacious solutions to some of the fundamental problems of the genre of philosophical dictionary, the significance of the *Vocabulaire* far exceeds such considerations. The work in many respects redefines the genre of the philosophical dictionary, reviving the cultural ambitions of both the medieval summa and such Enlightenment dictionaries as Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1702). It defines philosophy's past and its future prospects, as well as opening up new areas of research by suggesting unexpected links between existing problems and traditions of philosophy and between philosophy and its 'non-philosophical' others. Its cultural ambition ensures that it remains critical, never lapsing into the extremes of the uselessly monumental or antiquarian, respecting Bataille's definition of the modern dictionary as beginning not with the meaning of words but with their tasks.

Such a text – over fifteen hundred pages largely set in double columns scrupulously and programmatically respecting the idioms of the major European philosophical languages – is less to be read than to be lived and worked with. It provides a vast number of entries organized (and typographically distinguished) in terms of 'untranslatable' terms and their equivalents in the vernacular languages, meta-entries on languages and themes, and introductory short entries. The entries are

historically rich, punctuated with shaded insertions of short essays on related themes, concluding with generous and useful bibliographies. With a work of such scale and ambition what follows can only be a provisional report on a few months of cohabitation, premised upon admiration for the *Vocabulaire*'s achievement tempered by a certain curiosity concerning some of its limits and eccentricities. These may be functions of a necessarily partial reading – who could claim or want to claim to have read a whole dictionary? – but some of the omissions and oversights are striking, and, given the overall ambition of the work, worthy of reflection.

One example of such a limit is the absence of an entry on the philosophical dictionary itself, crucial not only as a site for the debate and codification of philosophical idioms but also as a vector for the teaching and dissemination of philosophy. Book V of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* is the earliest surviving example of the philosophical dictionary, organized in terms of concepts, although the genre as we know it is largely a product of the Enlightenment. In his study of the dissemination of Spinozist ideas – *Radical Enlightenment* – Jonathan Israel described the early Enlightenment dictionary as a vector for radical philosophy, 'a philosophical engine of war which massively invaded the libraries, public and private, of the whole continent'. The subentry on lexicography in the entry on 'Logos' is too general to help, unless of course the entire *Vocabulaire* be considered as a vast entry on this very question.

Before pursuing further the dominant and inevitable trope of a dictionary review – repining over what is absent or excluded in its pages – it is necessary to pay unequivocal tribute to the extraordinary achieve-

* Barbara Cassin, ed., *Vocabulaire Européen des Philosophies: Dictionnaire des Intraduisables*, Editions du Seuil/ Dictionnaires Le Robert, 2004. xxiv + 1531 pp., €95.00, 2 85 036 580 7 (Le Robert), 2 02 030730 8 (Seuil).

ments of the *Vocabulaire*. Habitual readers or users of philosophical dictionaries will find in the *Vocabulaire* a summation of the form of the philosophical dictionary, operating at nearly all the levels covered by this genre. At its most basic, the work is designed to satisfy readers in search of a concise, working definition of a concept or problem: each major entry is preceded by a short, historically informed summary of the task or problem posed by the word set in italics. In this respect the work functions well in comparison with my preferred versions of the genre of short-entry philosophical dictionaries: D. Runes's 1962 *Dictionary of Philosophy*, the excellent *Enciclopedia Garzanti di Filosofia* of 1981 and, perhaps surprisingly, I. Frolov's *Dictionary of Philosophy*, first published by Political Literature Publishers (Moscow) in 1980. Each of these gives a short definition of a concept or theme oriented by a particular vision of the relationship between philosophy and non-philosophy. Runes emphasizes the relationship between philosophy, ethics and theology; the Garzanti volume philosophy and culture; Frolov science and political theory. The *Vocabulaire* has its own pre-orientation, to which I'll return below, but it nevertheless functions well within the generic rules of the short-entry dictionary. The entry 'Qualia', for example, is a model of the genre, combining a short, conceptual description with a historical sketch of the dissemination of the term from Latin into the modern languages.

The *Vocabulaire* also makes a powerful contribution to the subgenre of the dictionary of a distinct period of philosophy, especially the inaugural period of Ancient Greek philosophy. In its treatment of Ancient Greek concepts the *Vocabulaire* far exceeds other available working dictionaries in its etymological precision, conceptual rigour and ability to open new perspectives on apparently well-known terms. In comparison the *Greek Philosophical Terms: A Historical Lexicon* of 1967 seems garrulous, while J.O. Urmson's *The Greek Philosophical Vocabulary* of 1990 and Ivan Gobry's 1982 *Le vocabulaire grec de la philosophie* are too limited and dry. The *Vocabulaire*'s many excellent entries on Greek philosophical words are in most cases complemented by a review of their subsequent history. As an example, Alliez's entry on 'Aion', with the insert by Couloubaritsis, while rooted in an account of the Greek experience of the term also provides a fascinating lesson in ancient, medieval and modern understandings of time, with the insert referring to debates in modern Greek philosophy whose importance is neither widely known nor properly appreciated. The magisterial entries on such terms as

'Subject' by Baliber et al. and 'Truth' by Braque et al. are similarly impressive, and deserve to be published in pocket editions to be consulted on trains, in airports and while waiting for buses. In addition to such entries on philosophy's fundamental words of power are the apparently more modest but equally fascinating contributions to discrete concepts such as 'to ti en einai' by Courtine and Rijksbaron. Perhaps most disappointing is the entry on 'Being', where the editors seem to have (understandably) flinched and restricted themselves to a short list of cross-references, directing the reader to 'Esti' for classical and 'Sein' for post-Kantian discussions of the word.

The *Vocabulaire* also functions well as a dictionary for medieval and modern philosophy. Most of the large thematic and conceptual entries include a discussion of the medieval transformation of Greek concepts. Courtine's entry 'Res' (an English translation of which will appear in *Radical Philosophy* 139, September/October 2006) is exemplary in this respect, offering a full analysis of the medieval development of the notion of a thing. It is also noteworthy for its inclusion of the Arabic versions of Greek concepts, vitally important for the medieval Latin reception of philosophical concepts. The *Vocabulaire*'s recognition of the contribution of Arabic to the development of the language of philosophy is on the whole rather traditional, focusing upon its role as a vector for the Latin reception of Greek concepts and texts. This approach seems the result of a self-imposed editorial restriction, but one which is drawn perhaps too tightly. The contribution of the work of Henri Corbin in bringing Arabic and Persian philosophical texts into French and his postwar achievement in recovering an entire history of Islamic philosophy for European thought remains largely unacknowledged, with Corbin making a sole appearance as a translator of Heidegger. This aspect or restriction of the *Vocabulaire* will inevitably provoke an intensification of the debate into the relationship between the self-image of philosophy and 'Europe' which can only to be welcomed.

The *Vocabulaire* proves an invaluable source for information and guidance for the field of modern philosophy, although the reader must be prepared to search not only through the body of the dictionary but also through the conceptual network accessed via the indexes. The latter comprise an index of names, principal authors and passages cited, translators and translations and finally an index of words. Perhaps unique in its respect for the modern dissemination of philosophical concepts throughout the vernacular languages, the entries of the *Vocabulaire* cover most

of the modern ‘European’ languages including Basque, Ukrainian and Finnish and Hungarian – the latter pair contributing specific words for divinity. The coverage of Russian terms is especially impressive, the pursuit of the entries in the index of Russian terms providing a course in Russian-language philosophy. The entries on the philosophical languages are also invaluable, especially those on ‘Russian’ and ‘Greek’ by Malamoud/Omelyantchik and Couloubaritsis. The entry on ‘English’ by Clero and Laugier is the most disappointing, never seriously confronting the significance of the emergence of English as the current philosophical *koine*. In the midst of such linguistic diversity the *Vocabulaire* succeeds in presenting many of the central concepts and arguments of the philosophy of the modern period.

Part of the pleasure of combing the *Vocabulaire*’s indexes consists in being diverted in unexpected directions: I have still not been able to find ‘a priori’ but the search has led to many, probably more interesting, places. The indexes also permit the *Vocabulaire* to be used as an example of another subgenre of the philosophical dictionary, that of the idiosyncratic individually authored work. Quine’s *Quiddities* and Savater’s *Dizionario filosofico* establish the limits of this subgenre between the often wicked individualism of the former and the parochial gossip of the latter. In the case of the *Vocabulaire* it is possible, using the list of contributors provided at the beginning of the work, to follow the entries of a particular author, often adding up to a text in their own right, as is the case with those of Balibar, Courtine and Alain de Libera. The list of contributors also makes it possible to identify large individual contributions by writers such as Alliez on ‘Aion’, Badiou on ‘French’, Bodei on ‘Italian’, Bollack on ‘Memory’, Dastur on ‘Appearance’ and Malabou on ‘Plasticity’.

A further possibility opened by the indexes is the use of the *Vocabulaire* as a dictionary for the work of individual philosophers. The principal authors index seems designed to serve precisely this purpose although there are differences in the treatment of philosophers, some being considered more principal than others, or, as is noted at the head of the index, being ‘treated in a more detailed manner’. The entries on Aristotle, Descartes, Hegel, Heidegger, Husserl, Kant, Plato and Wittgenstein are accordingly distinct from the others in the type and extent of their coverage. This is an indication of the virtual canon that structures the *Vocabulaire*’s vision of philosophy and its history.

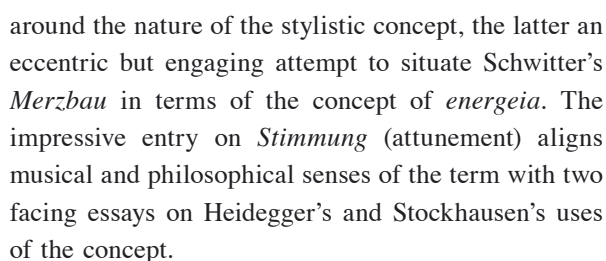
There are two subgenres of the philosophical dictionary to which the *Vocabulaire* does not pretend

to make any contribution. These are the dictionaries that focus on philosophers and on philosophical texts. There is very little biographical information or attempt to reconstruct and present an individual philosophical itinerary, as is the premiss of Lange and Alexander’s *Philosophen-Lexicon*. The same holds for the treatment of philosophical works as a basic unit of meaning – there is no systematic treatment of the philosophical text as a whole such as that proposed in Franco Volpi’s *Dizionario delle opere filosofiche*. Instead the *Vocabulaire* samples and reassembles fragments of text into a consecutive historical argument, separating concepts from their setting within texts and detaching texts from their broader cultural and political situations. The systematic relegation of the integrity of the philosophical text as a site for philosophizing is evident even in attempts to recuperate the notion of the integral work in the index of principal authors. The entry on the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781/1787) gives a list of topics in order of appearance in the *Critique* but it would be impossible to gain any sense of the consistency of that text from this presentation.

The *Vocabulaire* eschews any systematic reference to dates and places of philosophers’ lives and the publication of their works, strangely distancing itself from the geo-philosophy to which its attention to linguistic difference would seem to incline it. While the individual articles possess detailed and valuable bibliographies, with much of the necessary bibliographic information nested within them, this is not assembled in the indexes not systematically respected in the texts of the articles themselves. The effect of this perhaps necessary avoidance of repetition of dates and places is to blur the historical specificity of emergence and development of philosophical concepts. While such biographical and bibliographic information is readily available elsewhere, it would have been very simple to add it to the indexes and make the coverage of the *Vocabulaire* more complete.

In spite of such caveats regarding biography and bibliography, the historical range of the *Vocabulaire* remains one of its most impressive features, providing a comprehensive account of the history of the European philosophical language. Rivalling Joachim Ritter’s monumental and still incomplete *Historisches Wortebuch der Philosophie*, the *Vocabulaire*’s sense of engagement and argument with the history of philosophy contrasts favourably with the often indiscriminate citation that characterizes the German work. Yet the inevitable choices taken in each article regarding inclusion and approach are guided not only by an implied canon but also by a vision of philosophy

To a large degree the *Vocabulaire* is informed by a vision of philosophy as standing in close proximity to art and aesthetics and to a marked but lesser degree to psychoanalysis. One of the most wonderful features of the work is its systematic descriptions of the relationships between philosophical and aesthetic concepts. This is evident not only where it might be expected, in the entries on 'Aesthetics', 'Art', and 'Beauty', but also in entries not usually anticipated in philosophical dictionaries such as 'Baroque' and 'Work in Progress' as well as in crossovers between philosophical and aesthetic concepts such as '*Stimmung*' and 'Form'. 'Baroque' and 'Work in Progress' are extremely suggestive: the former proposing a review of the debate



tioned perfectly to direct this reader to the appropriate entries and the short essay by Cassin nested within the entry 'Force'. The fascinating opening paragraphs of this entry by Balibar on the relationship between the concepts of force and energy create a desire in the reader to find out more about this and other episodes in the relationship between philosophy and natural science, but unfortunately this is left unsatisfied by the *Vocabulaire*. The absence of comprehensive coverage of the concepts of natural philosophy is perhaps the most questionable aspect of the entire work.

The systematic absence of natural philosophy and philosophical cosmology is confirmed by the relegation of Newton from a 'principal author' to a 'proper name', a fate not shared by Cardinal John Henry Newman. The Bergson preferred by the *Vocabulaire* is the early model of the 1890s, not the author of *Creative Evolution* or *Duration and Simultaneity*, and the only reference to Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature* is to be found, tangentially, under the entry discussing the Russian term *Samost*. The superficial absence of direct reference to natural philosophy extends into the articles themselves, which seem uniformly to respect the modern separation between philosophy and science. A striking exception already mentioned is Balibar's entry

‘Force’, which, with its clear distinction of force and energy and its philosophical history of the former, will have to satisfy those coming to the *Vocabulaire* from their readings of Bergson, Whitehead, Deleuze, Prigogine and Stengers in search of help in understanding the philosophy of nature. More typical is the entry ‘*Mutazione*’ (Mutation), which focuses on Machiavelli’s account of political mutation with no reference to the mutations of the concept itself in evolutionary biology and genetics. Creationists, incidentally, will be cheered by the complete absence of Darwin and his natural philosophy from the *Vocabulaire*, to say nothing of the concept of evolution.

Nevertheless, the *Vocabulaire* is an immense achievement. It demands time to live with it and

to learn how to use it. It may be that many of the shortcomings and parochial habits that I have sensed are less a function of the work than of insufficiently developed skills in using it. As a philosophical dictionary, it is perhaps *sui generis* and any attempt to judge it according to existing generic rules is fundamentally misplaced and inappropriate. The work certainly succeeds in its ambition to map differences within the linguistic histories of philosophy and it opens new agendas for – as well as setting new standards of – debate. It makes an important contribution not only as a work of reference, but, more significantly, as a report on the place of philosophy in European culture and its prospects, as it is called to leave the confines of the peninsula and its languages.

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Subject

Gr.	<i>hupokeimenon</i> (ὑποκείμενον), <i>hupostasis</i> (ὑπόστασις)
Lat.	<i>subjectum</i> , <i>suppositum</i> , <i>subjectus</i> , <i>subditus</i>
Fr.	<i>sujet</i>
Germ.	<i>Subjekt</i> , <i>Untertan</i>
Ital.	<i>soggetto</i>
Mod. Gr.	<i>hyopkeimeno</i> (ὑποκείμενο)
Span.	<i>sujeto</i> , <i>subdito</i> , <i>sugeto</i>

► SOUL, and *BEING*, *CATEGORY*, CONSCIENCE, CONSCIOUSNESS, *FREEDOM*, GEMUT, GOGO, I, MATTER OF FACT, OBJECT, PREDICABLE, PREDICATION, RES, *SOI*, SOUL, SUPPOSITION, TO TI EN EINAI

The English word *subject* (French, *sujet*) is used in a variety of senses which are, at first sight, difficult to articulate in philosophical terms. We can, however, identify three main groups of meanings, dominated by the ideas of subjectness (*subjectité* in French), subjectivity (*subjectivité*) and subjection (*sujétion*). The three notions are not completely distinct and it is clear that various combinations of them are, to a greater or lesser extent, operative in most philosophical usages of the term.

The notion of subjectness is the richest of the three (the French word *subjectité* is a translation of the neologism *Subjektheit*, which was probably coined by Heidegger) and condenses several possible usages. It derives more or less directly from Aristotle's *hupokeimenon* (ὑποκείμενον) and basically provides a link between the logical subject ('of which' there can be predicates) and the physical subject ('in which' there are accidents). It also has a much broader meaning that is bound up with the etymology of *hupokeisthai* (ὑποκεῖσθαι, 'to be laid or placed somewhere', to serve as a base or foundation, to be proposed, accepted). This sense overlaps with the network of *thing* and *pragma* (πράγμα), or *res* and *causa*, which intervenes no less frequently than the *subject* (in the sense of matter, object or theme) we find in the modern usage. In the same way, we find the sense of cause, reason or motive in the fourth part of Descartes' *Discourse on Method*. In his discussion of the existence of bodies, Descartes writes: 'nevertheless, when it is a question of metaphysical certainty, we cannot reasonably deny that there are adequate grounds for not being entirely sure of the subject. We need only observe that in sleep we may imagine in the same way that we have a different body' (*The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. 1, p. 130; trans. amended). French still uses *sujet* in that sense in everyday speech ('*quel sujet vous amène?*', 'What brings you here?'; *avoir sujet de se plaindre*, 'to have cause for complaint'). Another meaning, expressed in English by the reduplicated *subject matter*, signals membership of two categories, and merits attention. (The expression is also attested in the sixteenth century as *matter subject* and is in fact a translation of Boethius's *subjecta materia*, which itself reproduces Aristotle's *hupokeimenê hulê* [ὑποκειμένη ὕλη].) A third meaning makes *subject* synonymous with *object*, as when we evoke the 'subject' of a book or science.

The notion of subjectivity, on the other hand, makes '*subject*' the antonym of '*object*' when a more specific distinction has to be made between the sphere of the psyche or the mental, as opposed to that of objectivity (cf. the English 'thinking subject', which is well attested in the seventeenth century).

Connotations of subjection are present in any usage of *sujet* that implies the idea of dependency or subjugation, or any form of domination that subjugates, compels or obliges; the first meaning of the English noun *subject* is '*one who is under the dominion [Latin: *dominium*] of a sovereign*' or, in the adjectival form, '*that is under the rule of a power*' (fourteenth century). The articulation between this set and the first two remains problematic, despite the suggestions of ordinary language. Not everything that is *sous-mis* or *sub-mitted* (*subjectum*) is *subjected* (*subjectus*), and nor is everything that is submissive (*soumis*); it is even clearer that 'being placed beneath' should not be confused with 'being subjected'. Subjectivity is not the relative product of subjectness and subjection, even though a relationship of sub-position is present in both registers. The fate of the French term *suppost* (fourteenth century) and then *suppôt* (1611) provides a good illustration of these ambiguities. The term derives from the Latin *suppositum*, which is used in both grammar and logic as well as the natural sciences (physics, metaphysics and psychology, to adopt the medieval classification of the sciences) in the sense of the Greek *hupokeimenon*; in its specifically French usage, the term *suppost* was, from the late fourteenth to the late seventeenth century, used in the sense

of ‘vassal’, or ‘subject of someone’, or even in the sense of ‘subaltern’. The spatial metaphor common to the fields of *sub-jectness* and *sub-jection* must not, however, lead us to trace the genealogy of subjectivity by identifying *subjectum* with *subjectus*. What is implicit in French or English is much less clear in the German, where the ‘Aristotelean’ *Subjekt* is not synonymous with *Untertan* and its derivatives *untertänig* (humble, submissive) and *Untertänigkeit* (submission, humble obedience), even though both *Subjekt* and *Untertan* can be translated into English as *subject* and into French as *sujet*. By the same criterion, the notion of a ‘legal’ or ‘political’ subject or a subject with rights is difficult to accept in a context where *subject* is predestined to belong to the register of ‘submission’ – one has only to think of the harmonics of the term ‘Islam’, which, depending on how it is translated, can evoke either radical subjugation (‘Muslims’ = ‘those who submit’) or ‘*trusting abandonment of the self in God*’. The introduction of *subject* into philosophy is doubled with the avatars of *subjectum* and *subjectus*.

We will attempt to elucidate a set of problems that has determined the entire history of Western philosophy by alternating between two contrasting points of view. We will begin with the Latin use of *subjectum* in order to identify the medieval origins of the Moderns’ ‘self-certainty’, which is torn between the heritage of Aristotle and that of Augustine. We will then look at the contemporary critique of the unity and univocity of ‘the subject’ inaugurated by Nietzsche in order to identify the roots of the conflicting expressions to which it now gives rise in the context of the ‘internationalization’ of philosophical language. We will in both cases give a central role to the historical and hermeneutic reconstruction proposed by Heidegger, and will demonstrate both its importance and its limitations.

I. *Hupokeimon*: subject degree zero

Subject is Anglo-Latin and *sujet* is Franco-Latin. No one term in Greek simultaneously supports the threefold idea of subjectness, subjectivity (see CONSCIENCE) and subjection; there is no Greek word meaning ‘subject’, just as there is none meaning ‘object’, even though we encounter, and cannot but encounter, both terms in translations (see OBJECT).

The Latin *subjectum* was in fact originally a translation of the Greek *to hupokeimenon* (τὸ ὑποκείμενον), especially as used in the Aristotelean corpus, even though it is not only a translation of *hupokeimenon*, and even if other terms, such as *suppositum*, can capture other aspects of Aristotle’s *hupokeimenon* in certain circumstances (see ‘suppositum’/‘subjectum’ in SUPPOSITION).

To hupokeimenon is never an expression of subjectivity. Nor is it an expression of subjugation, except for the quasi-sexual connotations that link it to the idea of ‘matter’, *hulê* (ὕλη) as united with *eidos* (εἶδος) or *morphê* (μορφή), that is to say, the ‘form’ it receives or to which it is subject, and with which it makes up a complete substance or *sunolon* (Compare *Metaphysics* Zeta VII 1029a – ‘Primary subject [*hupokeimenon prôton*] is in one way matter, in another shape-form, and in a third sense the composite of both of them [*to ek toutôn, τὸ ἐκ τούτων*]’ – with *De generatione animalium* I, 20. 729a 8-11: ‘What happens is what one would expect to happen. The male provides the “form” and the “principle” of the movement [*to t’eidos kai tèn arkhên tês kinêseôs*]; the female provides the body and the matter [*to sôma kai tèn hulên,*

τὸ σῶμα καὶ τὴν ὕλην]. Compare the coagulation of milk. Here, the milk is the body, and the fig juice or rennet is the principle that causes it to set.’ Sylviane Agacinski stresses that the gender hierarchy ‘is applied, by analogy, to the basic concepts of metaphysics, as when the philosopher states that ‘matter aspires to form in the same way that the female desires the male’ (*Politiques des sexes*, Seuil, 1998, p. 44).

On the other hand, the term does cover and bring together two kinds of subject whose composition proves to be a necessary part of the very idea of subjectivity: the physical subject, which is a substrate for accidents that occur through changes, and the logical subject, which is a support for the predicates in a proposition. This suture, which is onto-logical in that it allows being and ‘being said’ to coincide, as if by nature, is the mark of Aristotle’s *ousia* (οὐσία).

• see box 1

Following Bonitz (*Index s.v. hupokeisthai*), we will take as our starting point all the senses in which Aristotle uses *hupokeimenon* and *hupokeisthai* (ὑποκεῖσθαι). We can leave aside the local, or non-terminological, sense of ‘being there’, as well as all the current meanings that Aristotle simply established, particularly when he posits something as the basis, principle or premiss for reflection (*positum, datum*). This leaves a complex of three usages. Bonitz describes it thus:

We can identify three main genera in Aristotle’s use of the words *hupokeisthai* and *hupokeimenon* in so much as *hupokeimenon* is either matter [*hê hulê*] that is determined by form, or *ousia*, in which passions and accidents are inherent, or the logical

subject to which predicates are attributed; but as matter itself is also related to the notion of *ousia*, the first and second genera are not differentiated by limits that are universally certain, and given that *einai* [huparkhein, being in the sense of belonging to] and *legesthai* [kategoreisthai, being said in the sense of being predicated of] are closely connected, the distinction between the second and third genera is little clearer.

Index Aristotelicus, p. 798, col. 1.

Hupokeimenon's plurality of meanings is not, in other words, fixed or thematized in the same way that the meanings of 'being' are fixed. (At best, we can read in *Metaphysics* Zeta, 13, 1038b: 'περὶ τοῦ ὑποκειμένου, ὅτι διχῶς ὑπόκειται, ἢ τόδε τι ὄν, ὥσπερ τὸ ζῶον τοῖς πάθεσιν, ἢ ὡς ἡ ὕλη τῇ ἐντελεχείᾳ [There are two ways of being a subject (lit. subjected), either as a possessor of thisness (as the animal is a subject for its properties) or as matter is a subject for actuality].' It is used, rather, to describe three types of relations: (1) relations between matter and form, to the extent that they combine to make up the *sunolon*, or the individual as a whole without parts; (2) relations between the individual, substance–subject of physics and what happens to it, its affections and accidents (an animal is subject to movement, or to being 'white', 'large' or 'ill'); and (3) relations between the subject of the proposition and its predicates ('animal as 'white', 'large' or 'ill'). In the first two usages, the subject can be variously described as matter (*hulê*), as the

individual, the primary substance or essence (*tode ti* or *ousia protê*), but in the third there is no substitute for *hupokeimenon*. No other word can designate the subject of the proposition as such. The irreducible meaning is also the meaning that unifies the set (just as *kinêsis* refers both to local movements and to movement in general; it therefore refers to all types of movement, such as growth) in a radically non-dialectical conceptual structure. This is typical of Aristotle's classificatory thinking: the key species gives its name to the whole genus.

This description requires some qualification: the reason why subjectness is able to combine in the single word *ousia* both the sense of substance and that of subject is that *ousia* itself can also be a combination of the two. Just as primary essence is *malista* (μόλιστα), first of all, essence, so that which is first of all proper to essence (*malista idion tês ousias*) is, 'although it remains, notwithstanding, numerically one and the same, its ability to be the recipient of contrary qualifications [*to tauton kai hen arithmôî on tôn enantiôn einai dektikon*]' (*Categories* 6, 4a 10–11). A colour cannot be both black and white and still remain one and the same, but essence can. For example, an individual man (*ho tis anthrôpos*; ὁ τις ἄνθρωπος), this singular man who remains one and the same, can sometimes be pale and sometimes black (*hote men leukos hote de melas gignetai*; ὅτε μὲν λευκὸς ὅτε δὲ μέλας γίγνεται) (*Categories* 4a 19–20). This is

Box 1 The definition of *ousia protê*

Οὐσία δέ ἐστιν ἡ χυριώτατά τε καὶ πρώτως καὶ μάλιστα λεγομένη, ἢ μήτε καθ' ὑποκειμένου τινὸς λέγεται μήτε ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ τινὶ ἐστιν, οἷον ὁ τις ἄνθρωπος ἢ ὁ τις ἵππος.

[Essence – when said most properly, primarily and most of all – is that which neither is said of a subject nor is in a subject, e.g. the individual man or the individual horse.]

Aristotle, *Categories* 5, 2a 11–13.

Our translation goes against received usage by having *essence* rather than *substance* for *ousia*; this is an indication that what is at stake here is the determination of that which is. 'Substance' would shift the emphasis towards the physical (substance/accidents) rather than towards the combination of the logical and the physical.

This definition, which is presented as the primary definition of essence and, at the same time, as the definition of primary essence, is quite

remarkable in stylistic terms alone. Rather than stating directly that essence is *hupokeimenon*, it juxtaposes two negatives: 'neither said of ... nor is in'; essence is a *hupokeimenon* in two senses, as it is neither a predicate (or, more accurately, something predicable; see PREDICABLE and PREDICATION) nor an accident. We are actually dealing with a crudely knit juxtaposition, operated by means of the word *hupokeimenon*, that establishes the pre-eminence of essence in both the physical and the logical sense:

Thus all the other things either are said of the primary essences as subjects [*êtoi kath' hupokeimenôn toutôn legetai*; ἦτοι καθ' ὑποκειμένων τούτων λέγεται] or are in them as subjects [*ê en hupokeimenais autais estin*; ἢ ἐν ὑποκειμέναις αὐταῖς ἐστιν]. So if the primary essences did not exist it would be impossible for any of the other things to exist.

Ibid., 2b 6–6c.

not like the statement ‘he sits’, which becomes false when ‘he rises’, but ‘through a change which belongs to it in itself’ (*Categories* 4b 3). The accidents that are predicated upon *ousia* therefore arise from *ousia* itself; its subjectness *qua* material substance is one and the same as its subjectness *qua* logical subject, and it is precisely this that makes it the *hupokeimenon*.

Aristotle’s various attempts to define *ousia* reveal a constant tension between the singular and the universal; it is the *eidos* or essence and the *to ti ên einai* (τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι) or ‘what-it-was-to-be-that-thing’, which are in *Metaphysics* book Zeta (7, 1032b) referred to as *ousia prôtê* and not the *tode ti* of the *Categories* (see TO TI ÊN EINAI). Now it is the definition given in the *Categories*, where essence is primarily the concrete singular, that determines the conflagration between logical subjectness and physical subjectness. We can deduce from this that the individual, being a subject in two senses, is a necessary (but obviously not sufficient) precondition for the later developments that generate ‘subjectivity’ and ‘subjection’.

• see box 2

II. *Subjectum*: from *hupokeimenon* to self-certainty

A. From subjectness to subjectivity

Whilst the term *subjectivity* (*subjectivité*) appears to have been borrowed from the German *Subjektivität* thanks to the diffusion of the adjective *subjektiv* in the Kantian sense, the psychological meaning of the term, which is dominant in ordinary usage, is the result of a series of transformations that began in the Middle Ages. According to Martin Heidegger, the most decisive of all is the mutation that transforms Aristotle’s *hupokeimenon* into *subjectum*. According to the author of *Sein und Zeit*, the essential feature of the Cartesian initiative is the assertion that the *subjectum*, which is the *substans* of the Scholastics, in the sense of ‘that which is constant’ (subsisting) and ‘real’, is the basis of any psychology of the subject, or in other words the transition from the Latin *subjectum* to the modern sense of ‘subject’, or, if we prefer, the transition from *subjectum* to *ego*, from subjectivity to I-ness (*égoïté*). In volume 4 of his *Nietzsche*, Heidegger remarks:

Box 2 *Hypokeimeno* (ὑποκείμενο) in Modern Greek

Aristotle defines matter as ‘the first *hupokeimenon* of all the things from where they come and which belong to them not by accident’ (*Physics* 1, 9, 192a 31–4). But whilst the term ‘subject’ is an appropriate translation of *ousia* in the sense of ‘the ultimate subject of all predication’, it is an inappropriate rendering of this text. *Hupokeimenon* is therefore often translated as ‘substrate’, in keeping with the scholastic tradition, which uses ‘substratum’.

Like the English *subject* or French *sujet*, the Modern Greek ὑποκείμενο means both the grammatical and logical subject, and ‘subjectivity’. There is no adequate translation of ‘substrate’. Théodoridis notes that ‘to the extent that “subject” is, in our language, a worn-out and polysemic term, we are often obliged to resort to something like “substratum”, using the word *substructure* (*hypostrōma*)’ (Introduction, p. 229). This is why several Modern Greek translations have been suggested. In his translation of the *Physics*, Kyrgiopoulos gives the impression of remaining close to the original by translating the term as ‘the primary subject (*hupokeimenon*) in every thing’. Georgoulis suggests a periphrase: ‘that which is as lying beneath

(*hôs hypokeimeno*) all things’. In his translation of Plotinus, Tzavaras sometimes uses the Ancient Greek term, but also adopts Georgoulis’s suggestion and uses ‘that which lies below (κειμένη-απο-κάτω)’; he also extends that sense by using ‘substructure’. Whilst the Modern Greek verb does indeed mean ‘to lie under something’, and ‘to come under the authority of someone’, the noun no longer has the old meaning. The first translation simply uses the Ancient Greek; the second resorts to a verbal form and uses the past participle of ὑπόκειμαι, which does not capture the ancient noun form; ‘substructure’ forces the meaning, even though it does have the virtue of being a translation. These disagreements are an adequate demonstration of the difficulties involved in translating such an important term from Greek into Greek.

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‘Since Descartes and through Descartes, man, the human “I” has in a pre-eminent way come to be the “subject” in metaphysics... Why is the human subject transposed into the “I”, so that subjectivity here becomes coterminous with I-ness?’ (vol. 4, p. 96). Heidegger’s explanation for this phenomenon, which is based upon the structure of ‘the lying-before’ [*vor-herige*] that he finds at the heart of the Cartesian notion of representation, gives Descartes the central role: he completes the transformation of *hupokeimenon* into *subjectum* by ballasting its ‘actuality’ with the new dimension of perceptive activity:

According to the metaphysical tradition from Aristotle onwards, every true being is a *hupokeimenon*. This *hupokeimenon* is determined afterwards as *subjectum*. Descartes’ thinking distinguishes the *subjectum* which man is to the effect that the *actualitas* of this *subjectum* has its essence in the *actus* of *cogitare* (*percipere*).

Martin Heidegger, ‘Metaphysics as History of Being’, p. 31; trans. amended.

Heidegger’s thesis is debatable. He claims that Descartes initiates a displacement that occurred either long before him or long after him and which does not in any case, directly or explicitly equate *subjectum* with *ego*. What is more, Heidegger’s notion of ‘subjectivity’ is too closely associated with the Lutheran notion of the certainty of salvation, which supposedly founds the certainty characteristic of ‘modern subjectivity’, to be valid as a true genealogy of the subject.

• see box 3

Consideration must also be given to other experiences demonstrating that the moment when *mens humana* has an exclusive claim on the term ‘subject’, they belong to a history that predates the ‘Cartesian’ golden age of representation. Heidegger’s analysis does, however, have one merit: it demonstrates the need for a distinction between subjectness and subjectivity. Heidegger sets us a task that his own text does not complete: describing in historicological terms what leads from one to the other, and that means taking the medieval contribution into account.

B. *Subjectum* in medieval psychology

In the Middle Ages, philosophical theories of the subject were originally inscribed within the space of subjectness. The medieval notion of the *subjectum* is still, at least in problematic terms, Aristotle’s notion of the *hupokeimenon*, or of a *subject* in the sense of a support or substrate for essential or accidental properties. In terms of the genealogy of the subject and subjectivity, however, medieval thought was for a long time characterized by a remarkable chiasmus that can be described as follows: the Middle Ages had a theory of the ego or I-ness (*égoïté*), or a theory of the *subject* in the obvious philosophical sense of the term *mens*, but that theory did not require the implementation of the notion of a *subjectum*; it also offered a complete theory of subjectivity in grammar, logic, physics and metaphysics, but was reluctant to export it into psychology in the form of a theory of *mens humana*. The theory of *mens* did not, in other words, need to import the notion of *hupokeimenon*; conversely, the theory of

Box 3 Heidegger: self-certainty and the certainty of salvation at the dawn of modernity

There is no room for the Middle Ages in the scenario Heidegger constructs in order to explain the certainty that will ‘take man to sovereignty within the real world’. Everything obviously begins with the new Lutheran conception of *Er-lösung* and the problematic of the ‘certainty’ of salvation (which is problematized from a different point of view by Max Weber in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*).

Before all [in the medieval period], God the creator, and with him the institution of the offering and management of his gifts of grace (the church), is in sole possession of the sole and eternal truth. As *actus purus*, God is pure

actuality and thus the causality of everything real, that is, the source and place of salvation which as blessedness guarantees eternal permanence. By himself, man can never become, and be, absolutely certain of this salvation. On the other hand, through faith and similarly through lack of faith, man is essentially established in the attainment of salvation’s certainty, or forced to the renunciation of this salvation and its certainty. Thus a necessity rules, hidden in its origin, that man make sure of his salvation in some fashion in the Christian or in another sense (salvation; *sôteria*; redemption; release).

Martin Heidegger, ‘Metaphysics as History of Being’, p. 21.

the *subjectum* did not in itself claim to govern that of *mens*. And yet the two did intersect and were articulated several hundred years before the Cartesian theory of *ego cogito cogitatum*. It is impossible to reconstruct every stage in the process here. We can indicate the two poles that determine the very idea of subjectivity: on the one hand, a Trinitarian Augustinian model of the human soul based in part upon the idea of the circumincession (mutual in-dwelling) of the Persons of the Trinity, and in part upon a non-Aristotelian notion of hypostasis (*hupostasis*, ὑπόστασις); on the other, a non-Trinitarian Averroist model of subjectivity which is explicitly based on the Aristotelian notion of *hupokeimenon*. The two models are not intended to solve the same problem: the former is mainly concerned with the problem of consciousness and self-knowledge, whilst the latter is concerned with the *subject* of thought.

1. Averroism and the question of the 'subject of thought'

It is with the translation of the *Long Commentary* on Book III of the *De anima* that the notion of subjectivity really becomes part of the field of psychology. It represents an attempt to answer a specific question: what is the subject of thought? This question presupposes the validity of a model, Aristotle's analysis of sensation and the notions that make it possible: action (*energeia*, ἐνέργεια), and actuality or the actualization of potentiality (*energein*, ἐνέργειν). Aristotle's theory of sensation is not based upon the idea of a 'feeling subject' that is affected by a sense of change, but on the idea of sensation itself, defined as the joint action of a sense-object and a sense-organ (see SENS I, A, B). In Averroes, it is this structure of the joint action that governs the question of the subject of thought. Just as sensation has two subjects, so thought, referred to here as *intentio intellecta* (see INTENTION), intelligible knowledge *in actu*, also has two subjects: (1) images (*intentiones imaginatae*); (2) the so-called 'material' intellect, which is divorced from the body and not numbered by it. The subject of thought is therefore twofold; only one of these subjects – the *ego* or the I – has anything to do with man.

According to Aristotle, cognizing through the intellect is like perceiving through the senses, and perceiving through the senses is accomplished through the intermediary of two subjects. The first is the subject [*subjectum*] through which what is sensed becomes true (the sensible that exists outside the soul), and the second the subject which ensures that what is sensed is an existing form (and this

is the first perfection of the sensorial faculty). It follows that *intelligibilia in actu* must also have two subjects, one being the subject thanks to which they are true images, and the second the subject that ensures that each *intelligibilia* exists in the [real] world. This is the material intellect. Indeed, to that extent there is no difference between the senses and the intellect, except in that the subject of what is sensed, and which makes it true, is external to the soul, whereas the subject of the intellect, and which makes it true, is internal to the soul.

Averroes, *Commentary on De anima* III comm. 5 on *De anima* III 4 429a 21–4.

According to Averroes, man is not his intellect: if he has a role to play in intellection as such, it is thanks to his cognitive faculty (ar. *al-quwwat al-mufakkira* [القوة المفكرة] lat. *vis cogitative, vis distinctiva*), which supplies images or, rather, particular 'intentions' (see box 2, 'Cogitative', in INTENTION) to the material intellect, a unique substance that is divorced from the human soul. Man is therefore not the subject of thought in the precise sense that the eye is the subject of vision. In a certain sense, his sub-jjective position is, rather, on the side of that which is seen. This is in fact the basic criticism that Aquinas makes of Averroes' noetics in the *De unitate intellectus contra averroistas*. The theory of the two subjects of intellection does not allow us to say that man – or, rather, the individual man ('that man there') – thinks, but only that its images are thought by a separate intellect.

Assuming that one numerically identical species is both a possible form of intellect and simultaneously contained in images, that type of linkage would not be enough to allow this particular man to think. It is in fact clear that as, thanks to the intelligible species, something is *thought*, and as, thanks to the intellectual power, something *thinks*, so something is felt thanks to the sensible species, just as something *feels* thanks to the sensible power. That is why the wall in which colour is found, and whose sensible species *in actu* is vision, is something that is seen, and not something that sees; what sees is the animal endowed with the faculty of vision where the sensible species is found. Now the linkage between the possible intellect and the man in whom there are images whose species exist in the possible intellect is like that between the wall, in which colour exists, and sight, in which the species of colour exist. [If that linkage existed] just as the wall does not see, even though colour is seen, it would follow that *man would not think but that his images would be thought by the possible intellect*. It is therefore impossible to defend the thesis that man thinks if we adopt the position of Averroes.

Aquinas, *De unitate intellectus contra averroistas*, ch. 3, §65.

Far from accepting Aquinas's counter-argument, some thirteenth-century Latin Averroists radicalize the thesis that the subject, which has to be described as 'thinking', as opposed to 'imagined intentions', is not the individual man. Strictly speaking, thought does not have 'man' as its subject because 'thought is not a human perfection', but the 'perfection of the intellect', and a separate material. Introducing the subject/object duality for the first time in this context, the Averroists (see Siger de Brabant, *In III De Anima*, q. 9; ed. Bazán, pp. 28, 79–82) go so far as to argue that thought does not need man in order to 'sub-ject itself to him' in the strict sense. It only needs man, or rather fantasies, or, in the last analysis, a material body as an object, and not as a subject. As an anonymous master writes: 'As thought is not a human perfection, it needs man as an object ... it needs a material body as an object, not as its subject' (cf. *Anonyme de Giele, Quaestiones de anima* II, q. 4; in M. Giele, *Trois commentaries sur le Traité de l'âme d'Aristote*, pp. 76, 91–6).

The thesis that the body is the object of the intellect enjoyed an exceptional longevity: we find it as late as the sixteenth century, when it is turned *against* Averroes in Pomponazzi's *De immortalitate animae* (1516). A follower of Alexander of Aphrodisias's 'materialism', Pomponazzi accepts the idea, which is doubly unacceptable for Averroism, that the body can be both the object *and* the subject of thought:

According to its general definition, the soul is the action of a naturally organized body. The intellectual soul is therefore the action of an organized natural body. Since the intellect is by virtue of its being the action of an organized natural organ, it therefore also depends, in all its operations, upon an organ, either as subject or as object. It is therefore never completely divorced from all organs.

P. Pomponazzi, *De immortalitate animae*, ed. Mojsisch, 'Philosophische Bibliothek' 434, Hamburg: Meiner, 1990, ch. 4, p. 18.

For the Averroists of the thirteenth century, at least, it is clear that the existence of the ego and of the 'fact of consciousness' certainly does not coincide with the assumption of man as *subjectum*. Man does not experience himself as the subject of thought; the 'I' or 'ego' does not experience itself as that which thinks or experiences thought. As the same *Anonyme de Giele* writes:

You will say: I [and no other] feel and perceive that it is I who thinks. I reply: this is false. On the contrary, it is the intellect, which is naturally united with you as the motor [principle] and regulator of your body, that feels this, *he ipse* [and no other],

in exactly the same way that the separate intellect experiences that it has within it intelligibilia. You will say (again): I, the aggregate of a body and an intellect, feel that it is I who is thinking. I say: this is false. On the contrary, it is the intellect that is in need of your body as object [*intellectus egens tuo corpore ut objecto*] that feels this and communicates it to the aggregate.

The heteronomy of the Averroist *subject* is very significantly illustrated by an episode in translation history that is worth recalling. We know that Averroes' *Long Commentary on the De Anima* is, given the current state of the corpus, fully accessible only in Latin, or in Michel Scot's tricky translation (the Arabic original having been lost). One of the most famous statements, in which Averroes appears to introduce the notion of the subject, is the passage on eternity and the corruptibility of the theoretical intellect – the ultimate human perfection. It asserts: 'Perhaps philosophy always exists in the greater part of the subject, just as the man exists thanks to man, and just as the horse exists thanks to horse.' What does the expression mean? Going against the very principles of Averroes' noetics, the Averroist Jean de Jandun understands it to mean that 'philosophy is perfect in the greater part of its subject (*sui subjecti*)', or in other words 'in most men' (*in majori parte hominum*). There are no grounds for this interpretation. We can explain it, however, if we recall that Averroes' Latin translator has confused the Arabic terms *mawdu* [موضوع] (subject or substratum in the sense of *hupokeimenon*) and *mawdi* [موضع] (place). When Averroes simply says that philosophy has always existed 'in the greater part of the place', meaning 'almost everywhere', Jean understands him as saying that it has as its subject 'the majority of men', as every man (or almost every man) contributes to a full (perfect) realization in keeping with his knowledge and aptitudes. 'Subjectivity' does slip into Averroism here, but only because of a huge misunderstanding resulting from a translator's error. It therefore contradicts Averroes.

Appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, the moment when, thanks to Averroes' theory of the 'two subjects' of thought, Aristotle's *hupokeimenon*, recycled as a *subiectum*, enters the field of psychology, has, as we can see, absolutely nothing to do with *mens humana*'s exclusive claim on the name 'subject' (*subjectum* and *ego*, or subjectivity and I-ness [*égoïté*], therefore take on exactly the same meaning). As we shall see, and by the same criterion, the attestation, in an originary experience, of the 'fact of consciousness' was not, according to those who argued its case,

originally bound up with the Aristotelian notion of subjectivity.

2. The discovery of self-certainty

Confronted with the Averroist theory of the two subjects of thought, several medieval doctrines argue that the ego or the I can perceive itself, experience itself and know itself, thanks, initially, to a kind of direct intuition. None of these doctrines, however, initially relates this apperception to the idea of self-apprehension as *subject*. The first thing they have in common tends to be an Augustinian denial of the specularity of the self-to-self relationship: 'The mind [does not] know itself as in a mirror' (Augustine, *De Trinitate* X, 3, 5 BA 16, p. 128). Many medieval philosophers conclude from this theorem that, despite the claims of Aristotle and the Peripatetics, the soul cannot know itself in the same way that it can know other things, namely through representation or abstraction, and that it does not know itself either as another thing or as another soul. It knows itself as self-presence, and in, through and as that self-presence. The absence of knowledge through representation is characteristic of both that which is present and that which is absent. Seeing is a more appropriate way of re-presenting that which is absent in its absence as though it were present. Self-presence is inadmissible. The soul can, Augustine goes on, therefore form an image of itself and can 'love that image', but it cannot know itself in that way. To the contrary, Pierre Jean Olieu argues (*Impugnatio quorundam articulorum*, art. 19 f. 47ra) on similar grounds that it knows itself 'through the infallible certainty of its being [*certitudo infallibilis sui esse*]: man knows from the outset 'so infallibly that he exists and lives, that he cannot cast that into doubt [*scit enim homo se esse et vivere sic infallibiliter quod de hoc dubitare non potest*]'. Even more so than the rejection of specularity, the dominant feature of the medieval Augustinian model of I-ness is the truly Trinitarian notion of circumincession. The primacy of circumincession explains why, in the Augustinian sphere, the notion of *hupokeimenon* does not have any particular role to play in the philosophical elucidation of the self-to-self relationship. The way in which the Greek *ousia* and *hupostasis* evolve in the Middle Ages is much more relevant.

The circumincession of Persons as a model for the theory of mind

The Augustinian theory of mind (*mens*) and mental actions does not depend solely upon the notions of essence and substance. It is entirely based on a notion

derived from Trinitarian theology which was elaborated in order to explain how, to use Augustine's own terminology, a substance can be at once simple and multiple. This notion is what is usually known as the circumincession of Persons or perichoresis. Perichoresis means the mutual indwelling of the Persons of the Trinity. Their mutual immanence – which has two aspects: a *manence* (expressed in scholastic Latin by the term *circuminsessio*) and a dynamic and never-ending immanence (expressed by the term *circumincessio*) – excludes from the outset any recourse to the standard conception of the subject-substantial as a support for accidents. God cannot, in any strict sense of the term, be said to subsist in the same sense that a *substantia* subsists. That which subsists in the strict sense is that which is subjected to what is said to 'be in a subject' (*ea quae in aliquo subjecto esse dicuntur*, *De Trinitate* VII 4, 10, BA 15, p. 536). That which exists *in substantia* is not substance; it is an accident, such as colour, which exists '*in subsistente atque subjecto corpore*' and which, when it ceases to exist, 'does not deprive the body of its bodily being'. The relationship between God and His attributes cannot be like this: God is not the subject of his goodness (*nefas es dicere ut subsistat et subsit Deus bonitati suae*), which does not exist in him as in a subject (*tanquam in subjecto*). It is preferable to say of God that He is himself his goodness, that He is an essence rather than a substance, and that the Trinity is in the strict sense 'a single essence' – Father, Son and Spirit are considered to be three 'hypostases' or, more accurately, three mutually indwelling Persons. The rejection of the *substantia/id quod est in subjecto* in Trinitarian theology is of crucial importance to the history of psychology. The doctrine of the Trinitarian image, which is central to Augustine's theory of the soul, in fact holds that the same structure of mutual immanence is found in the inner man. But if that is the case, the notion of *substantia*, in the sense of *subjectum*, has to be banished from the field of psychology, on pain of reducing mental acts to mere accidents that befall the mind. This is why Augustine, who was quite familiar with Aristotle's notion of *hupokeimenon*, eliminates the *subjectum* from his analysis of the triads of the inner man. The *hupokeimenon* is incompatible with the transposition of the theological notion of mutual immanence to psychology.

The application of the perichoretic model to the theory of 'mens'

What we are calling the perichoretic model of the soul (even though Augustine himself obviously never

uses the expression) is at work in the description of the two triads the author of the *De Trinitate* invokes in order to distinguish between knowledge and self-consciousness, namely (a) *mens–notitia–amor* and (b) *memoria (sui), intelligentia, voluntas*. The first analogy between the Trinity and the inner man subordinates self-consciousness to self-knowledge. The notions of *ousia* and *hupostasis* play an obvious role even at this level. Three theses articulate the perichoretic structure: the concept of *mens* necessarily implies its correlates: knowledge and the will; all three refer to substances: *mens* does so in the strict sense whilst knowledge and the will do so in a broad sense in so far as, being acts, they differ from mere accidents; these three ‘substances’, which are within one another, are simply ‘a single substance or essence’.

• see box 4

This structure allows the conceptualization of the transition from knowledge to self-consciousness: (1) the mind knows itself discursively and reflexively through the act of knowing; (2) this knowledge leads, directly and necessarily, to self-love; (3) in its self-love and self-knowledge, the mind becomes immediately self-conscious (*De Trinitate* IX, 2, 2–5, 8). In this analogy, which is still imperfect, between the inner man and the divine Trinity, *mens* represents the deity in his entirety, whilst the deity’s acts correspond to the Persons of the Son and the Spirit.

In the second analogy (*memoria [sui], intelligentia, voluntas*), in which the perichoretic model is more adequately applied, an immediate and intuitive self-consciousness precedes and founds reflexive knowl-

edge. Because the terms of the triad, which are really distinct, form a unity (because the mind is one), we can say that *mens*, which is the substance or essence of the soul, represents the deity in his entirety, whilst *memoria* corresponds to the Person of the Father, *intelligentia* to the Person of the Son, and *amor* to the Person of the Holy Spirit. When taken either separately or together, each of the three is equal to the others. Each of the three necessarily implies the other three, as all three are correlates. In the full Trinitarian structure, *mens*’s acts are described as ‘proceeding’ from the memory in the same way that, in God, the Son and the Holy Spirit ‘proceed’ from the Father (*De Trinitate* X, 11, 18).

The language of *ousia* and *hupostasis* has a specific function: to demonstrate that there is a type of unity between *mens*’s acts, which are actually distinct from one another, and *mens* itself. This intimate correlativity is irreducible to the relationship between accidents and substance. This is therefore, and by definition, a non-Aristotelian model designed to elucidate the notions of substance–subject and accidents, which are incompatible with the perichoretic structure of the soul. The invention of the ‘subjectivity’ of which Heidegger speaks therefore requires the *subjectum* to intrude into the Augustinian structure. It requires what at first sight appears to be an unnatural encounter between *certitudo infallibilis sui esse* and the Aristotelian notion of a subject. That encounter allows self-certainty to be reformulated as a ‘subjective’ certainty. That encounter presupposes in its turn a more sophisticated version of the subject/object distinction. We have two lines of investigation here.

Box 4 The psychical trinity: I am, I know, I will

In the *Confessions*, Augustine uses the perichoretic model in his outline description of what might be termed the ‘psychical life’ by invoking the triad of *esse, nosse, velle*. In this model, Trinitarian relations permit a formal description of the interacting equalities that define the incomprehensible unity of the ego:

I am, I know and I will. I am a being which knows and wills; I know both that I am and that I will ... In these three – being, knowledge and will – there is one inseparable life, one life, one mind, one essence; and therefore, although they are distinct from one another, this distinction does not separate them.

Confessions, XIII, 11, 12.

In the description of the *mens–notitia–amor* triad, the doctrine of the circumincession of the persons of the Trinity is evoked even more directly in order to conceptualize the mutual in-dwelling of *mens* and its acts:

The mind, love and knowledge ... each is a substance in itself, and all are found mutually in all, or each two in each one, consequently all are in all... These three, therefore, are in a marvellous manner inseparable from one another; and yet each of them is a substance, and all together are one substance or essence, while the terms themselves express a mutual relationship.

On the Trinity IX, 5, 8.

The encounter between the Augustinian perichoretic model and the Aristotelian 'subjectum'

The first, which seems self-evident, is the dichotomy between the subjective mode of being or presence and the objective mode of being or presence, between the *esse subjective* and the *esse objective* of an *intentio* or *conceptus*. This dichotomy does not, however, lead directly from subjectness to subjectivity. On the contrary, the idea that an intention or affect has a 'subjective' existence merely likens mental states to the qualities of the soul or the accidents that befall it, and they are characterized by the relation of inherence. It therefore violates the principle of circumincession. It can be applied to acts (as in William of Ockham) or equated with the Averroist theory of the two subjects (as in Pierre d'Auriol), and remains closer to Aristotle's subjectness than to *certitudo sui esse*. Even though the opposition between objectness/objectivity (*ob-jectitē*) and sub-jectness is essential if a sub-jective notion of the ego is to emerge, it is not enough to guarantee that it will do so. We therefore have to turn to our second line of investigation.

Although it is always dangerous to give a date for the appearance of new theories in the Middle Ages, we can advance the hypothesis that one of the first people to witness the 'subjective' mutation of sub-jectness was precisely the author of the formula *certitudo infallibilis sui esse*: Pierre Jean Olieu.

The Franciscan was reacting to a specific situation: the reformulation, which had become standard since the late thirteenth century, thanks to the notions of 'act' and 'object', of the peripatetic doctrine that the intellect knows itself (1) in the same way that it knows other things, and (2) on the basis of its knowledge of those other things. This so-called peripatetic formulation had in a sense already violated the Augustinian principle stating that the *mens* cannot be regarded as the subject of acts that can be likened to mental accidents. Man is assumed to arrive at an understanding of his mind (*mens*) and of the nature of his ability to think (*naturae potentiae intellectivae*) on the basis of his acts (*per actus ejus*) and the object of those acts (*per cognitionem objectorum*). This conjectural knowledge is the product of a process of reasoning which, taking objects as its starting point, works back to acts by postulating (a) that these acts subsist (*manant*) only because of the power that supplies their substrate (*ab aliqua potentia et substantia*), (b) that they therefore 'exist in a subject' (*sunt in aliqui subjecto*), (c) which allows us to conclude that 'we have a faculty that assures the subsistence' of those acts. Arguing against Augustine, the peripatetics posit

the existence of a '*potentia sub-jectiva*' in order to demonstrate the existence of 'a subject of knowledge acts that are oriented towards objects'. This conjecture, which looks to moderns like a decisive step towards 'subjectivity', is in reality what the Aristotelian model supplied: self-certainty. It actually says nothing about the ego or the I; it makes it possible to posit that my acts have a subject, but it does not establish that 'I am' that subject. Nothing in the peripatetic argument allows me 'to be certain that I am, that I am alive and that I am thinking'; on the contrary, it merely posits that my acts 'subsist thanks to a certain power and that they are inherent in a certain subject':

If we carefully examine this way of thinking, we will see not only that it cannot be beyond doubt, but also that no one can use it to arrive at any certainty that he is what he is, that he is living, and that he is thinking, even though he can therefore be certain that these acts subsist by virtue of a certain power and that they reside in a certain subject.

[*Si quis autem bene inspexerit istum modum, reperi-et quod non solum potest in eo contingere aliqua dubietas, sed etiam quod nunquam per hanc viam possemus esse certi nos esse et nos vivere et intel-ligere, licet enim certi simus quod illi actus manant ab aliqua potentia, et sunt in aliquo subjecto.*]

Pierre Jean Olieu, *Impugnatio quorundam articulorum*, art 19, f.47ra.

In order to arrive at the self-certainty of the Moderns, we therefore have to take one more step: we must assume that I can intuit that I myself am the subject of my acts. We must, in a word, go back to Augustine's perichoretic conception of the soul and adapt the 'peripatetic' language of subjectivity to it. This twofold manoeuvre brings about a forced synthesis and betrays both parties. The resultant thesis is, basically, neither Augustinian nor Aristotelian. But that is precisely why it is a farewell to 'subjectness', or at least the precondition for that farewell. That is the step taken by Pierre Jean Olieu when he makes my perception of my acts depend upon 'my prior perception of myself as subject of those acts'. This leads him to formulate the theorem that 'in the perception of my acts, the perception of the subject itself (= me) comes first according to the natural order of things.' Expressions such as '*certitudo qua sumus certi de supposito omnis actus scientialis*' or '*in hac apprehensione videtur naturali ordine praeire apprehensio ipsius suppositi*' signal the encounter between certainty and subjectivity that gives rise to the modern notions of subjectivity and subjective certainty. They also introduce one more basic feature: acts are likened to attributes or predicates of the subject-ego. Olieu is very clear about

this: ‘Our acts are perceived by us only as predicates or attributes [*actus nostris non apprehenduntur a nobis nisi tamquam praedicata vel attributa*].’ The subject is perceived first because ‘according to the natural order of things, the subject is perceived before the predicate is attributed to it as such.’ The ‘subjectivation’ of the soul is now complete in every dimension, including the assumption of the linguistic or logical form of predication, which is reduplicated when Olieu introduces the word *ego* into linguistic communication. Although the term is unnecessary in Latin, Olieu in fact stresses that, when we wish to signal the existence within us of some mental state, ‘we put the subject first by saying ‘I think that or I see that [*quando volumus hoc aliis annunciare praemittimus ipsum suppositum dicentes: ego hoc cogito, vel ego hoc video*].’ We could therefore describe this first medieval theorization of subjectivity as both ‘substantialist’ and ‘attributivist’. It entails the idea of self-intuition as ‘substance’, or as subject and principle (*subjectum et principium*), as the ‘experiential and almost tactile sensation’ (*sensus experimentalis et quasi tactualis*) that I am a permanent subject. We can further intuit, thanks to the same ‘inner sense’, that my acts are so many ‘attributes’ that are distinct from my substance. They subsist thanks to it and exist within a ‘becoming’ mode:

When we apprehend certain of our acts through an inner sensation, we make an almost experiential distinction between the substance whence they derive their subsistence and in which they exist,

and the senses, or sensations themselves. This means that we perceive through our senses that they subsist prior to that substance and not by virtue of our senses, and that substance is substance, and that it alone is something stable that subsists in itself, whilst its acts are in a permanent state of becoming.

[*Quando apprehendimus nostros actus quosdam interno sensu et quasi experimentaliter distinguimus inter substantiam a qua manant et in qua existunt et inter ipsos sensus, unde et sensibiliter percipimus quod ipsi manant et dependent ab ea, non ipsa ab eis, et quod ipsa esse quiddam fixum et in se manens, ipsi vero actus in quodam continuo fierii.*]

When Kant describes the soul in terms of a rational psychology, he is in fact deploying a theory outlined in the Middle Ages thanks to a violent synthesis of two models that went on arguing over the theory of the soul until the fourteenth century: the Aristotelian model of sub-jectness, to which Heidegger restricts his analysis, and the Augustinian model of the circumsession of Persons (or hypostases), which, in this context, has been overlooked by almost all historians of the *subject*.

• see box 5

III. Subject: subjectivity and subjection

A. An untranslatable passage in Nietzsche

At the heart of the problems that are now raised by the use of the ‘subject’ category – which has never been more central to philosophy, even though the

Box 5 Subject, thing, person

Everyday language tends to assimilate the notion of ‘subject’ to that of ‘person’, and this appears to contradict interpretations of subjectness (*subjectité*) in terms of subjection or domination. Livy (*History of Rome*, VII, 2) traces *persona* back to the fourth century BC, and the term is basically political, referring to a ‘representation’ that is assigned through a role. Thanks to this double metonymy, which moves from the mask worn by an actor to the role he is interpreting, and then to Cicero’s definition of the magistrate as ‘spokesman’ (*per-sona*) of the *civitas*, or one who ‘assumes the role’ of the city (*est proprium munus magistratus intelligere se gerere personam civitas* [It is ... the particular function of a magistrate to realize that he assumes the role of the city], *On Duties*, I, 34). This makes the magistrate nothing more than the voice of the

law (conversely, the law is a ‘silent magistrate’, *De Legibus*, III, 2). The *persona* is basically juridical; the first to hold it is the assembled Roman people, which, to the extent that it has a literal right to speak, is a *de facto* and *de jure* ‘person’. Given that ‘*nul n’étant censé ignorer la loi* [ignorance of the law is no excuse]’ a Roman citizen is a *persona*. The city is the supreme citizen or ‘supremely a persona’ (*persona civitas*), and the magistrate is the persona of a person (*persona personae*). There therefore appears to be a hidden link between ‘person’ and the dimension of subjection that is present in the notion of ‘subject’. *Persona*, that is, provides the backdrop for the distinction between the free man (*caput*) and the slave (*servus*); it allows the distinction between autonomy and juridical heteronomy. As the jurisconsult Gaius writes (c. 135) ‘*Quaedam*

personae sui juris sunt, quedam alieno juris subiectae sunt [some persons are *sui juris* (independent) and others are *alieni juris* (dependent on others)]' (*Institutes* I 48). The history of 'persona' is, in etymological terms, bound up with that of 'role' (a political, juridical, social or even ethical role) and with the emergence of 'subjectivity'–subjection. In philosophical terms, however, 'persona' is closely bound up with the phenomena of the translations and transpositions associated with the mutation of Aristotle's *hupokeimenon* into *subjectum*.

Philosophical definitions of 'person' first appear in the context of the controversies over Trinitarian theology that occurred in late antiquity. In Chapter 3 of the *Contra Eutychen et Nestorium*, Boethius (pp. 84, 4–5) defines 'person' as 'an individual substratum endowed with a rational nature [*natura rationalis individua substantia*]'. This definition provides the backdrop for the philosophical encounter between subjectness and personality. Yet Boethius uses not *hupokeimenon*, but *hupostasis*, a term which is even more ambiguous and difficult to elucidate. In order to make the strange Trinitarian notion of 'person' comprehensible to *Latini*, Aristotle's Latin translator assumes that he first has to explain what the Greeks call *hupostasis*. The Latin word *persona* – which he regards as equivalent to the Greek *prosôpon* (πρόσωπον), even though the term refers to an optical model, to a visible representation such as the face of the law or the polis, rather than to a voice or to speech – does not, in his view, express what is at stake in the notion he is trying to construct. And how indeed could a Latin-speaker living in the 520s understand something of the Trinitarian mystery by using a term that evokes someone appearing on stage in a mask, the role that intervenes in the ethical formulation of 'life choices' (in the sense in which Cicero writes: '*Ipsi autem gerere quam personam velimus a nostra voluntate profiscitur* [It is through a voluntary decision that we adopt the *role* we claim to be playing]'), or the death mask that wards off demons? The Greeks have the 'much more expressive' (*longe signatus*) term *hupostasis*, which allows them to express the fundamental feature: the 'individual subsistence of a nature [*naturae individuum subsistentiam*]' (Boethius, pp. 86, 24–5).

Because of the initial hesitation over 'substance' or 'subsistence', Boethius' definition of 'person' reveals the constituent features of the various medi-

eval networks that use different combinations of 'subject', '*suppôt*', 'thing' and 'person'.

The important thing here is the clarification of the distinction between subsistence and substance. Given that Boethius translates *ousia* as *essentia*, *ousiôsis* as *subsistentia* and *hupostasis* as *substantia*, the first step is to make a systematic distinction between the three terms. This can be done by showing that an entity such as man has *ousia* or essence because he is; has *ousiôsis* or 'subsistence', because he is 'in' no subject (is not, that is to say, an accident), and has *hupostasis* or 'substance' because he is 'subjected to others' who are not subsistences (who are, that is, 'accidents'). The second step is to demonstrate that that which is not an accident, but which is a substrate for accidents, or in other words that which is a subsistence, 'is' at the level of the universal, but 'acquires substance', or in other words functions as a substance (as a substrate for accidents) in particulars ('*ipsae subsistentiae in universalibus quidem sint, in particularibus vero capiunt substantiam*'). According to the Greeks, 'substances subsisting in particulars' deserve to be called 'substances' in the strict sense ('*jure subsistentias particulariter substantes ὑπόστασις ἀπὸ τῶν ἐν τοῖς ἰδιωτικοῖς ἀποκαλεῖται*', *ibid.*, pp. 86, 35–8, 39). What Boethius calls a 'hypostasis' or substance is therefore that which found the particular existence of a nature, or which makes possible for its particularization and its existence, which are inseparable.

Quite apart from the way Aristotle's *hupokeimenon* mutates into *subjectum*, we must also make allowance for the way *hupostasis* mutates into *substantia*, if we are to understand the emergence of the personal dimension of subjectivity within the domain of Trinitarian theology. The history of the Latin reception of the Greek formula – 'one essence in three hypostases' – provides the framework for a series of developments that are of great importance to the subjectness/subjectivity system. The replacement of the obscure term *substantia* by the word *res* or 'thing' in the eleventh century is one of the hidden reasons for the philosophical debate between the realists and the nominalists. This also provided the framework for the first medieval reflections on the notion of *suppositum*, which affected grammar, logic and theology alike. If we also recall that the formula 'have *hupostasis* (in)', which Boethius translates into Latin as *habere substantiam (in)* was the prescholastic way of expressing existence,

we can see that this is also the theme that introduces ontology (the difference between essence and existence), which was initially part of Trinitarian theology's conceptual network.

From this perspective, 'subjective' is not the opposite of 'objective' in the same way that 'perceiving' is the opposite of 'perceived', or that 'inner world' is the opposite of 'outside world'. When we encounter the terms *subjectum* or *subjectivum* in medieval texts on psychology, we therefore have to take care not to interpret them in the sense of 'subjective subject' or 'egoness'. Medieval philosophers were concerned with something very different, namely the substrate, *sub-jectum* or *suppôt* of thought. The way *subjectum* is used in the sphere of subjectness explains why authors such as Averroes gives human thought two subjects. To ask what is the subject of thought is to raise questions about what it is that founds the *intentio intellecta* as

an act *commun*. Averroes' answer – the imagination, which is a faculty situated in the body and numbered by it, and the 'material' intellect, which is separate from the body and not numbered by it – is inscribed within what we would now call a 'modular' psychology, and therefore does not assimilate the *subjectum* to the *ego*.

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twentieth century gave it a completely new orientation – there is a 'pun' (intentional or otherwise) on two Latin etymologies: that of the neuter *subjectum* (which, like *suppositum*, has, ever since the scholastics, been regarded by philosophers as a translation of the Greek *hupokeimenon*), and that of the masculine *subjectus* (equated with *subditus* in the Middle Ages). One gives rise to a lineage of logico-grammatical and ontological-transcendental meanings, and the other to a lineage of juridical, political and theological meanings. Far from remaining independent of one another, they have constantly overdetermined one another, because, following Kant, the problematic articulation of 'subjectivity' and 'subjection' came to be defined as a theory of the constituent subject. That overdetermination can be overt, latent or even repressed depending on whether or not the language in question reveals its workings.

The best way to introduce these problems of modern philosophy is, perhaps, to read an astonishing passage from Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*. I cite the most authoritative French translation and include the German terms in parentheses.

Les philosophes ont coutume de parler de la volonté comme si c'était la chose la mieux connue au monde [...] Un homme qui *veut* commande en lui-même à quelque chose qui obéit ou dont il se croit obéi [*befiehlt einem Etwas in sich, das gehorcht oder von dem er glaubt, dass es gehorcht*]. Mais considérons maintenant l'aspect le plus singulier de

la volonté, de cette chose si complexe [*vielfachen Dinge*] pour laquelle le peuple n'a qu'un mot: si, dans le cas envisagé, nous sommes à la fois celui qui commande *et* celui qui obéit [*zugleich die Befehlenden und Gehorchenden*], et si nous connaissons, en tant que sujet obéissant [*als Gehorchenden*], la contrainte, l'oppression, la résistance, le trouble, sentiments qui accompagnent immédiatement l'acte de volonté; si, d'autre part, nous avons l'habitude de nous duper nous-mêmes en escamotant cette dualité grâce au concept synthétique de 'moi' [*uns über diese Zweiheit vermöge des synthetischen Begriffs 'ich' hinwegzusetzen, hinwegzutäuschen*], on voit que toute une chaîne de conclusions erronées, et donc de jugements faux sur la volonté elle-même, viendrait encore s'agréger au vouloir [...] Comme dans la très grande majorité des cas, la volonté n'entre en jeu que là où elle s'attend à être obéi, donc à susciter un acte, on en est venu à croire, *fallacieusement*, qu'une telle conséquence était *nécessaire* [*so hat sich der Anschein in das Gefühl übersetzt, als ob es da eine Notwendigkeit von Wirkung gäbe*]. Bref, celui qui veut est passablement convaincu que la volonté et l'acte ne sont qu'un en quelque manière [*dass Wille und Aktion irgendwie Eins seien*] [...] 'Libre arbitre', tel est le mot qui désigne ce complexe état d'euphorie du sujet voulant, qui commande et qui s'identifie à la fois avec l'exécuteur de l'action [*das Wort für jenen vielfachen Lust-Zustand des Wollenden, der befiehlt und sich zugleich mit dem Ausführenden als Eins setzt*], qui goûte au plaisir de triompher des résistances, tout en estimant que c'est sa volonté qui les surmonte. À son plaisir d'individu qui ordonne,

le sujet voulant ajoute ainsi les sentiments de plaisir issus des instruments d'exécution [*Der Wollende nimmt dergestalt dies Lustgefühle der ausführenden, erfolgreichern Werkzeuge*] qui sont les diligentes 'sous-volontés' ou sous-âmes [*'Unterwillen' oder Unterseelen*] car notre corps n'est pas autre chose qu'un édifice d'âmes multiples [*ein Gesellschafsbau vieler Seelen*]. *L'effet, c'est moi* [in French in Nietzsche's text]: ce qui ce produit ici ne diffère pas de ce qui se passe dans toute collectivité heureuse et bien organisée: la classe dirigeante s'identifie au succès de la collectivité [*dass die regierende Klasse sich mit den Erfolgen des Gemeinwesens identifiziert*] [...]

F. Nietzsche, *Œuvres philosophiques complètes*, vol. 7, *Par-delà bien et mal*, §19.

In Hollingdale's English translation:

Philosophers are given to speaking of the will as if it were the best-known thing in the world [...] A man who *wills* – commands something in himself which obeys or which he believes obeys. But now observe the strangest thing of all about the will – about this so complex thing for which people have only *one* word: inasmuch as in the given circumstance we at the same time command *and* obey, and the side which obeys know the sensations of constraint, compulsion, pressure, resistance, motions which usually begin immediately after the act of will; inasmuch as, on the other hand, we are in the habit of disregarding and deceiving ourselves over this duality by means of the synthetic concept 'I'; so a whole chain of erroneous conclusions and consequently of false evaluations of the will itself has become attached to the will as such. Because in the great majority of cases willing takes place only where the effect of the command, that is to say obedience, was to be *expected*, the *appearance* has translated itself into the sensation, as if it were here a *necessity of effect*. Enough: he who wills believes with a tolerable degree of certainty that will and action are somehow one [...] 'Freedom of will' – is the expression for that complex condition of pleasure of the person who wills, who commands and at the same time identifies himself with the executor of the command – who as such also enjoys the triumph over resistance involved but who thinks it was his will itself which overcame these resistances. He who wills adds in this way the sensations of pleasure of the successful executive agents, the serviceable 'under-wills' or under-souls – 'for our body is only a social structure composed of many souls' – to his sensations of pleasure as commander. *L'effet, c'est moi*: what happens here is what happens in every well-constructed and happy commonwealth: the ruling class identifies itself with the successes of the commonwealth [...]

My purpose here is not to challenge the choices made by the French translator (which would imply

that I intended to propose alternatives) but to point out the problems they raise. I attach particular importance to the fact that Nietzsche's text itself contains some thoughts about 'translation' inasmuch as it is a process of misrepresentation (*travestissement*) that has to be given a basic anthropological meaning. No less remarkable is the fact that, given the illusions of unity that are inherent in willing, the invocation of the political metaphor (if that is what it is...) goes hand in hand with the construction of a 'French' phrase (which cannot be translated into French) which is a parodic version of the famous allegory of absolute monarchy attributed to Louis XIV (*'L'État, c'est moi'*).

Two striking features of the French translation are to be noted. It systematically introduces the word *sujet* (*'sujet obéissant'*, *'sujet voulant'*) because it makes the metaphysical assumption that an *Etwas* remains the same throughout the actions of commanding and the effects of obeying, and thus gets around the critique that Nietzsche's text is making, at this very moment, of the illusion of the I (*Ich*). It also plays on one of the French *sujet's* connotations, which is not present in the closest German philosophical equivalent (*das Subjekt*), and therefore uses a generic term to express the ambivalence of the real or imagined relations of subordination (*arkhein* [ἄρχειν] and *arkhesthai* [ἄρχεσθαι]) that exist between the parts of the soul; in Nietzsche's view, they constitute the essence of the phenomenon of 'will': *sujet obéissant* looks like a tautology, and *sujet voulant* almost like a contradiction. Or is it the other way around?

Far from being a mere curiosity, such a text brings us to the very heart of the linguistic tensions characteristic of the construction and use of the notion of *sujet*. Their essential characteristic derives from the Greek and Latin notions, which tend to produce two different paradigms for the interpretation of 'subject', one specific to the neo-Latin languages (and especially French) and one specific to German. In one case, the simultaneously logical-ontological and juridico-political connotations of *sujet* are – thanks to a sort of 'historiological' word play on the meanings of *subiectum* and *subjectus* – exploited in a systematic investigation into the modalities of the *'assujettissement du sujet'* ('subjugation of the subject'). In the other, the relationship between the subject's mode of being and the register of law or power can be found exclusively in an ontology of freedom which contrasts it with nature, because the political dimension is immediately concealed by language or is, rather, relegated to the latent system. The two paradigms do not, of course, develop independently of one another, as they share

the same classical references and because the more or less simultaneous translation of the works of European metaphysics is one of the main determinants of their history. In that respect, it is striking that it should be the divergent readings of Nietzsche's work that bring this out.

B. Sovereignty of the subject: Bataille or Heidegger?

The first paradigm is exemplified by Georges Bataille, who was probably one of the first contemporary authors working in the French language consciously to exploit the possibility of inscribing a dialectical (or mystical) antinomy at the heart of anthropology by defining the subject in terms of its 'sovereignty', or in other words its non-subjection. According to Bataille this is just a bad pun – even though his construct obviously relies upon it:

If I have spoken of objective sovereignty, I have never lost sight of the fact that sovereignty is never truly objective, that it refers rather to deep subjectivity [...] [in the world of things and their interdependencies] we perceive relations of force and doubtless the isolated element undergoes the influence by the mass [*la masse*], but the mass cannot *subordinate* [*subordonner*] it. Subordination presupposes another relation, that of object to subject. [Footnote: The custom of sovereigns saying 'my subjects' introduces an unavoidable ambiguity: in my view the *subject* is the *sovereign*. The subject I am talking about is in no sense *subjected* [*assujetti*].] The subject is the being *as he appears to himself from within* [...] *The sovereign different from the others differs from them as the subject differs from the objective action of labour*. This unavoidable pun is unwelcome. I mean that the mass individual, who spends part of his time working for the benefit of the sovereign, *recognises* him; I mean that he *recognises himself* in him. The mass individual no longer sees in the sovereign the object that he must first of all be in his eyes, but rather the *subject* [...] the sovereign, epitomizing the *subject*, is the one by whom and for whom the instant, the *miraculous* instant, is the ocean into which the streams of labour disappear.

Georges Bataille, *La Part maudite* III, La Souveraineté, I, 4, in *Œuvres complètes* VIII, pp. 283–6; *The Accursed Share*, vol. 3, *Sovereignty*, Pt 1, ch. 4, pp. 237–41, trans. amended.

The obstacle Bataille comes up against here may have influenced his decision to abandon his book. But it also provides Lacan, Althusser and Foucault with their starting point when they transform the impasse into an opening.

The second paradigm is exemplified by Heidegger's suggestion that Nietzsche's doctrine of the 'will to

power' should be seen as part of the 'history of being' characteristic of Western metaphysics. Nietzsche characterises the subject that designates itself 'I' (*Ich*) or 'ego' as a grammatical fiction (see in particular the fragments from 1887–89 published under the title *The Will to Power*). Heidegger, however, is trying to demonstrate that it 'is grounded in the metaphysics established by Descartes', to the extent that, although he makes body rather than 'soul' and 'conscience' the substance of thought, he identifies the latter more closely than ever with subjectivity and makes the criterion of truth the definition of man as subject (Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. IV, ch. 19, pp. 123 ff.). Heidegger's problem is how to determine, through a genealogical investigation into 'metaphysics as the history of being', the preconditions for the moment of ontological conversion (which is closely linked to the mutation in the idea of truth itself) that made *subjectum*, which Latin philosophers regarded as a 'translation' of Aristotle's *hupokeimenon*, not just the simple presupposition of the realization of an individual substance in a particular form, but 'the' very power to think, from which all representations stem, and which reflects upon itself in the first person (*cogito me cogitare* is the key phrase attributed to Descartes by Heidegger). The 'sovereignty of the subject' (*Herrschaft des Subjekts*), on which we are still dependent, is basically a creation of the Descartes of the *Meditations* and the *Principles of Philosophy*.

To begin to undo this tangle (and, in doing so, to elucidate at least part of the unsaid [*non-dit*] of late-twentieth-century debates about the 'philosophy of the subject' and the various critiques therefore), we must first reduce Heidegger's construction of the history of Being as the history of successive generalizations of 'subjectness' (*Subjektheit*, 'I think') to the self-referentiality (or autonomy) of the transcendental subject and its retrospective attribution to Descartes, and make it the starting point for the specifically modern attitude in philosophy. Despite Bataille's embarrassment about what he calls a pun, we must then reconstruct a *longue durée* semantics whose effects become ever-more specific and conscious in the hands of his successors, whom it helps to unite, regardless of the obvious doctrinal disagreements. Let us begin with the first point.

C. The 'Cartesian' subject: a Kantian invention

The expressions 'Cartesian subject' and 'Cartesian subjectivity' are so widely used and so often used to situate Cartesianism in a historical or comparative

series (either in a French discourse, or between French and other philosophical idioms) that it is worthwhile expounding in detail the prehistory of this construct, which is also a translation error. That error reveals the extraordinary conceptual work performed by the language itself (because of the syntactic differences between Latin, French and German). Language is sufficiently powerful and suggestive to induce a retrospective understanding of Descartes' text and the issues at stake in his philosophy, and we can no longer ignore the issue. Thanks to Kant's reading of Descartes, we can see it as an early instance of resistance to the transcendental problematic but cannot divorce it from the language of 'subjectivity'. From that point of view, we cannot undo what Kant has done.

As J. Ritter judiciously reminds us, *Subjektivität* is already an important term in Baumgarten's *Aesthetics*. It refers to the field and quality of phenomena which, in the thinking, perceiving and sentient being, are the effect not of the external objects that affect it, but of its own dispositions (they are what Locke or Malebranche would call 'secondary qualities'). Ritter's suggestion to the contrary notwithstanding, the use of *subjectum*, or rather *Subjekt*, in German does not, however, precede this abstract conceptual formation; it comes later. It is in fact only with the *Critique of Pure Reason* that *das Subjekt* (variously described as the logical subject, the empirical subject, the rational subject, the transcendental subject or the moral subject) becomes the key concept in a philosophy of subjectivity. Kant's philosophy therefore simultaneously 'invents' the problematic of a thought whose conditions of access to both the objectivity of the laws of nature and the universality of ethical and aesthetic values lie in its own constitution (the so-called 'Copernican revolution'), and gives the name 'subject' (i.e. the opposite of 'object') to the generic individuality inherent in the interplay between the faculties of knowledge; for all finite minds, that interplay constitutes 'the world' and gives a meaning to the fact of acting in the world. Even if we take into account its remarkable forerunners (such as that identified by A. de Libera in the work of the 'brilliant' twelfth-century Franciscan, Pierre Jean Olieu; see above), which were in all probability not known to Kant, the only intrinsic connection between the *Subjekt* created by Kant and the scholastic notion of the *subjectum* or *suppositum* is that implied by the idea of the Copernican revolution: the categories, or in other words the most general modalities that the activity of judgement uses to attribute predicates to things, are no longer genera of being, but categories of the subject, constitutive of

the object (and, in that sense, of experience in general: 'transcendentals').

Why, in these conditions, did Kant retrospectively project this discovery on to a 'precursor', namely Descartes? For over two hundred years, he has lent credence to the idea that the subject is a Cartesian invention, and has thus encouraged even the greatest thinkers to look for traces of a semantic mutation in terms that are almost never used by the philosopher of the *Meditations*. The answer lies, as so often, in the letter of the text itself. We will compare three passages from the *Critique of Pure Reason* ('Transcendental Deduction' and 'Paralogisms of Pure Reason'). It has to be said that they are still not easy to translate.

1. *Das: Ich denke, muss alle meine Vorstellungen begleiten können; denn sonst würde etwas in mir vorgestellt werden, was gar nicht gedacht werden könnte [...] Also hat alles Mannigfaltige der Anschauung eine notwendige Beziehung auf das: Ich denke, in demselben Subjekt, darin dieses Mannigfaltige angetroffen wird. Diese Vorstellung aber ist ein Aktus der Spontaneität, sie kann nicht als zur Sinnlichkeit gehörig angesehen werden. Ich nenne sie die reine Apperzeption [...] weil sie dasjenige Selbstbewusstsein ist, was, indem es die Vorstellung Ich denke hervorbringt, die alle anderen muss begleiten können, und in allem Bewusstsein ein und dasselbe ist, von keiner weiter begleitet werden kann.*

[The *I think* must be able to accompany all my representations; for otherwise something would be represented in me which could not be thought at all [...] Thus all manifold of intuition has a necessary relation to the *I think* in the same subject in which this manifold is to be encountered. But this representation is an act of *spontaneity*; i.e. it cannot be regarded as belonging to sensibility. I call it the *pure apperception* [...] since it is that self-consciousness which, because it produces the representation *I think*, which must be able to accompany all others and in which all consciousness is one and the same, cannot be accompanied by any further representation.]

Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Transcendental Logic, §12, B 132.

2. *Ich, als denkend, bin ein Gegenstand der inneren Sinnes, und heisse Seele [...] Demnach bedeutet der Ausdruck: Ich, als ein denkend Wesen, schon den Gegenstand der Psychologie [...] Ich denke, ist also der alleinige Text der rationalen Psychologie, aus welchem sie ihre ganze Weisheit auswickeln soll. Man sieht leicht, dass dieser Gedanke, wenn er auf einen Gegenstand (mir selbst) bezogen werden soll, nichts anderes, als transzendente Prädikate desselben, enthalten könne [...] Zum Grunde derselben können wir aber nichts anderes legen, als die*

einfache und für sich selbst an Inhalt gänzlich leere Vorstellung: Ich, von der man nicht einmal sagen kann, dass sie ein Begriff sei, sondern ein blosses Bewusstsein, dass alle Begriffe begleitet. Durch dieses, Ich, oder Er, oder Es (das Ding), welches denkt, wird nun nichts weiter, als ein transzendentes Subjekt der Gedanken vorgestellt = x, welches nur durch die Gedanken, die seine Prädikate sind, erkannt wird [...]

[I, as thinking, am an object of inner sense, and am called 'soul'. Accordingly, the expression 'I', as a thinking being, already signifies the object of a psychology ... I think is thus the sole text of a rational psychology, from which it is to develop its entire wisdom. One can easily see that this thought, if it is to be related to object (myself), can contain nothing other than its transcendental predicates ... At the ground of this doctrine we can place nothing but the simple and in content for itself wholly empty representation I, of which one cannot even say that it is a content, but a mere consciousness that accompanies every concept. Through this I, or He, or It (the thing), which thinks, nothing further is represented than a transcendental subject of thought = x, which is recognized through the thoughts that are its predicates...]

Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, The Paralogisms of Pure Reason, A 342–3, 345–6.

3. Der Satz: Ich denke, wird aber hierbei nur problematisch genommen; nicht sofern er eine Wahrnehmung von einem Dasein enthalten mag (das cartesianische cogito ergo sum), sondern seiner blossen Möglichkeit nach, um zu sehen, welche Eigenschaften aus diesem so einfachen Satze auf das Subjekt desselben (es mag dergleichen nun existieren oder nicht) fließen mögen.

Läge unserer reinen Vernunftserkenntnis von denkenden Weser überhaupt mehr, als das Cogito zum Grunde [...] so würde eine empirische Psychologie entspringen [...]

[The proposition 'I think' is, however, taken here only problematically; not in so far as it may contain a perception of an existence (the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum*), but only in its mere possibility, in order to see which properties might flow from so simple a proposition as this for its subject (whether or not such a thing might now exist).

If more than the cogito were the ground of our pure rational cognition of things in general ... then an empirical psychology would arise ...]

Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, The Paralogisms of Pure Reason, A 347.

Leaving aside the remarkable alternation between the pronouns (*Ich, Er, Es*; see I), we can see that Kant is doing one thing whilst claiming to do another. He attributes to Descartes a nominalization of the statement *cogito*, or 'I think', so as to make it the name

of a self-referential operation whereby thought takes itself as its own object; the full formula should be 'I am thinking that I am thinking that I am thinking'. It therefore designates the 'something' or the 'being' that both intends and is intended by thought as a *subject* (*subjectum*, which Kant transcribes as *Subjekt*) in the sense that classical metaphysics defines a subject as a pole or support for the attribution of predicates. Kant thereby suggests to his successors (Fichte, Hegel) that the only conceivable subject (*hupokeimenon*) is a subject that thinks itself, and whose predicates are its thoughts. From the Cartesian point of view, these two operations are contradictory, as we can see if we go back to the text of the *Meditations*. Strictly speaking, there is no nominalization of the simple phrase *cogito/je pense* in Descartes (it first appears in Arnauld's *Des vraies et des fausses idées*), even though the way it reflects upon the properties of its own proper enunciation anticipates it. The transition to the metaphysical subject is, on the other hand, incompatible with the cogito in the strict sense (in the *Meditations* it is reduced to the existential proposition '*je suis, j'existe*'). The *cogito* is in fact inseparable from a first-person statement (*ego*), which Descartes contrasts with the he/it (*il/elle*) of God and the 'this' (*hoc*) of his own body (in a problematic of identity or ego: '*Ce moi, c'est-à-dire mon âme, par laquelle je suis ce que je suis*' – 'That I, thanks to which I am what I am', *Discourse on Method*, Part 6). 'I think' is equivalent to 'I am', which is then developed into 'I am who I am', or in other words my soul (*mens*) and not Him (God) or that (my body). We have here a misunderstanding – which has very serious implications as, reading thought Kantian spectacles, the whole of transcendental philosophy, right down to Husserl and Heidegger, constantly criticizes Descartes for having 'substantialized the subject' in the very moment of its discovery. As we now know, transcendental philosophy reads Descartes as though he were a medieval thinker (Olieu), but has nothing to say about the philosophy of the Middle Ages ...

The misunderstanding arises, basically, because Kant finds it difficult to situate in historical terms an idea that is revolutionary in philosophical terms and that is a concentrate of all the originality of his own 'transcendental dialectic' and which differs from both the 'subjectivity' of Aristotelian metaphysics (*tode ti, hupokeimenon, ousia*) and the 'ipseity' of the Cartesian 'thing that thinks' (*ego ipse a me percipior*): that of the truth of the perceptive appearance inherent in thought. According to Kant, we cannot think (form concepts, subsume intuitions, etc.) without our inner sense being

affected and without, therefore, giving rise to the illusion that there is an ‘inner reality’ which is itself the object of thought: the thinking ‘self’ recognized itself in its logical function (unifying experience) to the extent that it constantly misrecognizes itself because it believes it can be known (as a phenomenon, literally a ‘that which appears’ in the scene of representation: *erscheint*) (see *ERSCHEINUNG*). Now, in Kant, ‘substance’ is no longer of the order of being or of the Thing ‘in itself’. Substance is no more than the concept of that which remains permanent in phenomena. Kant therefore explains to us that the *subject*, which in itself (*qua* potentiality or logical faculty) is nothing substantial because it is in no sense phenomenal, constantly *appears to itself* in the modality of a substance as it thinks (itself) and because it thinks (itself). In the *Transcendental Deduction*, Kant writes: ‘I am conscious of myself not as I appear to myself, nor as I am in myself, but only that I am’ (B 155). The ‘I’, which is given only in a form that is inseparable from an ‘I think’ statement, which also functions as its ‘proper’, or in other words generic, name, can be apprehended (*en s’affectant lui-même*) only in an illusory mode. But this illusion or transcendental appearance (*Schein*) is the only thing that can deliver a primal truth, and the only possible form of ground. In one sense, it is the truth itself. *Subject* is the word that now denotes this astonishing unity of opposites. And Kant attributes to Descartes the metaphysical illusion he himself claims to have escaped. Descartes’ ‘error’ is testimony to the fact that the false lies at the heart of the true.

It does seem that we are dealing here exclusively with epistemological propositions and the experience of thought – and it should be noted that the enunciation’s syntactic forms and the translations or transpositions play a determinant role. There is nothing to evoke openly a ‘practical’ and, a fortiori, ‘political’ dimension of the subject. This is not, however, certain when we look at two characteristics of the arguments we have just described. The first is that Kant’s *subject* (the *Ich* or, to be more accurate, the *Ich denke*) is basically caught up in a relationship of ascription. The reflexivity ascribes to it, or it ascribes to itself, a representation that is both truth and error, recognition and misrecognition. The second is that this circle of apperception results in an injunction. It is not only tempting, but necessary, to compare this injunction with the very form of the categorical imperative: we are enjoined to free our own representation from phenomenalism (or, which comes down to the same thing, substantialism) in order to relate it to the idea of ‘pure’ intellectual activity. Now as such an idea is meaningless in terms

of nature, and it is only as a correlate of freedom that it can acquire a meaning. This is the way the study of the ‘Paralogisms of Pure Reason’ ends: the transcendental *subject* (the reflexive identity of the self or *Selbst*) is identified with the moral ‘personality’ (*Persönlichkeit*): ‘a possible subject of a better world, which he has in its idea’ (B 426).

In historical terms, one would like to be able to relate this substratum of Kant’s thought to the ‘becoming a subject’ of the revolutionary and post-revolutionary citizen, and especially to the establishment of the category of a ‘subject of law’ (*Rechtssubjekt*) of which we do not, as yet, have a sufficiently clear idea. In a recent study, Yves-Charles Zarka notes in Leibniz, in contrast, a problematic of justice and equity that requires everyone to ‘put himself in the place of all’, the emergence of the expression *subjectum juris*, in the sense of a ‘moral quality’ that universalizes its bearer. But we also know that, even when he seems to come closest to defining the idea of it (as in the *Doctrine of Right* of 1795, where the divisions of right are deduced from the subjective relationship between the obligors and the obligees), Kant (and Hegel after him) never uses the expression *Rechtssubjekt*, which seems to appear only with the *Historical School of Law* (Savigny, Hugo, Puchta). These subjects (*Subjekte*), in ‘relation to whom’ obligations can be conceptualized (and who ‘relate’ those obligations to themselves) have strictly nothing to do with political *subjects* (*Untertan*, which Kant equates with the Latin *subditus*) who obey a sovereign (which may be the people, as constituted into a state). The encounter with the thematic of sovereignty and the law implicit in the idea of a liberation of the subject, and of the subject as one ‘he who frees himself’, therefore remains repressed.

• see box 6

D. Subjectivity à la française

It is, in contrast, possible to interpret the way in which contemporary philosophy – and especially contemporary French philosophy – understands the question of subjectivity: not as a question of essence, or as relating being to truth and appearance or in the metaphysical opposition between nature and liberty, but as a political issue, a becoming or a relationship between forces that are ‘internal’ to their conflict.

From the point of view of the history of ideas and words, we should obviously establish a certain number of intermediary links, but we can do no more than evoke them here. First and foremost, there is Rousseau. The two sides of his work and the corresponding turns of phrase leave traces everywhere. Think of

Box 6 *Subjectus/subjectum*: the historial pun

► RIGHT, OIKONOMIA, POLIS, POWER

The English *subject*, the French *sujet*, the Spanish *sujeto*, and the Italian *soggetto* immediately reveal what the German *Subjekt* cannot evoke because of the differences between it and *Untertan*. They have a twofold etymology: *subjectum*, which is a support for individual properties, and *subjectus*, meaning ‘subject to’ a law or power. ‘Subject’ implies both presupposition and subjection, the answer to the question ‘what?’ and the answer to the question ‘who?’ It is my considered view that this linguistic fact has played a determining role in the development of Western philosophy, and I have, parodying certain French translations of Heidegger, spoken of a historial (*historial*) pun whose effects can be traced from Hobbes to Foucault, via Rousseau, Hegel, Nietzsche and Bataille.

Subject was not originally one of the words with ‘antithetical’ meanings that so fascinated Freud. But it has become one, and the result is that freedom and constraint now look like two sides of the same coin. The origins of this overdetermination are, inevitably, Greek, even though the structural analogy between the terms *hupokeimenon* (substrate or support) and *hupostasis* (meaning ground or substance until it became the Greek Fathers’ technical term for the ‘persons’ of the Trinity [*hupekos*: ‘he who obeys the word’, the servant, the disciple or the vassal who pays tribute]) can have a retrospective effect on our imaginations. They have never been theoretical ‘neighbours’. We have to turn to Latin, or in other words to imperial and Christian Rome, and then to the history of the theologico-political and of a moral anthropology centred on obedience as path to salvation.

The *subjectus* is a juridical figure with a history lasting seventeen hundred years, from Roman law to absolute monarchy. This raises the question of how we can go from an enumeration of the individuals who are subject to the power of an other, to a representation of the human race as a set of *subjects*. The distinction between independent and dependent persons was basic to Roman law. A text from Gaius is sufficient reminder of that:

Next comes another division in the law of persons. For some persons are *sui iuris* (independent) and others are *alieni iuris* (dependent on others). Again, of those *alieni iuris* some are

in potestas, others *in manu*, and others *in mancipium*. Let us consider first persons *alieni iuris*, for, knowing them, we shall at the same time know who are *sui iuris*.

Institutes I, 48–50.

It is the dialectical division of forms of subjection that gives us, *a contrario*, a definition of free men or masters. But the notions of *potestas*, *manus* and *mancipium* are not enough for that division to create a link *between* subjects. What is needed is an *imperium*. The idea of a universal subjection therefore emerges with the Empire (and in relation to the person of the Emperor to whom citizens, and many non-citizens, owe *officium* or ‘service’). But that is still not a sufficient precondition: Romans must (if they have not already done so) submit to the *imperium* in the same way that conquered peoples ‘submit to the people of Rome’ (the incipient confusion emerges in contradictory fashion when the personal status of ‘Roman citizen’ extends to the entire Empire). And, above all, the *imperium* must be theologically founded as a Christian *imperium*, as a spiritual power derived from and preserved by God, and reigning not over bodies but over (and in) souls.

Understood in this sense, the subject (the subject of law) is the absolute opposite of what will later be termed the *Rechtssubjekt* (a subject by right or with rights, *sujet de droit*). The *sujet de droit* has two main characteristics: he is a *subditus* but not a *servus*. To describe the subject as *subditus* is to say that he enters into a relation of obedience. Obedience is not only something that applies between a leader who has the power to coerce and those who are under his power; it also describes the relationship between a *sublimis* who is elected as commander and the *subditi* or *subjecti* who turn to him to hear what the law states. The ability or power (*pouvoir*) to coerce is distributed throughout a hierarchy of powers (*puissances*). Obedience is the principle which ensures that all who obey are members of the same body. Although it is concentrated at the top in the figure of a *principium/princeps*, it basically comes from below; in so far as they are *subditi*, subjects ‘will’ their own obedience, which is inscribed within the economy of creation and salvation. The ‘loyal subject’ (*fidèle sujet*) is of necessity a ‘faithful

subject' or 'believer' (*sujet fidèle*) who knows that all power comes from God.

Such obedience, in its theoretical unity and its innumerable forms, therefore implies the notion of a commandant (*arkhôn*), but being commanded (*arkhomenos*) then implies – at least in a democratic *politeia* – the possibility of becoming a commander (this is Aristotle's definition of the citizen); alternatively, it is a domestic-style natural dependence. In that perspective, the very idea of 'free obedience' is a contradiction in terms. That a slave can 'also' be free is a late (Stoic) idea which has to be understood as meaning that he who is a slave in this world can also be a master (of himself and his passions) in another world (a 'cosmic' city of spirits); he can also be a citizen who is bound to others by reciprocal ties (*philia*: see LOVE). There is nothing here to suggest the idea of a freedom that resides in obedience, or that results from obedience. For that to be conceivable, obedience must cease to pertain to the soul and must cease to be considered natural; it must be the supernatural part of an individual who understands the divine nature of order.

A constant distinction was made between the *subditus* and the *subjectus*, just as a distinction was made between the sovereignty of the prince or *sublimis* and that of a despotism (literally, the authority of a slave-master). But that basic distinction took several forms. Within the theological framework, the subject is a believer, a Christian. This can also mean that because, in the last instance, he obeys his soul, he cannot be the sovereign's 'thing' (to be used or abused as he wishes); the counterpart of his obedience is the prince's responsibility (duty) towards him. This way of conceptualizing the freedom of the subject is, in practice, extraordinarily ambivalent: it can be understood as meaning that his will to obey is assertive and active (just as the Christian can, through his works, 'cooperate in salvation'), or that his will has been extinguished (which is why mystics seek to annihilate themselves in the contemplation of God, who is the only absolute sovereign). Autonomy is close to nothingness, and 'property' to 'expropriation'.

It is understandable that when the 'citizen' reappeared in the towns of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, he was no longer reducible to the *zôon politikon* (ζῷον πολιτικόν); Aquinas (who translates the expression as 'social animal') makes a distinction between man's (supernatural) *christianitas* and (natural) *humanitas*, between the

believer and the citizen. So what becomes of the 'subject'? In one sense, the subject becomes more autonomous (his subjection is an effect of a political order that integrates 'civility' and 'polity', and is therefore part of nature). But it becomes increasingly difficult to see the subject as a *subditus*, as the concept of his essential obedience comes under threat. The contradiction explodes in the absolute monarchy, which stretches to breaking point the mystical unity of the 'two bodies' of the temporal-spiritual sovereign. The same applies to the freedom of the subject. All that remains is a prince whose will is law, a 'father of his subjects' who has absolute authority over them. '*L'État, c'est moi*,' as Louis XIV is supposed to have said. But an absolute monarchy is state power, or in other words a power that is established and exercised through the law and an administration: its subjects are, if not 'subjects by right' (*sujets de droit*), at least *de jure* subjects (*sujets en droit*) and members of a 'republic' (or Commonwealth, as Hobbes would say). All the theorists of absolute monarchy explain that 'subjects are citizens' (or, like Bodin [*La République* I, 6] that 'all citizens are subjects, some of their freedom being diminished by the majesty of the man to whom they owe obedience; but not all subjects are citizens, as we have said of slaves'). Boethius inverts the terms of the argument and answers them by defining the power of the One as a 'voluntary servitude'. At the same time, *raison d'état* means that freedom no longer has any supernatural meaning. The controversy over the difference (or non-difference) between absolutism and despotism went on throughout the history of the absolute monarchies. And the subject's condition is retrospectively identified with that of the slave. And from the viewpoint of the new citizen and his Revolution (which is also an essential factor in his idealization), subjection is identified with slavery.

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the way *The Social Contract* establishes a strict correlation between the figures of the ‘citizen’ who is a member of the sovereign (or, in other words, the author of the law) and the *subject* who finds freedom in absolute obedience to that same law thanks to the ‘total alienation’ of individual wills that gives rise to a general will. That will founds a ‘collective ego’ that is reflected in every individual consciousness (in *The Phenomenology of Mind*, Hegel makes explicit reference to Rousseau when he speaks of ‘*Ich, das Wir, und Wir, das Ich ist*’; see I). Think too of the way in which Rousseau’s autobiographical works associate the theme of the authenticity of the ego with that of subjection (*l’assujettissement*):

There is not a day when I do not recall with joy and emotion that unique and brief time in my life when I was completely me, when nothing prevented me from being truly myself and when I could say that I was alive ... I could not bear subjection [*assujettissement*], I was completely free, and more than free because I was subject [*assujetti*] only to my affections, and I did only what I wanted to do.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, tenth walk.

We then have to take into account the revolutionary caesura, which not only has the effect of allowing the citizen (who is entitled to have political rights) to ‘take over’ from the subject (*subjectus, subditus*), but also of allowing the subject (*subjectum*) to evolve into a citizen in the sense that his humanity is naturalized. This inscribes all anthropological differences (age, gender, culture, health, abilities, morality, etc.) in an ‘individual character’, which determines the subject’s social recognition, with which the subject identifies (to a greater or lesser extent) in the course of his education. Together with the Rousseauist theorem and the Hegelian or Nietzschean critiques that have been made of it, it is the historical and political precondition for Bataille’s subversion of the relationship between sovereignty and subjectivity. Such (at least according to my hypothesis) is the genealogy of the identification of the *problem of subjectivity* with the *problem of subjection*, which will give a completely new meaning to the philosophical question of the subject (and at the same time our perception of its history).

Gilles Deleuze refers to this issue in his *Empiricism and Subjectivity*:

It is the same difference [between the origin and the qualification of ideas] that Hume encounters under the form of an antinomy of knowledge: it defines the problem of the self [*un Moi*]. The mind is not subject; it is subjected. When the subject is

constituted in the mind under the effect of principles the mind apprehends itself as a self [*moi*], for it has been qualified. But the problem is this: if the subject is constituted only inside the collection of ideas, how can the collection of ideas be apprehended as a self, how can it say ‘I’ [*moi*] under the influence of those same principles?

Gilles Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, p. 31, trans. amended.

Later (with Guattari), he carefully works upon the paradigms of servitude or slavery (*asservissement, servus*) and subjection or subjugation (*subjectus, subditus*) in order to explain the characteristic modernity of the capitalist subject:

We distinguish *machinic enslavement* and *social subjection* as two separate concepts. There is enslavement when human beings themselves are constituent pieces of a machine [...] under the control and direction of a higher unity. But there is subjection when the higher unity constitutes the human being as a subject linked to a now exterior object [...] It would appear, then, that the modern State, through technological development, has substituted an increasingly powerful social subjection for machinic enslavement [...] In effect, capital acts as the point of subjectification that constitutes human beings as subjects; but some, the ‘capitalists’, are subjects of enunciation that form the private subjectivity of capital, while the others, the ‘proletarians’, are subjects of the statement, subjected to the technical machines in which constant capital is effectuated.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 456–7.

Jacques Derrida discovers this constituent amphibology from Rousseau onwards:

From then on, writing has the function of reaching *subjects* who are not only distant but outside of the entire field of vision and beyond earshot.

Why *subjects*? Why should writing be another name for the constitution of *subjects* and, so to speak, of *constitution* itself? of a subject, that is to say an individual held responsible (for) himself in front of a law and by the same token subject to that law?

Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 281.

He also finds it in connection with Levinas:

The subordination of freedom indicates a subjection of the *subjectum*, certainly, but a subjecting that, rather than depriving the subject of its birth and its freedom, actually gives [*donne*] it its birth, along with the freedom that is thereby ordained [*ordonnée*]. It is still a of subjectivation, but not in the sense of interiorization; rather, the subject comes to itself

in the movement whereby it welcomes the Wholly Other as the Most High. This subordination ordains [*ordonne*] and gives [*donne*] the subjectivity of the subject.

Jacques Derrida, *Adieu: To Emmanuel Levinas*, p. 54.

But he also tries to force it to the point of implosion and, to adopt Artaud's neologism, to: 'derange the subjectile [*forcener le sujetile*]'.

Writing at the same time as Bataille, Louis Althusser also emphasizes the paradox of sovereignty:

This God is a King-Subject, or in other words a King-Slave. Hegelian freedom frees the subject from his subjection and converts his servitude into a kingdom. The concept is the kingdom of subjectivity, or in other words the subject who has become a King [...] Such is the circularity of freedom in the concept: it is the conversion of servitude, the conversion of the subject into its kingdom.

Louis Althusser, 'On Content in the Thought of G.W.F. Hegel,' p. 90, trans. amended.

He sees this as the general mechanism whereby ideology 'interpellates' individuals as subjects. The prototype is supplied by religious consciousness:

It then emerges that the interpellation of individuals as subjects presupposes the 'existence' of a Unique and central Other Subject, in whose Name the religious ideology interpellates all individuals as subjects. [...]

God thus defines himself as the Subject *par excellence*, he who is through himself and for himself ('I am that I am'), and he who interpellates his subject, the individual subjected to him by his very interpellation, i.e. the individual named Moses. And Moses, interpellated-called by his Name, having recognized that it 'really' was he who was called by God, recognizes that he is a subject, a subject of God, a subject subjected to God, *a subject through the Subject and subjected to the subject*. The proof: he obeys him, and makes his people obey. [...]

Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', p. 167.

It is Lacan and Foucault who deploy the spectre of subjectivity as a process of subjugation most systematically. But they do so in diametrically opposed ways.

Lacan draws upon the old heritage of two French phrases that are at once paradoxical but absolutely idiomatic: 'the ego is hateful' (Pascal) and 'I is an other' (Rimbaud). What is the subject, according to Lacan? Nothing more than the sequential effects of the living individual's alienation by the 'law of the signifier'. Whilst it has to be regarded as irreducible, the subject is never originary, but always-already dependent. The subject exists only as an effect of the speech (*parole*)

that constitutes it (and names it, to begin with) in a symbolic world of discourses and institutions that it cannot, by definition, master. This is how Lacan interprets the 'misrecognition' that constitutes the unconscious. Because it is 'subject [*soumis*] to the signifier' that irremediably cut it off from itself, the subject must for ever oscillate between the illusion of identity – the narcissistic beliefs of a 'imaginary capture' are resumed in the figure of the *ego* – and the unknown element in the conflict: the recognition of a question from the other (beginning with the other sex) as to what is most characteristic about it.

If desire is an effect in the subject of the condition – which is imposed on him by the existence of discourse – that his need pass through the defiles of the signifier [...] the subject [must] find the constitutive structure of his desire in the same gap opened up by the effect of signifiers in those who come to represent the Other for him, in so far as his demand is subjected to them.

Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, p. 525.

At best, analysis inverts the trajectory of the constitution of desire, which leads the subject to enunciate his own 'lack of being' ('Desire merely subjugates what analysis subjectifies', p. 520).

Foucault, for his part, found in the methods used to obtain admissions and confessions (which migrate from religion and the Inquisition to psychology and psychiatry) a model for the relationship between subjectivity, appearance and truth (*Madness and Civilization, History of Sexuality*). In Bentham's panopticism he finds an ideal diagram of all the 'fictive relations' (which are materialized in the working of institutions of social normalization) in which 'a real subjection is born mechanically' (*Discipline and Punish*, p. 202). On this basis, he drew up a programme for an investigation into the 'modes of objectification that transform human beings into subjects' and especially relations of power' ('The Subject and Power', p. 326). But there is no power, either over the 'self' or over 'others', that does not involve the constitution of a knowledge (*un savoir*), and knowledge itself is not a purely theoretical activity: it is a social practice that produces objectivity. The question of the subject and that of the object, brought back to a twofold process of subjectivation and objectivation, of the subordination (*assujettissement*) of the individual to rules and the construction of a self-to-self relationship that takes various practical modalities, are therefore not opposed to each another. They are two aspects of a single reality:

Foucault has now undertaken, still within the same general project, to study the constitution of the

subject as an object for himself: the formation of procedures by which the subject is led to observe himself, analyse himself, recognize himself as a domain of possible knowledge. In short, this concerns the history of 'subjectivity', if what is meant by that term is the way in which the subject experiences himself in a game of truth where he relates to himself.

Michel Foucault, 'Foucault', p. 461.

These are the very words that were used in the *Transcendental Dialectic*, but their original meaning has been inverted. We can see that there is a circle of presuppositions; the *subject* is the set of subjecting or subjectifying structures (*dispositifs d'assujettissement ou de subjectivation*) that act objectively on the 'subjectivity' of the individual. They presuppose, that is, the subject's 'freedom', or ability to resist, and turn it against him. We are in other words talking about a power differential. It results in both a politics (trying to free the individual from certain disciplines and certain types of individualism) and an ethics (inventing 'practices of freedom', 'new power relations', and modes of *askesis* rather than of self-consciousness). Precisely because they are dispersed and conflicting, these propositions transform our reading of Europe's philosophical past. Because they reveal the associations and metaphors that underlie Nietzsche's text, they allow us to make different use of the subjectivity defined in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Had an internal relationship been established between the subject (*subjectum*, *Subjekt*) and personal subjection, and therefore with the political, juridical and theological power of which it is an effect and inverted image, we would not be able to recognize in the paradoxical combination of truth and transcendental appearance described in the 'Paralogisms of Pure Reason' the sign of an originary difference (or *différance*) that concerns the ethics of internal obedience and *askesis* as much as the metaphysics of the mind and self-consciousness; if not more so. To conclude, they reopen the question of the active finitude specific to the Cartesian subject (or non-subject), which is, perhaps, not so much a 'nature' or thinking 'substance', or in other words a representation, as a 'demand' (as Canguilhem puts it) for the right to say 'I', 'between infinity and nothingness', or between God and the body.

E. How should we translate French philosophers?

To conclude what is not so much a history of translations as that of the *split* that has occurred in philosophical language as each idiom works on the basis of its own relationship with the juridical, theological and

metaphysical heritage of European culture, we can ask two questions. First, can what we have termed a new 'idiomatic French' grounding of the problematic of the subject in French be translated into other idioms? Second, does the philosophy which, in the twentieth century, provided the framework for its invention, have any choice but to go on repeating its terms ad infinitum, or can it purely and simply break with it by adopting other paradigms (such as that of analytic individuality) and more or less adequately 'Gallicizing' their discourse?

A few summary remarks must suffice here. The *sujétion*–*subjectivation* paradigm can obviously be translated into the other Romance languages, give or take a few minor differences in the current usage of *soggetto* and *suddito*, *sujeto* or *sugeto* and *subdeto*, as both Italian and Spanish have retained the doublet (even though the Spanish introduces a significantly variant spelling).

• see box 7

Modern Greek, which has retained *hupokeimeno* for *subject*, has forged *hypokeimenotêta* for 'subjectivité', can translate *sujétion* and *assujettissement* by expressions such as *hypotagê* and *hypodoulousê*, though there could be some confusion with servitude or slavery.

Strictly speaking, this discourse cannot be translated into German. The only possible translation of *sujétion* is *Unterwerfung* ('soumission'; *submission*), whereas 'subjectivation' translates as *Subjektivierung*. A revelatory example is supplied by Habermas in his *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne* (1996), which is a collection of twelve lectures devoted mainly to contemporary French philosophy (Bataille, Derrida and Foucault). Here are two samples:

Für Bataille öffnet sich mit dieser Idee der Entgrenzung eine ganz andere Perspektive als für Heidegger: die sich selbst überschreitende Subjektivität wird nicht zugunsten eines superfundamentalistischen Seinsgeschicks entthront und entmachtet, sondern der Spontaneität ihrer verfemten Antriebe zurückgegeben. Die Öffnung zum sakralen Bereich bedeutet nicht Unterwerfung unter die Autorität eines unbestimmten, in seiner Aura nur angedeuteten Schicksals; die Grenzüberschreitung zum Sakralen bedeutet nicht die demütigende Selbstaufgabe der Subjektivität, sondern ihre Befreiung zur wahren Subjektivität.

Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne, p. 251.

[For Bataille, a completely different perspective from Heidegger's is opened up with this idea of unbounding: The self-transcendent subject is not dethroned and disempowered in favour of a superfundamentalist destining of Being; rather spontaneity is

Box 7 *Sujeto, subdito, sugeto*. The body of the subject: Montaigne and St Teresa

When we examine the process of the formation of the language of corporality and intimacy in Spanish, we should note the importance of the word *subjecto* or *sujeto*, which is very close to certain contemporary philosophical usages (Merleau-Ponty, Zubiri, Lacan), but also to the Montaigne of the *Journal de voyage en Italie*. The Spanish translation may help to bring this out. In this sense, *sujeto* is closely related to the recognition of intimacy, to the experience of pain and, more generally, of the passions of one's own body. It applies to both the register of politics and the register of mysticism.

Sujeto enters the Spanish lexicon at some point in the mid-sixteenth century (see J. Corominas, *Diccionario critico*). The Spanish *sujeto*, which derives from the Latin *subjicere*, has two meanings, and refers both to 'that thing underneath' and 'one who is subject to an authority'. But the difference between the two languages becomes apparent as Spanish prefers to derive the word from the radical *subdere* – which gives *subdito* – whilst *sujeto* is related to *suppositum*, or in other words the materiality of the person and, ultimately, the body, with all its force or potentialities. The decisive moment for Castilian thought comes, however, when the terms begin to overlap.

Montaigne, writing in French, provides the essential contemporary account of the transition from the political to the intimate:

Nous y passasmes un chasteau de l'Archiduc qui couvre le chemin, comme nous avons trouvé ailleurs pareilles clostures qui tiennent les chemins subjects et fermés.

Journal du voyage en Italie, p. 59.

[We passed a castle belonging to the Archduke that overlooks the path, just as we found elsewhere similar fences that keep the roads subject and closed.]

This quotation exemplifies the transitive use of *sujeto*, which is a past participle designed to describe the act of squeezing or containing something from outside a passage or a pathway so as to prevent it from spilling out into the countryside. Leaving aside this technical sense, Montaigne describes other situations in which the first meaning of 'subject' – the political subject – comes to the fore. But he also supposes (*suppositum* is the subject's other name) that it is possible to know an internal realm that is

not divorced from the surrounding world and that finds in it the metaphors and signifiers that allow it to express itself. Travel is the path to intimacy. In his *Journal*, Montaigne tries to appropriate certain words whose meaning has been altered in order to justify a new distribution of powers. '*Cuius regio eius religio*' is from now on the rule governing a process that Montaigne examines with an attention that is barely concealed by his air of nonchalance. *Subject* is an old word for a modern practice, for a strange practice which, for the first time, modifies what seemed to be part of human nature or the unchangeable order of things. *Subject* is Montaigne's greatest discovery in Florence, and it seems to him to be as strange as the exotic animals (sables or black foxes) the Muscovite presented to the Pope. In his commentary on the Duke of Florence's policy towards his '*subjects (of whom he must be wary)*' Montaigne shows us the effort that was being made to naturalize a situation of conflict. And in Lucca, subjects are counted as 'souls'. '*Les seigneurs ont quelques chastelets, mais nulle ville en leur sujection* (ibid., p. 134) [The lords have several castles, but no city is subject to them].'

The specificity of Spanish allows *sugeto* to be displaced in the direction of a meaning that is directly linked to the disposition of both the body and the spirit. Cervantes provides an example: '*Es menester que me advirtáis si estais con sugeto de escucharme* [You must let me know if you are disposed to listen to me]', *Persiles* III 17. This semantic field includes a direct reference to the corporeal dimension of human beings, especially when they suffer some loss or are ill.

Autoridades Dictionary (1726) gives this definition: '*se usa tambien por la actividad, vigor y fuerzas de la persona: y asi seulen decir del enfermo muy extenuado: No hai sugeto* [it is also used to refer to a person's activity, vigour and strength, which is why it is said of someone who is ill and quite exhausted that there is no subject]'. The last sense was in common use from the end of the sixteenth century onwards; the main evidence is supplied by quotations from so-called mystical or 'spiritual' writers.

The Life of Saint Teresa gives twenty or so examples of the transitive *sujetarse* (to subject oneself, to restrict the discussion to a transliteration

that has yet to acquire other cultural or psycho-analytic meanings). The beautiful thing about the text is that it gives a clear idea of a subject that is a product of work, of a 'becoming-subject'. Just as Montaigne saw paths that were 'subject to' the walls of castles, the founder of the Avila convent was aware of the effort it took to become a subject – a subject of the law or, rather, of a novel and unwritten form of speech. This is why mysticism, which can be an experiment in writing that uses popular metrics, is of interest to the translator: St Teresa is trying not so much to say what cannot be said as to stay within the limits of what can be said. Theresa, an educated woman disguised (as she puts it) as an illiterate woman, exemplifies a very particular relationship with language. It is close to what Roland Barthes calls 'logothesis', or the simultaneous invention of speech and a vital space. Its invention juxtaposes the two meanings of 'subject': the political sense (henceforth, *subdito*) and the bodily sense (*sugeto*). Hence the surprising use of both *sugeto* and *yo*:

Padeciendo tan grandismo tormento en las curas que me hicieron tan recias, que yo no sé cómo las pude sufrir; y en fin, aunque las sufrí no las pudo sufrir mi sugeto.

[I ... suffered the greatest tortures from the remedies they applied to me, which were so drastic that I do not know how I endured them. In fact, though I did endure them, my subject (that is to say my body) was not able to do it.]
The Life of Saint Teresa, p. 35.

The same duality appears in the language of asceticism, as when Ignatius speaks of his penitence:

No es penitencia quitar lo superfluo de cosas delicadas o moles, ma es penitencia quando en el modo se quita de lo conveniente, y quanto más y más mejor, sólo que non se corrompa el subiecto, ni se siga enfermedad notable.

[Taking what is superfluous away from delicate and sweet things is not penitence. Taking away what is appropriate from our habit is penitence. In that case, the more we take away, the better, provided that we neither injure the subject (body) nor risk serious illness.]

Ejercicios espirituales, p. 216.

This subject who scarcely suffers from illness, and this subject who can also be corrupted, are two examples of a new subject. What kind of subject is this, who signals its own existence without realizing it, or sends out signs pertaining to a different type of knowledge – the knowledge of the mystics to which Lacan refers: 'This wisdom without wisdom passing all knowledge' (St John of the Cross).

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Tools

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given back its outlawed drives. Opening towards the sacral domain does not mean subjugation to the authority of an indeterminate fate only hinted at in its aura; transgressing boundaries toward the sacral does not imply the humble self-surrender of subjectivity, but liberation to true subjectivity.]

The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, p. 214, trans. corrected.

And later:

In seinen späteren Untersuchungen wird Foucault diesen abstrakten Machtbegriff anschaulich aus-gestalten; er wird Macht als die Interaktion kriegführender Parteien [...] schliesslich als die productive Durchdringung und subjektivierende Unterwerfung eines leibhaften Gegenübers verstehen.

Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne, p. 300.

[In his later studies, Foucault will fill out this abstract concept of power in a more tangible way; he will comprehend power as the interaction of warring parties ... and ultimately as the productive penetration and subjectivizing subjugation of a bodily opponent.]

The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, p. 255.

As one can imagine, this linguistic obstacle is not without its effects on the reasons why Habermas finds the object, internal divisions and aporias or limitations of the 'French' philosophy of the subject to be both incomprehensible and unacceptable.

In English, finally, the situation is quite specific. The 'pun' is fully present (*Subject/subject*). The *sujétion/subjectivation* paradigm can therefore be legitimately

transposed and assimilated. It can be further developed in English. A single sentence from Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition* proves the point:

Somebody began it [= his own life story] and is its subject in the twofold sense of the word, namely its actor and its sufferer, but nobody is its author.

Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 184.

What does create a problem is, rather, the fact that philosophical anthropology has, since the classical age, been organized around notions such as *person*, *self* and *agent* (see I and AGENT), and not *subject*. *Subject*'s first meaning is political and institutional. ('The idea of the servant makes us think of the master; that of the subject carries our view to the prince' [Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* II, 2, 2]; John Stuart Mill's famous work on the civil and political inequality of the sexes, which was published in 1869, is entitled *The Subjection of Women*.) The naturalization of 'French ideas' is, however, changing this situation (and raising the tension). The work of Judith Butler, which is inspired by Freud, Derrida, Althusser and Foucault, provides a remarkable example. At the beginning of her *Psychic Life of Power* (1997), which is subtitled *Theories in Subjection* (the syntax is perfectly idiomatic but probably also contains an allusion to John Stuart Mill's famous essay), she cites the *Oxford English Dictionary*'s entry on *subjection*:

The act or fact of being subjected, as under a monarch or other sovereign or superior power; the state of being subject to, or under the dominion of another [...] The condition of being subject, exposed, or liable to [...] The act of supplying a subject to a predicate.

OED, cited in *The Psychic Life of Power*, p. 1.

She later discusses the correspondences between the terms, but sometimes inverts the values to which we are accustomed:

No individual becomes a subject without first becoming subjected or undergoing 'subjectivation' (a translation of the French *assujettissement*) [...] The term 'subjectivation' carries the paradox in itself: *assujettissement* denotes both the becoming of the subject and the process of subjection – one inhabits the figure of autonomy only by becoming subjected to a power, a subjection which implies a radical dependency.

Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*, pp. 11, 83.

This is, however, part of her own development of the question: *subjection* becomes the general (tropological) concept of power 'turning back upon oneself, or even turning on oneself'.

As for the reciprocal question – how can French get away from being French (in philosophical terms, of course) – we can state that it cannot be answered by means of injunctions, either hermeneutic or analytic. This is not to say that it cannot be answered by remaining inside the French frontier. In his *Mythe de l'intériorité*, Jacques Bouveresse basically suggests (see, in particular, pp. 356f., and 656f.) that we have to make a detour via Wittgenstein, or in other words invert Nietzsche's critique of the 'grammatical privilege' conferred upon the subject, so as to turn it into an instrument for analysing the ways in which, in every language game, a speaker – a philosopher, perhaps – articulates statements containing expressions of self-referentiality with public acts of enunciation in such a way as to be recognized as the author of certain meanings or thoughts. The suggestion deserves consideration.

**Étienne Balibar,
Barbara Cassin,
Alain de Libera**

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October's tomb

Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois, Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, *Art since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism*, Thames & Hudson, London, 2004. 704 pp., 637 illustrations, 413 in colour, £45.00 hb., 0 500 23818 9.

For nearly thirty years the journal *October* has provided the most significant platform for addressing twentieth-century art. *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism* synthesizes ideas and arguments by four of the journal's key editors. It is a monumental achievement, running to more than 700 pages, that attests to the vast knowledge and sustained commitment to modernism shared by the four (main) authors. Some chapters are brilliant, some are quite batty, but they are never less than engaging. Overall, the book provides ample evidence both for the long hegemony exercised by *October* and for the gradual waning of its influence.

All indications suggest that this book is intended as an introduction aimed at undergraduates and general readers. The one-volume version is divided at 1945 and the two-volume US edition splits at the same date, indicating an orientation to the North American art-history syllabus. To facilitate this pitch, the book is made up of short chapters, each focused on a particular year. This approach provides an armature rather than a straitjacket: twenty-six years go missing; some multiply – there are four versions of '1959'. The individual chapters offer points of departure for reflecting on themes and issues and this structure allows the authors to provide a chronological framework while mapping connections; the excellent cross-referencing system helps a great deal. Each chapter is well illustrated and contains a brief (if tendentious) bibliography. There are also a series of short 'introductory boxes' covering particular theorists, journals, concepts and so on; the book also contains two round-table discussions in which the authors debate issues arising from the individual chapters (one for 1945, the other from the current perspective). Authorship is attributed via initials at the beginning of each section, rather than on individual chapters. This gives the book the sense of a collective project; for those in the know it is easy to detect individual voices, but at two points the displaced attribution is an issue. Organizing the chapters as a series of artistic events does, though, have its costs, because it displaces the charge of historical events: 1917 is Mondrian; 1933 the Mexican muralists. Much

of the attraction of realism, or indeed the avant-garde challenge, is inexplicable without these force fields. This aside, the structure and organization is well conceived.

In the interests of transparency, I should declare my hand: Krauss has said that the book was designed to counter the influence of the Open University modern art course, on which I work. Her assertion may, or may not, be true, but if the book was intended to function as this kind of introduction, I think it is unsuccessful. From the opening pages the reader is confronted with unexplained concepts and ideas – 'paranoid representations as projections of desperate order'. For the uninitiated reader, at least three assumptions would need unpacking from a clause like this. We frequently encounter sentences like the following:

This antipainterly impulse probably originates in the irrepressible suspicion that the matter of painting cannot ultimately live up to the promise of a fundamental psycho-sexual experience of identity, one that would be grounded in the somatic register of the unconscious alone.

You won't find anything like that in Honour and Fleming! Similarly, the four methodological chapters at the start of the book (psychoanalysis; social history; formalism and structuralism; and poststructuralism and deconstruction) don't really fit with a book like this. One gets the feeling that they are included to absolve the authors from having written a textbook. These introductions are, in any case, unlikely to be used: readers will browse this book, reading sections, following a particular career, movement, theme or whatever. Only the obsessive will read it through, as I have, year by year. The bite-size chapters encourage dipping-in. In contrast, the introductions seem clogged and unhelpful. The authors would probably have been better employed providing a rationale for the (often mysterious) selection process underpinning the book; it might also have been worthwhile indicating why they believe twentieth-century art to be overwhelmingly concentrated on Europe and the USA.

The four authors take to the format rather differently: Krauss carries on as normal; Bois seems

badly served by the restraints – under the pressure of accessibility his ‘structuralist activity’ gives way to (intelligent) description; Buchloh drifts towards a gnomic post-Frankfurt School idiom; Foster, particularly when he puts psychoanalysis aside, probably finds the best tone for this kind of work. While the book doesn’t really work as an introduction – the reader needs a great deal of general cultural knowledge and it presents some very peculiar readings as normative – it does distil the accumulated wisdom of *October*, of which there is a great deal on view, into a convenient (if very fat) package.

The authors complement each other and, between them, cover a vast amount of material. Bois, who was formed in classic structuralism, focuses on Matisse, Picasso and abstract art (particularly Mondrian and Newman). Krauss brings poststructuralism (and Bataille) to bear on Picasso, Duchamp, surrealism and sculpture; she also bats for particular favoured artists in the period after 1945. Buchloh, an unrepentant German ’68er, writes on the avant-garde and neo-avant-garde. His points of orientation are Adorno and Debord, and he is a champion of Gerhard Richter and recent critical practice (though he ignores the latter in this book). Foster might be characterized as a ‘left postmodernist’, drawn to psychoanalysis (and increasingly to surrealism), though Debord provides another important point of reference. In this book Foster provides the glue holding things together, or, to shift the metaphor, he vacuums up everything left out by the others. In addition to chapters on the avant-garde, Foster covers design and architecture, race and gender; he is also responsible, almost single-handedly, for the last quarter of the century. He emerges very positively from these commitments. This typology is undoubtedly too neat, but it will provide a working guide. However, as I previously indicated, the displaced attributions attest to a small problem. Even Foster seems to have balked at addressing the issues raised by two of the chapters – ‘1933: The Mexican Mural Movement’ and ‘1943: The Harlem Renaissance’. Both chapters are attributed to ‘AD’ – presumably the Amy Dempsey thanked by the publisher. This particular supplement marks the boundaries of a collective vision.

One of the strengths of this book – at least when reading it from beginning to end – is that it allows for a clearer picture of the *October* project. The very different commitments of the protagonists can make the journal seem like an unholy alliance. For instance, in the box on *Artforum*, Krauss notes that *October* emerged when she and fellow editor Annette Michelson split from the former journal. She suggests that their aim was

to sustain the commitment to formalist art in the face of the political turn that had been made by *Artforum* under Max Kozloff and Lawrence Alloway. The title of Eisenstein’s movie was adopted to flag the political repression of formal experimentation. That was a long time ago, and, no doubt, the participants now see things differently, but it sits oddly alongside Buchloh’s and Foster’s advocacy of political avant-gardism and institutional critique. However, three points of common concern emerge strongly from *Art since 1900*. The first – the point I previously thought provided the defining agenda – is in fact the least secure: this is a determinate negation of Clement Greenberg’s story. In part, the *October* project has involved reinstating those aspects of twentieth-century art that Greenberg clipped from *Art and Culture*, principally the practices he characterized as dead ends in opposition to the ‘mainstreet’ or ‘mainstream’. These include Duchamp, constructivism, Dada, surrealism; all of those forms he viewed as ‘far out’ in the postwar context, such as ‘pop’ or ‘minimalism’. Krauss notes, for instance, that when she started working on surrealism, no one had read journals like *Minotaur* or *Documents*.

If not single-handed, *October* played a key role in the rediscovery of avant-garde art, republishing original texts, translating the work of foreign scholars and carrying path-breaking analyses of individual artists. Simply put, *October* redefined the story of modern art. However, at times the inversion of Greenberg can seem pathological. The nadir is probably reached in Krauss’s celebration of Pollock’s horizontality in contradistinction to Greenberg’s account of (vertical) opticality (thankfully, she refrains from the story about sniffing animal’s bottoms in the version on offer here). This negation of Greenberg’s account needs modulating, though. Bois is much more open to formalism – in this volume he draws heavily on Michael Fried’s account of the ‘deductive structure’ – and, increasingly, Krauss seems to be returning to her own roots in American formalism, emphasizing the determining role of ‘medium’ (if not quite Greenberg’s version) in opposition to kitsch. That sounds like a familiar tale.

The second point of convergence is a commitment to the cognitive function of modern art, when much recent art history all too often reduces art to ideology. This engagement takes different forms. In Buchloh and Foster it entails a search for critical projects that evade the logic of commodity culture. Oddly, this orientation sometimes verges on the instrumental (Buchloh’s Adorno, like Peter Bürger’s version, has more than a whiff of Brecht about him). In Bois and particularly Krauss, it can entail a refusal of any social or politi-

cal reading of art works. Poor old Pat Leighton, for instance, has the riot act read to her (again) for connecting cubism and the Balkan war! But even Krauss is inconsistent in her application of this position. For some reason, sexuality and the unconscious don't seem to constitute 'external' frames of reference in the way wars and anarchism are considered to do. And at other moments Krauss and Bois reach for political explanation. I suspect that particular readings have taken on the force of an *idée fixe*: cubism is the prime candidate here, as is the persistent valuation of Bataille over Breton. In addition, this approach has now spawned a whole swathe of pale imitators, all burrowing away on surrealism or whatever; all finding 'critiques' at every turn. Much of the epigones' work seems to have lost the tension that drove the *October* project.

Third, and perhaps most surprisingly, their joint enterprise is underpinned by a resolutely anti-affirmative vision of modern art. This goes for the writers attached to French models and, ostensibly, more formal practices, just as much as for Buchloh, and to some extent Foster, who are closer to negative dialectics and left avant-gardism. Anything that smacks of transcendentalism, idealism or mysticism draws their fire. The effort required to dislocate abstraction from this baggage attests to how central the issue is for them. Art is, above all else, critical. Again, Greenberg



is in their sights here, but the central target is probably the MoMA ratification machine. In this sense, *October* is a profoundly political project that carries the traces of its 1980s' moment. This, for me, is its enduring power.

There are, of course, innumerable other points of shared reference: Duchamp as unquestionable touchstone; an unconvincing account of cubism and semiotics, in which Picasso and Braque emerge as illustrators of Saussurian *bon mots* (interestingly, Foster always writes "'arbitrary" sign' rather than 'arbitrary sign'); an enthusiasm for minimalism and 'institutional critique'; an antipathy to conceptual art (particularly its British forms). Max Bill repeatedly carries the full weight of the avant-garde's incorporation. For some unspecified reason, the 'index' (itself predicated on a very weird reading of Peirce) is always a positive value. Their sense of social history is schematic at best and their understanding of left politics can be poor and not a little aloof. Much of this has the feel of the internal dialogue of a caucus.

In *Art since 1900* these concerns are slotted into an overall narrative, and Buchloh is undoubtedly the central progenitor. This goes as follows. A nascent proletarian public sphere is set against both the totalitarian public sphere and the rise of a mass cultural sphere as the framework or battleground for a political avant-garde (oddly, Kluge and Negt are never mentioned). The readymade registered art's status as commodity and called into question art's supposed autonomy; Berlin Dada and Soviet constructivism shifted this conception to active politics. There can be no retreat from this set of moves, and every attempt to resurrect art without the (political) self-critique of autonomy entails a reactionary retreat – should this include recourse to painting, then this judgement is even more damning. (You almost have to admire Buchloh's willingness to take clear-cut positions: twentieth-century culture is petty bourgeois; European subjectivity comes to an end in the 1930s; abstract expressionism represents a reactionary turn against photography and a reassertion of masculinity; and so on. Twentieth-century art is, for him, ultimately a cipher for German history.) The destruction of the proletarian public sphere by fascism and Stalinism cleared the ground for the total triumph of the mass cultural sphere, in which all values were commodified and spectacularized. Art subsequently operates in this mass sphere and is increasingly fused with it, leading to the withering of its critical powers. In this sense, even art, the last redoubt against the inhumanity of capitalism, becomes progressively untenable.

Adorno's meta-story appears here in a particularly exacerbated form. In part, this is because these writers exhibit little dialectical sensibility. Artworks rarely embody contradictions. Rather, they fall on one side of a division critical/acquiescent, oppositional/incorporated. On this basis, the extremely dubious notion of 'antimodernism' comes to occupy a fundamental place in this book. Almost any assertion of the integral figure, particularly in painting, after cubism, Duchamp and Dada constitutes a 'return to order'. (The exceptions are Heartfield and the surrealists – even Magritte!) *Pittura metafisica* and Leger, American social realism and fascist art, Kienholz and Brodsky: all entail backsliding from the political advances of the avant-garde. All manner of well-meaning attempts to constitute 'relevance' are swept up with outright nasty practices to constitute an antimodernist reactionary bloc. (Whatever one thinks of Socialist Realism – not much in my case – the account on offer here seriously underestimates both its allure in the period and its radical roots.) It is never quite said, but there is a strong sense that much recent art represents another antimodernist return to order. With the exception of the last point, I have a great deal of sympathy for this argument, but stated in this bald manner it is untenable. In this form it is both an undialectical account and, ultimately, a self-defeating one: the effect is to position modernism as the normative culture of the twentieth century. Doing so is fundamentally contradictory, undercutting the claim of modernism to represent a critical resource against the doings of capital.

One can't help but feel that there is an unacknowledged issue of good taste underpinning this narrative. The real demon of the piece seems not to be capitalism, or even fascism, but mass culture. Much of what is valued, in contrast, seems to be dandyism. What is presented as a deconstructionist confounding or ruination of established discourses of power often seems just clever in a New York kind of way. The obvious examples are Duchamp's and Bataille's 'base materialism'. T.J. Clark's account of abstract expressionist 'vulgarity' was aimed precisely against this dandyish moment of taste.

The fusion of Adorno and Debord, or, in Krauss's case, Baudrillard, with the life histories of this group of art critics is, in my view, a deadly trap. In this book, autobiography and critical analysis increasingly collapse. Cut free from its longest chapter *Society of the Spectacle* leads back, beyond Lukács, to 'tragic vision'. These writers seem more and more to confuse their own lack of sympathy for contemporary art with

the capitalist colonization of the avant-garde. They just don't like what the 'young ones' are doing. It is instructive here to contrast this perspective with Adorno's late meditation on new art in 'Vers une musique informelle'. (In this sense, Clark's own itinerary is much closer to *October* than might be imagined.) The *October* crew aren't renowned for their side-splitting jokes and they just don't appear to get the arsing-around involved in much recent art, which they see as irresponsible and juvenile (as if cubism wasn't). It is telling that Mike Kelly and Paul McCarthy figure here under the rubric of 'infantile regression' rather than dumb humour.

Despite continuing to think of themselves as critics rather than historians, *October* has become a historical journal dedicated to excavating the avant-garde's legacies. What was once a key site for the theorization of contemporary practice now carries just occasional pieces on recent art. This trend comes through strongly in *Art Since 1900*. The section on the 1960s is as long as the combined thirty-five years that follow. The last contribution from Bois is dated 1967 (although, to be fair, this always has been his range); Buchloh reaches 1988; Krauss stretches to 1998, but her contributions become increasingly rare in the last quarter of the century. After 1973 more than 50 per cent of the material is written by Foster, including almost everything after 1984. In the final round table, he seems to be trying to pull his co-authors back from an increasingly hysterical assertion of the impossibility of art. Given its decisive role in contemporary art, the scant attention paid to conceptual art is particularly telling. And, surprisingly for thinkers renowned for their commitment to theory, apart from one mention of Negri and Hardt, there is no reference to any thinker after Baudrillard.

The book ends with a rather lame invocation of utopia and a strange hedging of bets on Jeff Wall and Sam Taylor Wood. Sustaining critical value means rubbing taste, including established radical taste, against the grain. This would now require a fundamental shake-up of the canon ratified in this book. I doubt if *October* has the energy for such a task. This is, after all, the fate of all avant-gardes. *Art Since 1900* is a major achievement and much more political in its impetus than many detractors want to acknowledge. But it is the kind of book you write when the dust has settled. In so far as it is a monument, I suspect it is a mausoleum, putting a body (of thought) on display at the moment of its decomposition.

Steve Edwards

Haptocentrism

Jacques Derrida, *On Touching – Jean-Luc Nancy*, trans. Christine Irizarry, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2006. xiv + 377 pp. £45.50 hb., £18.95, 0 8047 4243 X hb., 0 8047 4244 8 pb.

Published in French in 2000, this major late work by Jacques Derrida is both a wide-ranging engagement with the figure of 'touch' such as it appears within a specific trajectory of European philosophy and an extended meditation on the work of his close friend Jean-Luc Nancy. The book is centred around a number of interlinking hypotheses: that touch organizes a manifold tradition of thinking which would incorporate, among others, such diverse names as Maine de Biran, Ravaisson, Kant, Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Deleuze; and that this tradition has given rise to what Derrida calls 'an *affair*, a plot, a sort of conspiracy, a philosophical intrigue of touch', which has been played out along the cultural boundaries that separate France, Germany and England. Derrida also poses the hypothesis that this tradition is continued, complicated and interrupted in twentieth-century thought, most prominently in the development of phenomenology from Husserl onwards and then, specifically, in the work of Nancy such as it develops from the 1970s to the 1990s. Touch, then, allows Derrida to reread the philosophical corpus of his friend as a 'way of consequently rereading everything', all of Nancy and 'the whole philosophical tradition as well'.

Derrida revisits the concerns of his earliest work on Husserl, namely the deconstruction of phenomenological presence and of the concept of origin. He repeats or alludes to key moments in his own thinking over the last thirty years or so: the *pharmakon*, the impossibility of the gift, haunting and spectrality, the terms 'dehiscence', 'disadherence' and, of course, '*différance*'. Just as a privileging of voice was highlighted in Derrida's early identification of a phonocentric tradition, and a privileging of word and concept in his diagnosis of logocentrism, so the figure of touch becomes the privileged motif of a 'tactilist' tradition or a 'haptocentric metaphysics', and once again it is the possibility of presence and its attendant philosophical baggage which is in question:

Touch, more than sight or hearing, gives nearness, proximity – it gives nearby.... In this regard, is it ever possible to dissociate the 'near,' the 'proximate' from the 'proper,' the 'propriate' [*propre*]? The proximate, the proper, and the present – the presence of the present? We can imagine all the consequences if this were impossible.

What is at stake here is the question of originary intuition and the manner in which the figures of touch and touching enable it to ground consciousness and constitute a meaningful world of sensible appearance. Derrida's concern, then, is to interrupt this function of touch, question its conditions of possibility and, in a classically deconstructive manner, reveal them as simultaneously conditions both of possibility and impossibility.

None of this is likely to be surprising to those familiar with Derrida's work. Yet *On Touching* also develops these themes in new and important ways. In particular, this is a work dominated by the question of originary technicity, technics, or what is also termed 'technical prosthetics'. In *Of Grammatology* the question of supplementarity, writing and *archi-écriture* was bound up with that of *technē* and originary technicity (and arguably with an implicit critical distance from the Heideggerian thesis on technology). Although indicated in only one slightly elliptical footnote, Derrida here takes up the question of technics developed by Bernard Stiegler's *Technics and Time* trilogy. In this context, the body which touches, feels, hears and sees – in particular, the 'body proper' as thought by phenomenology – is a body which is originally implicated in the interconnections of technical prosthetics. If, for Derrida, there is any originary intuition, it is also 'the ageless intrusion of technics, which is to say of transplantation or prosthetics'. It is this 'ageless intrusion' of technics which interrupts the tactilist or haptic affirmation of the immediacy, continuity and contiguity of contact within conceptions of touch. Interrupted also, then, is the propriety and self-identity of the 'body proper' and, with that, the presence of presence. Derrida attempts to think originary technics as that which '*suspends* contact in contact and divides it right within tactile experience in general, thus inscribing an anaesthetic interruption into the heart of aesthetic phenomenality'. This in turn

would open up the spacing of a distance, a disadhering, a *différance* in the very 'inside' of haptics – and *aisthēsis* in general. Without this *différance*, there would be no contact *as such*; contact would not appear; but with this *différance*, contact never appears in its full purity, never in any immediate plenitude, either.



Thus the condition of possibility of originary intuition, touch and contact – that is, technical prosthetics – is, at the very same time, its condition of impossibility.

Derrida's writing proceeds 'interruptively' by way of a number of tangents which 'touch on' diverse thinkers, with Nancy as the guiding thread that binds all these tangents and disparate figures together. Derrida's response to Nancy is double-edged or ambivalent. On the one hand he is very clear: Nancy deploys the figure of touch or writes in the name of touch against all idealism, all philosophies of subjectivity, and against the tradition of immediacy. In so far as Nancy's discourse ceaselessly engages figures of apartness, exteriority, spacing, partition, dividing, sharing, discontinuity and so on, it distances itself from, or sets itself squarely against, tactilist or haptocentrist metaphysics. At the same time Derrida sees his use of certain terms from the philosophical lexicon of this tradition (and primarily the term 'touch' itself) as drawing Nancy's discourse back into the orbit of what it sets itself against: 'how can one say anything that does not in advance get surrounded, invested, preoccupied, in all historical places of these figures of touch, in their rhetorical circle, in their logical or hermeneutic twirling around?' Derrida reprimands Nancy for this, at times theatrically: 'that's quite enough, give this word back, it's prohibited.' Readers of Derrida's more recent *Rogues* will be familiar with the way in which Nancy

is taken to task for his use of the term 'fraternity' in *The Experience of Freedom*. His use of this term is questioned here also, and put down to Nancy's privileging of 'virility'. Attention is drawn also to Nancy's seemingly unapologetic invocation of the 'proper' in *Being Singular Plural*, and his deployment of theological or Christological language in his 'Deconstruction of Christianity'. All this leads Derrida to question whether Nancy is not simply another idealist among many, or whether his 'Deconstruction of Christianity' is not 'a difficult, paradoxical, almost impossible task, always in danger of being exposed as mere Christian hyperbole'.

Despite Derrida's terminological concerns and the critical gesture which accompanies them, his engagement with the deconstructive gestures of Nancy's writing is extensive and broadly appreciative. In particular the relation of 'touch' to the key Nancean motif of the 'syncope' is given considerable attention. The syncope is the linchpin of Nancy's reading of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and of Descartes's *Discourse on Method* in the 1970s, and, Derrida rightly points out, although touch is nowhere explicitly mentioned during this period, it is already to some degree at work. A 'syncopated touch' is, as Nancy himself repeatedly reminds us, a 'touch in distance', that which, recalling Blanchot, implies a contact without contact, one which always leaves 'intact' that which is touched. Nancy's

discourse on the syncope implies, then, a distancing and spacing at the very heart of originary intuition, an opening or spacing which subverts the foundational ambition of Kant's first *Critique*, the Cartesian Cogito, or any attempt to offer a metaphysical ground in an autonomous, self-present, self-posing subjectivity.

Nancy's thinking of 'ecotechnics', as developed in *Corpus, Being Singular Plural* and elsewhere, is also proffered as a rich deconstructive resource in relation to the tactilist tradition. Ecotechnics perhaps marks the point of greatest proximity between Derrida and Nancy. Deeply rooted in Nancy's rejection of Heidegger's thesis on technology, Nancy articulates ecotechnics as the manner in which the body, far from being the pretechnical 'body proper' of phenomenology, is always already and originarily inserted into a technical environment. Ecotechnics describes the originary disoriginating insertion of technics into the event of being itself, overturning all logic of the proper which Heidegger would ascribe (in however complicated a fashion) to the event of the giving of being (*das Ereignis*).

Derrida pays particular attention to Nancy's strategic use of the term *partes extra partes*, a term most likely borrowed from Merleau-Ponty. This term describes the way in which material bodies exist in a relation of exteriority each to the other, and the way in which the components or constitutive parts of material bodies likewise exist outside of each other, never occupying the same place, and are thus able to articulate themselves as bodies and come into relation or contact with other bodies. In the structure of *partes extra partes* all is technical connection or a relation to an outside. There is never an instance of originary or pre-technical being, never an inside or pure interiority. In articulating his discourse around ecotechnical spacing and the structure of parts outside parts, Nancy, Derrida contends, 'touches and tampers with the philosophic gigantomachy surrounding intuition and intuitionism – no less'.

Towards the end of *On Touching* Derrida identifies a decisive difference between his and Nancy's approaches, and speaks of 'two irreducibly different "deconstructive" gestures' which mark their discourses. Derrida has throughout his writing persistently repeated the phrase 'if there is any'. Deconstruction, responsibility, justice and so on might all find themselves qualified by an 'if there is any' whenever they are invoked. Nancy, for his part, will say 'there is no *the*' or 'there is not' touching, essence, the technical and so on. For Derrida, Nancy is struggling or wrestling at the limits of what discourse or meaning will allow. He is

not deploying terms in any straightforward manner, but speaking about instances that place themselves outside of, or ex-scribe, that which they seek to inscribe in writing: hence 'there is no "...". Derrida persistently questions whether the 'definite article is already engaged or required by the discourse that disputes it', 'if there is any'.

Nancy repeats certain terms and holds on to them. In so doing he aims to inaugurate new possibilities of meaning, new trajectories of thought. Derrida also repeats certain terms, but, in his ceaseless caution with regard to their baggage and the retention of past traces of signification, will disallow them or place them off-limits. They are too compromised and too tainted, and a different gesture is required to affirm the emergence of the new. This may imply a different understanding of temporality on the part of each thinker. Nancy seeks to affirm an inaugural moment of creation in the spacing of a singular and plural opening. Every term drawn from the tradition is rethought in the light of this. Derrida is always attentive to stretching the present into the past, even as it opens onto a future without identity, and it is the undecidability and incalculability of this future which is affirmed. The dehiscence or impropriety of the present is thought differently by each. In this sense *On Touching* is an indication of the future paths of deconstructive thinking, of deconstruction as a thought which has always affirmed itself as a thought of the future.

Ian James

Neo-Benjaminian historicism

Matthias Fritsch, *The Promise of Memory: History and Politics in Marx, Benjamin, and Derrida*, SUNY Press, Albany NY, 2005. xiii + 249 pp., £43.75 hb., 0 7914 6549 7.

Can a reconfiguration of Walter Benjamin provide the productive context for theorizing affirmative action, reconciliation and memorialization? Does victory in struggle, even when 'free at last', always repeat past suffering in the present success? Could it be otherwise?

Into this charged forcefield appears Matthias Fritsch's book on memory, promise and historical time. It sets before its readers the heavy task of an interminable mourning through which the exclusionary,

amnesiac potential of power structures is to be resisted in perpetuity. In restricting his presentation to a concoction of Marx, Benjamin and Derrida, the figures who would ask him the most difficult questions are fortuitously excluded. Not least of whom would be Nietzsche, for whom the fixed idea of suffering marks the bad conscience of 'unhealthy' modern nihilism. For can a philosophical treatment of memory really absent consideration of strong forgetting. More to the point, the uncharitable manner in which Marx and Benjamin are co-opted prevents their writings from interrupting Fritsch's thematic – no small irony, given what is at stake. In a book concerned to resist 'empty, homogeneous time', the history between Marx, Benjamin and Derrida disappears; ignored, so that all three become interlocutors in abstract, discursive space directed by a syncretistic bent, available to us latecomers, with no deliberation on that privilege. In this regard, this book is symptomatic of academic bricolage which fails to understand how the critique of 'homogeneous and empty' time breaks with 'empathetic' historicism.

Although it is presented as a book on Marx, Derrida and Benjamin, each of the four chapters is organized around the last. The first of these presents the 'Theses on the Concept of History' as a critique of vulgar Marxism in so far as it rejects teleological, progressive totalizing accounts of history. The second, an interpretation of Derrida's *Specters of Marx*, forms a bridge to the third, which concentrates on 'Critique of Violence' and Derrida's deconstruction of it in 'Force of Law'. The fourth and final chapter offers an 'oscillation' between Benjamin and Derrida, where the latter's account of *différential* repetition acts as a supplement to the former:

It is the account of repetition, in its link to *différance* and *l'avenir à-venir*, that delivers the temporality of the past–future relation that we found underdeveloped in Benjamin. At the same time, it affords an albeit precarious distinction between messianism and the messianic (or messianicity) that clarifies otherwise problematic theological ambiguities stemming from the attempt to, as Benjamin put it, 'return a messianic face' to Marx while affirming his secularization of messianism.

In effect, the place of Derrida and Marx here is determined by the contours of a meditation on Benjamin's concept of historiography. For example, there is no place for thinking Derrida's relation to both Husserl and Althusser, whilst Marx, squeezed through the other two, is contorted into an oblique problematic, upon which it is worth dwelling.

If past suffering has a claim to be remembered, how are the sufferings of those now dead remembered? Fritsch opposes any idea of progress in history and rejects the reconciliation premised upon the 'dream of wiping the slate clean': both calumniate the dead in a 'second mortification'. 'Past suffering must be freed from its insertion into a conception of historical necessity, and it must not be subjected to the concept of a just end.' Instead past victims must be given a voice to retrieve something of their emancipatory promise, a past future, that was occluded. Here, 'Benjamin reconceived proletarian resistance to capitalist oppression ... as a non-violent political action that draws on the limits of the political itself, and that is responsive to the forever incomplete voice of the vanquished and forgotten.'

The stress is on the incompleteness of this praxis as it contests 'endism' and 'progress'. It is not just vulgar Marxism that Fritsch takes to be the object of Benjamin's critique, but Marx himself, whose vision of communism – as an end 'retaining all the riches capitalism produces' – precludes mourning the 'real losses of historical development'. Fritsch appears to assume that any totalization of history entails that the suffering located in that history is justified by the meaningfulness of the end-state.

From the perspective of 'Critique of Violence', communism would be merely the subsequent violent imposition in a cycle of law-positing violence. For Fritsch, these drawbacks are exacerbated because its scientific pretension, read as straightforward economic determinism, views the victory of a particular class as guaranteed. Allying Benjamin with Lyotard, scientific representation of history is seen as effacing real suffering (a sentiment reinforced by the Irving libel trial where no first-hand accounts were allowed, only official Nazi documentation). Yet, if for Lyotard an 'exhaustive account' can aid forgetting and potentially removes the possibility of lament, things are more complicated for Benjamin, for whom history is both scientific and a form of 'cultural memory'. Fritsch misses this doubled aspect and hence the nuances of Benjamin's communism. That is:

1. Benjamin does not reject the primacy of the unfolding forces of production (at least in their circumscription of possibility).
2. The totalization of history is not absent from his work – it is found in the central notion of catastrophe. This is the negative trajectory that must be interrupted, with the revolutionary 'emergency brake': the 'pile of debris ... The storm that we call Progress'.

3. Benjamin retains the 'ontological centrality of the working class', a position viewed by Fritsch as 'conceptually impossible and politically dangerous'.

It is in relation to these three aspects that Derrida's 'messianic without messianism' upsets and sidelines the philological separation of 'Critique of Violence' – a fragment of an abandoned anarcho-syndicalist politics – from the 'Theses on the Concept of History', whose 'messianic' is metaphysically distinct from the former's 'divine' (*göttlich*). This Derridean supplement is produced in spite of Fritsch's acute criticisms of 'Force of Law' and its overdetermination by the Heidegger and de Man debates.

It is somewhat paradoxical, then, that Fritsch uses Derrida to return Benjamin to something akin to Marburg Social Democracy. For Derrida supplies two functions:

1. The thought of the trace and the quasi-transcendental condition of messianicity mean that subjects are always already the inheritors of languages, histories and institutions – to which they cannot avoid responding. This general 'responsiveness' is held to resolve certain ambiguities in Benjamin by 'explaining' the originary injunction of the past.
2. More importantly, Derrida demonstrates the 'impossibility' of final accounts of history and opens the possibility of an empty future that 'no person or group could claim to embody or represent'. 'Repetition always defers to an unreachable future the identity it nonetheless promises.' There is no memory that is not violent, in that memory preserves itself only through work which is inevitably an organization and a forgetting.

The result is that, 'if we read Derrida and Benjamin together, an openness to the future beyond horizons is the very possibility of receiving and responding to the messianic claim that the oppressed of history have on us.' Fritsch is well aware of what results: the promise rescued from Marx is rendered unrealizable – it becomes a Kantian, regulative ideal from which to criticize empirical reality. He writes: 'Derrida not only supplies Benjamin with the temporality of the relation between a disenchanted future and memory, but also prevents the former's radical critique of Kantian Marxism and progressivism from leading to a wholesale rejection of all utopian horizons.'

This leaves us in a strange situation. If this is the claim of this book, then why is this Kantian Marxism not the focus? What is Benjamin doing beyond providing an organizing framework for less fashionable thoughts? Moreover, Benjamin has already distanced

himself from the position this book promotes. In the 'Paralipomena to "On the Concept of History"', we find:

Once the classless society had been defined as an infinite task, the empty and homogeneous time was transformed into an anteroom, so to speak, in which one could wait for the emergence of a revolutionary situation with more or less equal equanimity. In reality, there is not a moment that would not carry with it its revolutionary chance ... namely as the chance for a completely new resolution of a completely new problem. ... (Classless society is not the final goal of historical progress but its frequently miscarried, ultimately achieved interruption.)

The emptiness of the 'open future' espoused by Fritsch sees 'interminable mourning' as itself revolutionary, a bad conscience which proliferates narratives to contest official history. It is not that it is merely difficult to ascribe to Benjamin an idea of the 'infinitely interpretable layers of history', but rather that this notion is rejected in the critique of historicism. Is this not a form of *acedia*, 'a process of empathy whose origin is the indolence of the heart ... which despairs of grasping and holding the genuine historical image as it flares up briefly' (Thesis VII)? In 'The Image of Proust', enervation is the result of intellectual renunciation that proliferates interpretations.

However, not everything past or old is thereby historical. Historical pasts address the present equivocally and heterogeneously and are not always legible or relevant to 'a moment of present danger'. Historicist 'linearity' holds that time is left behind in its passing out of the present. In contrast, Benjamin's constellation, rejecting empathy, does not merely organize inert, past material in a politically charged way. In light of the comments on second mortifications, how would this not be an instrumental use of the past? Instead, the past returns in the present. *Jetztzeit* ('now-time') names this rare, conjunctural structure.

For Benjamin, 'linear time' is associated with the thought that all history is always available for memoration, appreciation of its richness or retrieval for salutary lessons ('the past will not run away from us'). In this regard, it is disappointing that this book on memory contains no discussion of Benjamin's relation to Proust, and in particular the manner in which memory [*Erinnerung*] and 'remembrance' [*Eingedenken*] interweave *constructive* narrative and *mémoire involontaire*; neither are his two historical works, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* and the *Arcades Project*, discussed.

If Proust's *À la Recherche...* is an attempt to 'produce experience synthetically' under damaged

modern conditions, then Benjamin's historiography seeks to produce *historico-political* experience synthetically under conditions of increasing barbarism. Its task is to find, and somehow present, that which the collective has lived through (but which can no longer be assimilated into experience) to produce a charge directed towards changed conditions. As Proust writes, 'we ought to fear ... even the past, which often comes to life for us only when the future has come and gone – and not only the past which we discover after the event but the past which we have long kept stored within ourselves and suddenly learn how to interpret.' In the hope of harnessing this fearful power, Benjamin seeks a 'unique experience' with it, an experience that shocks or strikes, and generates a 'revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed past'. Owing to the later importance of Proust, and the early imprint of Sorel, the Bergson of *Matter and Memory* is a necessary way station in the destruction of the received notions of memory and image in Benjamin scholarship, which serve as one of the indications as to how he is read empathetically as *our* contemporary. The unmediated, immediate rendering of Benjamin in our own image is fundamentally historicist. In this respect, Fritsch's book is symptomatic.

Andrew McGettigan

Anti-anti-totalitarianism

Michael Scott Christofferson, *French Intellectuals against the Left: The Antitotalitarian Moment of the 1970s*, Berghahn Books, New York and Oxford, 2004. 304 pp. £50.00 hb., £15.00 pb., 1 57181 428 0 hb., 1 57181 427 2 pb.

This book takes its cue from a puzzling anachronism: in the mid-1970s a concept that had elsewhere fallen into desuetude – totalitarianism – came to dominate French intellectual life, eventually draining the radical impetus of May '68 and ushering in a new kind of Thermidor, turning Paris into what Perry Anderson famously excoriated as 'the capital of European reaction'. Commendably, Christofferson chooses to deactivate two complementary approaches that have long obfuscated this critical juncture. First, the position that, looking to France's tribulations to reaffirm the phlegmatic virtues of Anglo-American civil society,

regards the 'antitotalitarian moment' as a symptom of the country's need to catch up with the only reasonable model for thinking liberty with equality: liberalism (fraternity must, of course, be swiftly dispensed with). Second, the tendency, present in both sympathisers and detractors, to accept the participants' own narrative of the motivating factors behind their peculiar *engagement*: this 'myth of origins of anti-totalitarianism' is effectively dismantled by Christofferson in his meticulous reconstruction of the Solzhenitsyn affair.

To counter both the invidiousness of comparison and the delusions of introspection, Christofferson – in chapters covering the intellectual vicissitudes of French revolutionary politics, the function of *The Gulag Archipelago*, the debate on the PS–PCF 'Union of the Left', dissidence, *la nouvelle philosophie*, and François Furet – combines two axes of investigation: a longitudinal look at the events and initiatives that led revolutionary intellectuals from socialist visions to anti-communist fixation, and a conjunctural inquiry into how a host of varied attitudes and perspectives on the Left came to be condensed into the 'antitotalitarian moment' (roughly from 1975 to 1978) by the electoral prospect of an entry of the French Communist Party into government.

The title of the book suggests a grouping of intellectuals on the Centre or the Right. Yet it is to be understood in a retroactive sense: how and why did intellectuals originally affiliated with revolutionary programmes of emancipation elaborate positions which, in order to exorcise the purported menace of the PCF, dissociated freedom from socialism, laying the ground for a conformist politics of the 'lesser evil'? In this respect, one of the most fruitful threads in *French Intellectuals against the Left* consists in focusing attention on how the discourse of direct democracy played a role in the formation of the antitotalitarian front. Incubated by a certain heterodox Trotskyism (*Socialisme ou barbarie*) and remembrances of council communism, and exacerbated by the crushing of the Hungarian uprising in 1956, notions of direct democracy became a privileged way to attack the PCF *from the left* (not such a hard task, given its passive collusion with the oppression of Algeria), linking the misdemeanours of communist power at home and abroad. Under the guise of *autogestion* (self-management), it endured into the 1970s where, shorn of its insurrectionary traits, it became a significant element in the ideological campaign of the French Socialist Party (PS) for hegemony over the Union of the Left – even gaining prominence in the *Assises* conference of 1974, through which the anti-communist Left sought to gain hold of the party,

eventually failing in the face of Mitterrand's far more pragmatic concerns.

Of equal interest is Christofferson's attention to that amalgam of direct democracy and Maoism which was the Gauche prolétarienne (GP). Born of the unexpected emergence of Marxism–Leninism in the student Left, but tied to the Cultural Revolution by only the most imaginary of bonds, the GP's 'combination of populism, voluntarism and spontaneism', whilst making for an eclectic ideology with at best tenuous links to Marxism, served as a crucial intercessor between the subversive spirit of '68 and the Restoration that was to follow. With their focus on exemplary actions and flashy slogans, the likes of Benny Lévy (alias Pierre Victor) and André Glucksmann already enacted the new relationship with the media that was later to mark the figure of the antitotalitarian intellectual. Moreover, as Christofferson indicates, they provided prominent radical figures, namely Foucault and Sartre, with an organizational referent that was both virulently anti-PCF and sufficiently extreme in its leftist ideology. In Foucault's case especially, the hyper-populism of the GP provided a way of cutting through the ambiguities besetting his discourse on power and political subjectivity, giving rise to a kind of plebeian anti-communist libertarianism still manifest in Foucault's reporting on the Iranian Revolution. In a sense, Foucault later returned the favour by openly legitimating the virulent anti-Marxism of Glucksmann and serving as a kind of respectably radical midwife for the entrance onto the scene of the *nouveaux philosophes*.

The discontinuous genealogy of this direct-democratic discourse, which Christofferson also tracks through the writings of Castoriadis and Lefort (during and after *Socialisme ou barbarie*), the strategic interventions of the journal *Esprit* and the inauguration of the newspaper *Libération*, is undoubtedly crucial for grasping how the coordinates of French anti-totalitarianism could only be provided by a Left discourse which mixed righteous moralism about political action, an extreme – but extremely vague – libertarianism about organization, and an abiding suspicion towards any muscular form of political power. In short, we could say that the antitotalitarian moment

was prepared by the *longue durée* of anti-Leninism. With respect to this facet of the argument, Christofferson's narrative might be faulted on two counts, both of which are perhaps inevitable consequences of the strength of the book: its scrupulously well-documented and persuasive focus on the rise of antitotalitarianism from the vicissitudes of a political ideology (direct democracy) and a specific political struggle (against the PCF's hegemony over the Left).

First, by focusing primarily on the strictly political debates on democracy, Christofferson fails to integrate the sociological debate on the 'new working class' and the post-'68 attention to 'new social movements' – which he nevertheless alludes to – into his account of the rise of antitotalitarianism. In other words, by tracing an internal *political* history of the phenomenon, he does not investigate the correlation of this ideological moment with the shifting terrain of French capitalist society – despite the fact that transformations in the organization of labour and class composition played an integral part in the rise of the theme of *autogestion* in the left of the PS. Second, the focus on the final betrayal of any direct-democratic aspirations with the rise of the *nouveaux philosophes* and Furet's revisionist history of the French Revolution, whilst methodologically correct,



ends up airbrushing out other strands of anti-Stalinist thought that did not collude in the spectacle of antitotalitarianism. Thus, there is little attention throughout to the powerful and coherent critiques of Stalinism provided by a (Trotskyist) Leninist Left, of the kind generously depicted in Birchall's *Sartre against Stalinism* (reviewed by Ben Watson in *RP* 129). Equally, little is said about the anti-Leninism of the Situationists, whose intervention in May '68 was steeped in the council-communist tradition of direct democracy in a far more persuasive and radical manner than many of the so-called anti-totalitarians. On a different note, Christofferson does perspicuously point to the significance of the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* in trying to formulate a speculative solution to the relationship between subjective liberation and social emancipation, but the influence or force of that attempt remains unexplored. At times, and especially when evoking

the supposed weakness of non-PCF, Left criticisms of the antitotalitarian vogue, Christofferson seems to gauge the strength of opposition by the very meter that the antitotalitarians naturally favoured: media exposure. The fact that Left positions alien both to the PCF and to the *nouveaux philosophes* and their ilk failed to attain critical mass does not mean that the anti-totalitarians had won the argument. Hijacking bandwidth does not necessarily translate into lasting hegemony. On the other hand, the debates within the PCF – namely the Althusserians' involvement in the battle over purging the thesis of the dictatorship of the proletariat – are unfortunately glossed over, despite their potentially revealing relations with the positions of the non-communist Left.

The second axis of Christofferson's analysis, besides the vagaries of direct-democratic thought, concerns the function of the common programme of the Left – with the ominous spectre of the PCF in power – in both catalysing and condensing the energies of antitotalitarianism. The anachronism and analytical debility of antitotalitarianism is here accounted for by the way it was instrumentalized in order to impede the PCF's integration into the political scene. Though, as Christofferson acknowledges in a useful, albeit brief, survey of the concept, the Cold War history of 'totalitarianism' was never devoid of instrumentality, in the French instance it is patently clear that the vicissitudes of its use – even when they involved advocacy for Warsaw Pact dissidence and human rights – were almost entirely dominated by domestic concerns. Whether they took the shape of Glucksmann's bombastic teleology of the Enlightenment (from Plato to Kolyma, 'to think is to dominate'), or Furet's revisionist excavation of the French roots of totalitarianism in the Jacobin terror, the various 'theories' of totalitarianism – for the most part oblivious either to fascism or to Nazism – demonstrated a kind of political narcissism which subordinated an elaboration of the concept to the expediencies of the French electoral calendar. Moving outside of the French context, the reliance of much anglophone post-Marxist thought on a concept of democracy generated within this antitotalitarian vogue still suffers from the poverty and opportunism of its sources.

One of the prize features of *French Intellectuals against the Left* is the meticulous care with which it debunks the 'myth of origins' of antitotalitarianism by documenting the intimate articulation between political events and the rhetorical mobilization of intellectuals. This was not only the case of the 'gulag effect' – where attention to chronology shows that Solzhenitsyn was

only monumentalized *after* the attack on *The Gulag Archipelago* by the PCF, more than a year after the book's publication. It also marked the numerous 'cases' and 'affairs' involving East European dissidents, and especially the rhetorical manipulation of the struggles internal to the Portuguese Revolution in 1975, which Christofferson tracks with admirable care and a wealth of informative detail. Throughout its narrative, the book weaves together a set of investigations into the alignments, affiliations and polemics that criss-crossed an increasingly media-centred intellectual scene. Though their intricacy and exhaustiveness might alienate readers more sympathetic to the broad sweep of cultural criticism, they do provide a welter of material for a sociological, cultural and political analysis of the changing role of the intellectual in twentieth-century France. Christofferson tracks the passage from a kind of self-effacing organic intellectuality under the banner of the PCF to the polemical human rights advocacy of the antitotalitarian intellectual – disaffiliated from any actual political movement, but also, as in the case of Furet (whose biography by Christofferson is forthcoming), a shrewd ideological and academic operator. In this shift, Foucault's 'specific intellectual' might thus be seen as a kind of vanishing mediator. Significantly, Christofferson enumerates the key instruments and accoutrements of this new psycho-social type: petitions, committees, editorial ventures (the case of Bernard-Henri Lévy and the publishing house Grasset is emblematic in this regard), the TV talk show, the newspaper (the founding of *Libération*), the function of journals (*Esprit*, or *Tel Quel*, with its passage from Maoist utopia to American 'polytopia'), and so on. It is a shame in this respect that Christofferson ignores the devastating insights present in Deleuze's caustic portrait of the *nouveaux philosophes*, which identifies their political function with the new *form* of their 'intellectuality', rather than in the second- or third-hand character of their supposed theses.

This book is clearly an indispensable resource for historians of twentieth-century France and French intellectual life, and a fine resource for anyone interested in a political sociology of the intellectual. Its fundamental thesis concerning the political sources of the antitotalitarian moment in the discourse of direct democracy and the electoral opposition to the PCF is largely persuasive – and a welcome antidote to the many distortions that obscure this key reactive shift. But in order to draw some lessons from Christofferson's laudable narrative we need to move beyond his conclusion that the vacuity of the antitotalitarian moment is derived from the 'propensity of French intellectu-

als to universalize and ideologize domestic political debates'. Such a statement tautologically designates as intellectuals precisely those who were able, in many respects due to wide-ranging changes in the structure of French society and academia, to shift the terrain of commitment to the mass media. As I've already intimated, this ignores the comprehensive demolition of the antitotalitarian position, and of the *nouveaux philosophes* in particular, by 'Left' thinkers such as Deleuze, Rancière, Lecourt, Linhart and Badiou. It also entails a very partial take on the nature of the intellectual – it is perhaps one of the book's missed opportunities that it does not really reflect on the tensions and shifts that have characterized this figure in contemporary French history. For what needs to be reflected on – if we take a practice of universalization to somehow define the intellectual and if we accept the conjunctural location of his interventions – is the difference between, on the one hand, the kind of vapid, self-serving universalist posture that marked many of the invocations of dissidence and human rights in the 1970s, and, on the other, the thinking of concrete or singular universality that still preoccupies many of those French thinkers who were thankfully deaf to the siren calls of antitotalitarianism.

Alberto Toscano

Learning the event

Gary Peters, *Irony and Singularity: Aesthetic Education from Kant to Levinas*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2005. x + 193 pp., £45.00 hb., 0 7546 3811 1.

Writing a book on aesthetic education today is problematic for a number of reasons. First and foremost, while the phrase 'aesthetic education' may remain resonant for many working in the traditions of continental philosophy or critical theory, it will nevertheless be unfamiliar to those who may have come to philosophy, and in particular philosophical aesthetics, more recently, perhaps via the heady portals of deconstruction, post-modernism, or even 'schizoanalysis'. The notion of aesthetic education, which dates back to Schiller, interweaves currents of humanism and hope that feel alien to the contemporary philosophical climate. It is one of the merits of Peters's book to begin to situate, however critically, the legacy of aesthetic education in relation to figures such as Nietzsche, Husserl, Heidegger, Rosenzweig, Levinas, Blanchot, Derrida, de Man and Deleuze, thereby opening up

a series of potential perspectives from which to re-engage with aesthetic education.

A second problem is more implicit and works to destabilize the possibility of such a re-engagement. While it is impossible to deny the impact of many of the great works of philosophical aesthetics – such as the *Poetics*, *Critique of Judgement*, *Birth of Tragedy*, 'Origin of the Work of Art' – both on the history of philosophy and on artistic practice, nevertheless contemporary philosophical aesthetics, particularly as it is practised in the analytical tradition, tends to find itself consigned to the intellectual no-man's land occupied by such disciplines as philosophy of history, philosophy of education, philosophy of science, and so forth. The problem with the texts that make up these disciplines is that they run the risk of being dismissed as more or less irrelevant both by 'pure' philosophy and by those disciplines for which they purport to provide philosophies. For the philosophers, these disciplines are little more than 'applications' of 'pure' philosophy, and as such can add nothing new to philosophy itself. For practitioners, let us say for practising scientists, there appears to be little that can be learned about the day-to-day business of molecular analysis or particle acceleration from listening to the philosopher of science's reflections on scientific epistemology. Who, today, we might therefore ask, could stand to benefit from an aesthetic education? As Peters observes at the start of his book, we appear to have been 'left with a model of aesthetic education that is ill-equipped to engage with the predicament of the artist'. But should we not extend this realization, and admit that the model of aesthetic education is equally ill-equipped to engage with the predicament of the philosopher?

The tension underpinning these problematics, as Peters makes clear, stems from a certain temporality. On the one hand, the purpose of aesthetic education is determined by utopianism, and the principle of the future betterment both of the self and society. Contemporary discourses about art, on the other hand, tend to focus on what Peters characterizes as 'the event of the artwork as it erupts in a "now" which is aporetic in the extreme'. The continuity determining the former discourse, and the process of betterment that is grounded in this continuity, appears to be irreconcilable with the fundamental discontinuity that determines the latter discourse.

Now, it may be observed that this nexus of problems pertains to the contingency of the historical development of the discourses of philosophy rather than to any intrinsic dimensions of aesthetic education as such. To

this extent, we might feel some sympathy for Peters's stated aim of 'sav[ing] aesthetic education from itself, that is to say, from its humanism, its bourgeois utopianism and its ultimate radicalism in the hands of the sixties generation'. In other words, Peters is attempting to slough off those very characteristics of aesthetic education which have come to bear the critical focus of discourses of post-modernism, deconstruction and their ilk. But what would be saved of aesthetic education, once it was shorn of its humanism, utopianism and radicalism? If we embrace the artwork as irruptive event, is it even worth trying to save aesthetic education? Why not consign it to its 'rightful' place as a more or less closed 'event' in the history of philosophy? One way or the other, it seems to me that the force of Peters's project is not fully revealed by the aim which he himself announces for his work.

Another way of understanding Peters's project is in terms of what he calls the 're-aestheticization of aesthetic education'. This would entail going beyond the 'moral, political, religious, and, indeed, pedagogical structures' of the educational dimension of aesthetic education. For Peters, such a process would open up a field of what he calls 'alterity-aesthetics', a field or space within which the 'unteachability' of aesthetics could be acknowledged while simultaneously enabling 'the productive movement of the aesthetic to be traced'. In what might such a productivity consist?

If we return to the source of the notion of aesthetic education, we recall that in *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, Schiller was writing in the wake of Kant and the French Revolution. The aftermath of the French Revolution was structured by the conflict between the ideal of freedom that inspired it and the actuality of the Terror that overtook it. This conflict can be discerned in the separation of the first and second of Kant's *Critiques*, and the two domains with which they concern themselves – that is, sensible nature and suprasensible nature.

Schiller argues that the significance and value of the cultivation of the beautiful stem from the way in which the beautiful work of art serves to reflect the freedom of the person contemplating the artwork, and specifically the free, unlegislated, interrelation between their sensible and intellectual faculties. It is a virtue of Deleuze's early work on Kant to have revealed how the topologies of the three *Critiques* involve a series of mappings of relations amongst the faculties, in each case leading to a 'common sense' of the faculties serving an interest of reason, under the legislature of one of the faculties, a legislature which itself is determinative of reason's interest. Deleuze then

argues that, in the third *Critique*, Kant still provides a genesis of this legislated accord amongst the faculties in his discussions of judgements of the beautiful, which involve an indeterminate accord amongst the faculties, and ultimately in judgements of the sublime, which involve what Deleuze nicknames a 'discordant accord' among the faculties. It is just this indeterminate accord among the faculties, and in particular the faculties of the imagination and understanding, which Schiller turns to in *Aesthetic Education*. He argues that a 'free-play' among the faculties, and the harmonious but indeterminate accord between sensibility and reason that emerges from this free-play, is able to 'overcome' the divided moral subject which emerges within the pages of the second *Critique*. He goes on to argue that the faculty of the imagination, interpreted as a 'play impulse', is able to strike a balance between the faculties of sensibility and understanding, or, as Schiller interprets them, the sensuous and formal impulses. The resultant balance among the faculties, or impulses, constitutes the so-called 'beauty of the soul' and the formation of a free and moral society.

If we were to align ourselves with Peters's critique of the pedagogical dimension of aesthetic education, then we could question whether it is indeed possible to *teach* or *educate* the faculties into such a free-play. On the contrary, is not this free-play the very ground upon which any aesthetic education could take place? But if we seek to affirm the opening within which the free-play of the faculties, balanced by the free-play impulse of the imagination, is able to occur, what then is left of the programme of aesthetic education as such?

The journey that Peters undertakes involves him in a series of negotiations with the dialectical – and non-dialectical – relations in the aesthetic theories of Kant, Schiller, Hegel, Nietzsche and Rosenzweig, and finally the phenomenological discourses on intersubjectivity of Husserl, Merleau-Ponty and Levinas. This assumes a deeper significance for Peters when he returns to the dialectical nature of the education event. By way of the intertwined displacement of the dialectics of both the classical aesthetic theories he discusses and the educational relation itself, Peters works towards a 'radical irresponsibility of aesthetic education'. This is in part exposed in the problematic relation between Levinas's discourses on aesthetics in *Existence and Existents* and the essay 'Reality and its Shadow', both published in the years immediately following the end of World War II, and his later 'ethical' texts. What links these works is a sustained engagement with a dimension of sensibility that cannot be constrained within the closures of either Husserlian phenomenology or Heideggerian

phenomenological ontology. This sensibility entails a fundamental *singularity* which exceeds any dialectical relation or conceptual universalization. As Peters notes, 'the work always gets in the way'.

Levinas's early aesthetic texts proved troubling to his existentialist peers because they emphasized the irreducible 'disengagement' at the heart of the aesthetic event. It is from this point of departure in disengagement that Levinas ultimately works towards the principles of excessive sensibility, singularity and ethical subjectivity. Would it be possible to construe a relation between this disengagement and the unlegislated free-play among the faculties which is the object of Schiller's discourse? In either case, we might wish to claim that the test of any contemporary work in philosophical aesthetics is whether it contributes to the affirmation of an opening – either temporal or spatial – within which sensibility is not immediately universalized, or is subjected to an interest of reason within which sensibility retains its potential for provoking consciousness. While this may not quite be the conclusion towards which Peters works, it seems nevertheless to accord with the goal of the dislocation and disarticulation of artistic education which Peters argues is the role of aesthetic education. To be sure, neither of these perspectives could be interpreted as a straightforward continuation or salvation of aesthetic education as conceived by Schiller.

Certainly, Peter's book engages with the principle of aesthetic education without 'domesticating' its insights; a domestication, according to de Man, of which the history of the reception of Kant's aesthetics is guilty.

Robin Durie

Dude, where's Yasser?

Gilles Deleuze, *Two Regimes of Madness*, Semiotext(e) Foreign Agents, New York, 2006. 415 pp. £11.95 pb., 1 58435 032 6.

This volume is the sequel to *Desert Islands* (which collected Deleuze's articles and interviews, 1953–74), gathering the remainder of the uncollected texts and presenting them in chronological order. The French editions did not exhaustively collect all the available texts, omitting a few important early pieces, perhaps most notably Deleuze's one explicitly Jungian article,

'From Sacher-Masoch to Masochism' (1961). The English edition of *Desert Islands* already had the distinction of being the worst translation of Deleuze to date (surpassing *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*). It was riddled with errors of meaning and distorted Deleuze's style and tone ('Sure I do' for *sûrement*, 'cops' wherever possible for *police*). Where he appears musing and thoughtful in the French interviews, in the English he somehow mutates into the Dude from *The Big Lebowski*. In *Two Regimes of Madness*, the Semiotext(e) team appear to have lost the plot further, as not only are the Dudisms even more strident, but the editors have taken it upon themselves to omit one of the texts published in the French version of the book, a short piece from 1983 entitled 'The Grandeur of Yasser Arafat'. There is no mention of the fact that this text has disappeared. How has a 'radical' publisher like Semiotext(e) ended up censoring a text of this nature for English readers? The piece had already been translated by Timothy Murphy in 1998 in the journal *Discourse*, so its exclusion must be due to the changed political climate.

There are three other texts on Palestine which have been reprinted here, all containing similar thoughts and arguments, so the question is why has this particular one been excluded? What does it say that the others do not? The opening remarks to Deleuze's last text on Palestine, 'Stones', states his general contention throughout these interventions: 'Europe owes its Jews an infinite debt that it has not even begun to pay. Instead, an innocent people is being made to pay – the Palestinians.' Deleuze's interest as a philosopher in Palestine is focused around this large-scale historical problem. More influenced by Arnold Toynbee's view of history than by Marx's, Deleuze sees the Palestinians as a minority who are faced with a highly specific geopolitical 'challenge'. They do not find themselves in a typical colonial situation, but rather in a situation analogous to the American Indians, where their land is evacuated to make room for the settlers. How can a people resist this kind of disappearance?

'The Grandeur of Yasser Arafat' is dated 'September 1983', the first anniversary of the Sabra and Shatila massacres. It contains several claims that are less clearly stated in the other articles. For instance, Deleuze argues as follows:

The conquerors were those who had themselves suffered the greatest genocide in history. Of this genocide, the Zionists have made an *absolute evil*. But to transform the greatest genocide of history into an absolute evil is a religious and mystical vision, it is not a historical vision. It does not stop

evil; on the contrary it propagates it, it makes it fall on other innocents, it demands a reparation which makes these others suffer a part of what the Jews suffered (expulsion, ghettoization, disappearance as a people).

Elsewhere in *Two Regimes* (in 'Pacifism Today'), Deleuze makes similar remarks about the use of the notion of absolute evil in relation to the Holocaust, but only here does he directly relate this 'religious' idea to the continuation of injustice. Deleuze's reasoning here needs a proper analysis, which cannot be undertaken in the space of a review, but from the perspective of his philosophical work it seems clear that he thinks he has discovered in the suppression of the Palestinians an instance of 'repetition' in history. The problem is structured by the repetition and displacement of a debt. One immanent problem with this suggestion as it appears in this short text is that not enough is said about the various displacements generated by this 'repetition'. While Deleuze does say that genocide is not the aim of the Israelis, the sole reason he gives for this here is that the means of physical extermination is secondary to the end of geographical evacuation.

Further on, Deleuze cites approvingly Elias Sambar's suggestion that the complicity of the USA with Israel arises in part because 'the United States has rediscovered in Israel an aspect of its own history: the extermination of the Indians, which there as well, was only in part physical ... In many respects the Palestinians are the new Indians, the Indians of Israel.' Although he makes this latter analogy in one of the other texts on Palestine, the analogy between the USA and Israel is most explicit in the censored piece. He asserts that 'pushing back limits was the act of American capitalism, the American dream', and that this is 'taken up by Israel and the dream of a Greater Israel on Arab territory'. Again, the wheel of repetition and difference is whirring in the background.

The rationale for the title of the excluded piece emerges when Deleuze suggests that the Palestinian resistance movement could not have emerged were it not for the role played by 'a greater historical character, one who, we might say from a Western point of view, could have stepped out of Shakespeare; and that was Arafat'. Like Hegel, Deleuze had a penchant for finding dramatic structures and roles in historical narratives. Were he alive today, he might have compared bin Laden to a character from Shakespeare, or perhaps from a gothic or decadent fantasy. The 'grandeur' of Arafat is in part dramatic: 'In a surrounded Tripoli there is nothing more than the physical presence of Arafat among his own, in a sort of solitary grandeur.'

The serious question to be asked here concerns the precise difference between interpreting history as a drama, and interpreting it as a 'religious or mystical vision'. We are returned to the enduring problem of Deleuze's relationship to the theory of history. He clearly has an idea of history, as distinguished from 'becoming', but it needs to be reconstructed.

Beyond Deleuze's concern with the dialectic of repetition and displacement, however, there is no denying the powerful ethical and political animus driving his writings on Palestine. From an ethical point of view, Deleuze follows Arafat in classing the Sabra and Shatila massacres as 'shameful'. Shame becomes a dominant ethical category in Deleuze's later work. The political aim in these texts is to warn that a solution to the conflict cannot emerge without an independent PLO; independent, that is, of both existing state institutions and Islamic religious movements. He concludes by warning (this is 1983) that 'the Palestinian people will not lose its identity without creating in its place a double terrorism, of the state and religion, which will profit from its disappearance and render impossible any peaceful settlement with Israel.' The 'religious terrorism' to which Deleuze refers here seems to refer to movements within political Islam; he is highly critical of political Islam elsewhere in the book.

There could be a number of reasons why this text has been suppressed from *Two Regimes of Madness*. It would be genuinely enlightening if the editors' rationale could be made public. It is doubtful that it has been excluded because of the possible charge of anti-semitism. Deleuze's ideas about anti-semitism are expressed quite clearly in the accompanying essay entitled 'The Rich Jew'. If anything, the short piece entitled 'Stones' could be deemed more liable to attack from this direction, and that has been printed here. We have seen that there seem to be three main ideas that surface in 'The Grandeur of Yasser Arafat' which are not spelled out as clearly in the other texts: the criticism of the use of the religious idea of absolute evil in history, the analogy between the Palestinians and the American Indians, and the picture of Arafat as a tragic figure from Shakespeare. It must be one, some or all of these ideas which has resulted in the censorship of the text. Or perhaps we could even take advantage of Deleuze's philosophy and suggest that these three ideas form a problematic 'multiplicity' which cannot be represented directly to English or American readers. There is certainly food for thought here.

Unfortunately, it is hard to dissociate this specific problem of the omission of the Arafat text from the cultural imperialism that runs through the translations.

The youth-culture Americanisms almost completely suffocate Deleuze's style, to the point that you wonder what the strategy of the Semiotext(e) team actually is. One uncharitable interpretation would be that there is some kind of provocation at work. It would be an aggressive affirmation of contemporary pragmatism: we're all Americans now, even cheese-eating French philosophers. Less uncharitably, the translation could simply have been infected with the ubiquitous intemperateness that distinguishes Theory in the Gloveless Age. Why else would a sentence as innocuous as '*non, non, non*' be translated as 'Don't be ridiculous'? The only charitable interpretation I can think of is that the Semiotext(e) team are just going all out to make Deleuze accessible for today's Americans. But the problem is that the Dude and his crew now appear to be losing their cool. They're throwing away texts that don't 'play well', when they should be doing the exact opposite and making available texts which ask one to think for oneself. Both *Desert Islands* and *Two Regimes of Madness* need to be re-edited and retranslated.

Christian Kerslake

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The World Social Forum in Chávez's Venezuela

Earlier this year I was appointed delegate from the Stop the War Coalition to the World Social Forum (WSF) in Caracas. This was a not just a chance to get a feel for the Bolivarian revolution, but also to see what would happen when the 'movement for another world' meets at one of the front lines of the struggle against the new world order.

Caracas is symbolically supercharged. You can tell from the tourist options. You can walk the Bolivar trail to relive key moments in the life of the father of Latin American nationalism, visit the Miraflores Palace, storm centre of the foiled 2002 coup, or, to get up to date, take a trip to one of the barrios that cling resentfully to the mountains overlooking the city's business centre.

A day before the Social Forum was due to start thousands of locals were already milling around the sound systems in the city centre in anticipation. Stallholders were selling kitsch Chávez baseball caps, T-shirts and badges; even a Chávez doll that did speeches. On a stage decked out with Bolivarian flags a trainer was leading a crowd in Chavista samba-aerobics. After a few conversations it was clear we were in that rarest of places, a country in which the poor were enthusiastic about their government. We soon got a lesson in the local class struggle. On the metro, we were suddenly surrounded by a huge crowd of well-dressed pale-skinned people with flags and banners. My companion told me knowingly we were in a baseball crowd. Baseball is indeed a national obsession. I still thought it was odd that so many of them were wearing George Bush T-shirts. Between stops, it dawned on us we were caught up in the assembly of an anti-Chávez, anti-WSF demonstration. Venezuela is not just a relatively poor country, but a very divided one. And the rich are not happy.

Previous WSFs were almost like carnivals. This time the context made it more serious. There were hundreds of meetings on a huge range of topics, but it was the threat from the USA that focused most peoples' minds. Thousands packed in to meetings denouncing US intervention in Latin America from Chile to Columbia, Brazil to Bolivia. Every attack on George Bush was met with wild cheers. What it means to oppose Yankee imperialism was another question. While Cubans and Bolivians were universally welcomed, when Brazilian government delegates expressed solidarity with the Venezuelan people, the audience split down the middle: half clapped, half booed.

Things started badly for the British anti-war contingent. Our first meeting was scheduled for 9 a.m., three miles from the city centre, in a tent in an army base. Most of the soldiers didn't take too kindly to the few committed peacenicks who turned up. Some of them flashed their guns menacingly. We held the meeting, but couldn't wait to get off the base. Still, there were moments of real solidarity. Most activists know that the outcome of the war in Iraq matters directly in what the USA likes to regard as its backyard. Even the vice-president is on record as saying the USA's failure in Iraq is giving the Bolivarian revolution a much needed breathing space.

Chávez himself had helped spark a debate that is new to the WSF. His talk of socialism and revolution in the twenty-first century generated a host of meetings about what this actually means in today's world. There were all sorts of different, often conflicting answers, and although some of the discussions were couched in formulaic Marxist-Leninist, this was a real departure for the Forum. Up to now there has been a conscious effort to avoid issues of power and concentrate on movements and issues. That was not possible in a region where there have been six major insurgencies in six years and where mass movements have unseated

presidents in country after country. The relationship between the movements and power, and the role of political parties, were at last discussed.

Chávez is himself in a roundabout way a product of the resistance movements. He launched his first coup attempt in 1992, three years after Caracas's own anti-neoliberal uprising, the 'Caracazo' of 1989. His coup was put down but not forgotten, and Chávez became the symbol of resistance to the old neoliberal regime. Since being elected in 1998 he has been saved by mass mobilizations three times: most spectacularly in April 2002, when half a million of Caracas's poor surrounded the Miraflores Palace after Chávez was removed in a coup. Equally significant was the oil bosses' lockout in December of the same year. Concerned about increasing government control of the industry, they tried to turn the taps off and starve Chávez of the oil revenues he needs. In the event, oil workers kept the pipelines flowing and broke the bosses' strike.

There is no doubt that all of this has radicalized the president. In his first two years in office, he modelled his policies on Tony Blair's Third Way; now he is calling for the formation of a popular militia of 2 million people under arms. When I met him, along with Cindy Sheehan and six other delegates from the anti-war movement, we were expecting a polite formal greeting and a few words of encouragement. In the event, we discussed the nature and fortunes of US imperialism for two hours. Talking movement strategy with a head of state was a novel and slightly disorientating experience, but Chávez was completely at ease with activists.

One comment by Chávez stuck in my mind. He said that he really needed to move out of the palace for three months to let the renovators do a proper job, since it had become so dilapidated; but he is not able to, because it is the only secure spot in Caracas. That was an alarming insight into the state of the regime, echoed by many of the supporters we talked to. Chávez is doing his best, they say, but he is surrounded by enemies: many top civil servants are hostile, some of the generals who launched the coup are still in post. Others explained that there are two police forces on the street in Caracas, and one of them is completely off the leash.

The Bolivarian Circles and the more recent Misiones are attempts to get round the old state machinery and get things done on the ground, mainly by volunteers and activists. A great deal has been achieved, including the virtual elimination of illiteracy and an impressive programme of public health in poor areas, with the help of 20,000 Cuban doctors. One of the most important missions supplies staple foods at subsidized prices through a chain of government-supplied stores. The majority of poor families and even a third of high-income families shop at these stores, called 'Mercal'. This type of initiative ensures Chávez's popularity (56 per cent approval in recent polls).

Yet these initiatives can't resolve the central problems faced by the regime. Poverty dogs Venezuela. Chávez has raised expectations, and there is a growing sense of frustration with the slow pace of reforms. One veteran activist from the barrios, Roland Denis, told us he thought only about 20 per cent of the slum population had seen any major improvements.

Chávez has room to manoeuvre because of the extra revenue generated by the high price of oil. But relying on oil revenue is risky. Caracas is full of half-finished building projects that are testimony to the ups and downs of the oil market. Without a real challenge to vested interests in Venezuela, the massive social problems will remain. On the other hand, Chávez has done enough to enrage the local bourgeoisie, never mind the USA. There seems little doubt that unless they can tame him, at some stage they will go for him again.

Much depends, then, on what is happening at the grassroots. The spirit in some of the barrios is inspiring. There is a sense of purpose about some of the local committees and a real pride in their self-organization. Many of the people leading in the barrio committees are veteran leftists. But they are playing a role that is half-activist, half-social worker. The committees are quite narrowly focused on administering reforms, rather than mobilizing the population. At some stage one can't help feeling that this will become a problem. Chávez is still very popular, but the historic Left has been devastated over the last two decades. Activists

are grappling with how to strengthen organization on the ground. They are trying different strategies. One important spin-off from the defeat of the oil blockade was the creation of the first independent union confederation in Venezuela in decades, the UNT. Others are trying to construct networks among the various movements of landless labourers, city workers and the poor. We witnessed a fantastic demonstration of agricultural workers from the south, brandishing machetes, marching alongside a feminist group from the barrios chanting 'socialism is not possible without women's liberation'.

The people have been politicized but the job of grassroots organizing has only just begun.

Chris Nineham

The assassin

The Critical Legacies of Manfredo Tafuri, Columbia University,
New York, 20–21 April 2006

There are many reasons today to find the figure of the 'Marxist' architectural historian Manfredo Tafuri a compelling one. Always critically and practically engaged in the world around him, even at the times when he appeared to be advocating a strategic withdrawal from it, Tafuri pursued an ideological criticism of the discipline and its relationship to the capitalist production of the city that changed the self-conception of the architectural institution and profession worldwide, in ways that have hardly begun to be worked through. He attracted to the architecture school in Venice, where he was professor from 1968, a number of brilliant young academics, including Francesco dal Co, Michel de Michelis, and, perhaps most importantly, Massimo Cacciari (the philosopher who would later become mayor of Venice). At the same time, he was, for many years, a member of the Communist Party and related left-wing parties in Italy, integrating these activities into the development of the academy in ways that are almost inconceivable to us today. As an editor of the journal *Contrapiano*, whose contributors included Cacciari and de Michelis as well as Antonio Negri, he contributed to the emergence of some of the most important contemporary intellectual discourses.

James Ackerman would hardly be alone in describing Tafuri as 'probably the most influential architectural historian of the later half of the twentieth century.' Yet when the architect Aldo Rossi dedicated his image *The Assassination of Architecture* to Tafuri, it was never clear whether the assassin was imagined to be capitalism, or Tafuri himself. And whilst Tafuri always denied apocalyptic readings of his work, it seems that, since his untimely death in 1992 at the age of fifty-eight, the suspicions and anguish generated out of the 'crisis' he uncovered at (and as) the heart of modernity and architecture have never quite disappeared, but have simply been repressed and denied. In the anglophone world at least, this can be explained, in part, by the continuing lack of translations of much of his large output. So it was with much anticipation that I travelled to New York to bear witness to that rare beast, a conference on Tafuri called to welcome into existence that equally rare creature, a new and excellent translation of a significant work by Tafuri, in fact his last major piece of writing: *Interpreting the Renaissance: Princes, Cities, Architects* (Yale University Press, 2006; originally 1992).

Tafuri's initial and most lasting impact came in the mid-1970s, following the translation into several languages of an essay originally published in Italian as 'Progetto e utopie'. Written in 1969 for *Contrapiano*, the 1976 English book-length version, *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development*, with its at times clunky translation and cover image by Rossi, established Tafuri's reputation as the difficult-to-read prophet of the end of architecture. The work remains a stunning example of a Marxian dialectical analysis of the dynamics of

metropolitan modernity and its critical and creative leading edge, as defined through the critical-historical concept of the 'avant-garde'. Form, plan and assemblage are amongst the concepts in the book whose dynamic, interpenetrating histories move productively between ideology and matter as they are taken on and developed by the competing yet interconnected logics of political utopianism and capitalist accumulation.

Tafuri's essentially classical Marxist warning against utopianism's potential to act as a deluding ideological veil is expanded and animated through a series of dialectical tales that pin down an originary crisis within contemporary architectural culture. This crisis is played out as a kind of primal scene, which in the absence of either a social transformation of architectural knowledge and the demands made upon it, or a sober critical awareness of their absence, is destined to be replayed endlessly as farce. The moment that architecture becomes self-conscious, and can represent society in the city, that representation becomes redundant, as a new temporality takes over. It is most fundamentally the need for urban growth in modernity that destroys the possibility of the 'classical' city, and in a sense constitutes the crisis of architecture itself. As Marco de Michelis stated, in his very useful paper at this conference:

The very establishment of science and technique as independent bodies of knowledge, separated and isolated architecture from the real process of conformation to modern society and condemned it to a laboured and irresolvable course. This, for Tafuri, is the origin of the ideological nature of any modern architectural work: the fact of no longer being a protagonist of the real transformations that

capitalistic development produces, of not being able to produce but only interpret them a posteriori. It could be said that architecture was no longer permitted to give form to reality but, at most, to re-form it.

For Tafuri himself, the crisis described in *Architecture and Utopia* had been played out personally some years earlier in the decision 'one tragic night' to become an architectural historian, when he found it no longer possible to continue direct, operative engagement in the struggle over the production of contemporary urban solutions. Yet this personal trauma was itself no more than the manifestation of Tafuri's emerging understanding of the unresolved disciplinary trauma within architectural culture itself.

Tafuri had set out the critical armature that would structure this work, and indeed that of the entire Venice school, in the 1968 book *Teorie e storia dell'architettura* (the English translation of which did not appear until 1980). As several contributors to the conference argued, the different sequence of publications has been an important cause of confusion in Anglo-American architectural circles as to the trajectory of Tafuri's development. In this, his



central argument was for the necessity of a split between the practice of writing architectural history, and the practice and theorising of making buildings, because, as Andrew Leach set out in his paper: ‘architectural ideology, in the sense of values that determine or shore up architectural production, is inextricable from the representation of the past as history’. Leach rightly emphasized the awareness of temporal orientation at work in Tafuri’s position: the differences between knowledge of objects from the past and the way that this knowledge is used to determine the possibilities of the future. If architectural practice is paradigmatically orientated towards the future, then the status of architectural history entails a particular ‘difficulty’ that needs to be acknowledged. Daniel Sherer, the translator of *Interpreting the Renaissance*, also delivered a paper which sought to dispel the notion that there was any simple shift in Tafuri’s work, from the position of a younger politically engaged activist to an older archival and remote philologist. As Sherer argued, modernity never ceased to be object of Tafuri’s analysis. Indeed, consistently for Tafuri throughout his research (though not, perhaps until now, in his English translations), it was the Renaissance’s ideological relationship to antiquity that determines and acts as the ground of a later modernism.

Perhaps the main question raised by this conference was how the contemporary and historical elaboration of the central concepts deployed in Tafuri’s works (such as criticism, ideology and operativity) could be extended beyond the narrow understandings often promoted by that generation of ‘Tafuri’s children’ most widely published in English. Such an activity is essential to any historicization of Tafuri today, and is crucial if we are to create new tools that can in some sense continue this project. Some useful contributions to such a project were made at the event, by Leach, de Michelis and Sherer, and also notably by Carla Keyvanian and Marco Biraghi. In rather different ways, there were some memorable scholarly contributions from Mark Rakatansky, Beatriz Colomina, Alessandra Ponte, Jean-Louis Cohen and James Ackerman as well. Almost entirely ignored by the event, however, were questions concerning Tafuri’s reception in bodies of thought not entirely situated within architectural culture – a reception marked in *Radical Philosophy* by recent contributions from David Cunningham and Gail Day (see *RP* 133). This omission is not insignificant since a great deal of Tafuri’s importance within architectural culture itself derives from the extent to which he was an emphatically trans-disciplinary thinker, so obviously influenced by Foucault, Benjamin and Althusserian Marxism – a historian who once audaciously attempted to form a fully trans-disciplinary and transdepartmental, critical history faculty at Venice, with a remit which stretched way beyond architecture.

It is finally, perhaps, in this broadest sense, as a thinker prepared, whilst working with fragments, to think through social, political and cultural totalities, that we should continue to work through his legacies today. For although, as Mark Wigley (contemporary architectural culture’s own Wildean wit) could not help but point out, ‘a successful conference on Tafuri would be a disaster’, there was a real sense of urgency at the end of this event, persistently expressed in terms of the need to keep returning to his work. It was in this sense that a now-aging generation of theorists and critics – including Anthony Vidler, Kenneth Frampton, Diana Agrest and Joan Ockman – all concluded with the idea that it might be Tafuri’s very indigestibility within consumer culture that keeps this project critical, as well as obscure. What they remained far less clear about was to what extent such a critical project remained their task, or that of contemporary architectural theory more generally, today.

Jon Goodbun