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Profit, plague and poultry

The intra-active worlds of highly pathogenic avian flu

Chris Wilbert

In 2006 we awoke, in Europe at least, to the odd situation in which twitchers – obsessive birdwatchers who spend much of their leisure time on the far-flung edges of countries – are being reinvented as the eyes and ears of the state, helping warn of new border incursions. These incursions are posited as taking an avian form that may bring with it very unwelcome pathogens. Everyday avian observations and knowledges of migratory routes are being reinvented as a kind of border patrol, a first line of veterinary surveillance. Birdwatchers and others are being asked to look out for any signs that wild birds may be dying from the highly pathogenic form of avian influenza known as H5N1, one of sixteen or so strains of flu virus endemic to wild birds and transferable to domestic poultry and also, in the right circumstances, to pigs and other animals.

Such appeals to amateur enthusiasts, walkers, farmers, and even hunters are not new. In 1933 the renowned animal ecologist Charles Elton called for amateur naturalists to act as the eyes and ears of ecological research centres such as the Bureau of Animal Population at Oxford University.¹ Elton argued that local observers could be useful for amassing empirical knowledge of animal populations, just as they were at giving information to detectives at Scotland Yard (the headquarters of the Metropolitan Police) about crimes. In the 1930s this worked in ways which allowed ecologists to popularize their nascent discipline, involving amateurs while holding on to their own cultural authority in professional centres of calculation. The difference today is that supranational state organizations are now taking on the ecologists' previous role. For example, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) now argues that farmers, and others, should be enrolled to act as early-warning networks. But the FAO is also proposing high-tech surveillance – for certain wild birds to be fitted with 'backpacker' telemetry systems networked to satellites and computers to monitor wild birds' annual migrations.²

As such, the knowledges of birdwatchers, and others, are being reconfigured (albeit as a minor part) in a renewed bio-geopolitics: the monitoring of animal health, locations and routes in the service of potential disease- (or, as Foucault would have had it, plague-) control, a management and surveillance of wild and domestic animal populations in the service of the health of human populations. The big fear is that this 'new' strain of avian virus may spread to farmed bird populations, increasing the possibility of rapid mutation and the risk of generating a new pandemic virus for humans via avian-human linkages, and a potential repetition (though in different ways) of the influenza pandemic of 1918–19 that killed upwards of 40 million people across the globe.

The dominant media stories that follow the above narrative are somewhat oversimplified, and national governments and supranational organizations such as the FAO, the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), and World Health Organization (WHO) are doing little to counter such media reporting – at least in their public pronouncements. It also increasingly appears that media, agribusiness, governments and global veterinary surveillance organizations are conspiring to blame wild birds, and small-scale poultry producers, just when much other evidence is pointing to large-scale factory poultry farms as the disease factories of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) strains.³ These same organizations and governments seem to be colluding in claiming that ‘closed’ export-oriented factory farms are the answer to preventing avian flu outbreaks.

We need to see how this fear of avian flu is being used by, and draws attention to, the practices and public discourses of governments, corporations, and transnational animal and veterinary organizations that have sought to police trade in domestic animals, and the movements of pathogens among livestock and poultry, since the early twentieth century. In short we need to look beyond the often simplistic media narratives focusing on bird migratory routes and their supposed ability to spread highly pathogenic viruses, and to question the ways food is produced and traded, as well as the harm being done – ecologically, socially, and to animals – by agribusiness.

With the attempts to extend social health and veterinary surveillance around the world, especially more fully into the modernizing nations of Southeast Asia, we see a further merging of biopolitics with geopolitics. There is a proliferation and globalization of what sociologist Nikolas Rose calls a demand for collective biopolitical risk management, where contemporary biopolitics becomes risk politics.⁴ For example, with regard to avian flu some scientists and politicians argue that just one territory lacking effective veterinary surveillance can open all other territories to possible pandemics. The EU, the USA and Japan, as well as the World Bank, promised over US\$1 billion in early 2006 for *biosecurity* so that developing countries can operate effective surveillance and monitoring systems of people and animals. These monies are undoubtedly needed to develop laboratories, social health systems and the like, to be able to protect their populations from potential harm – at least in the immediate future. Yet, as with all regimes of biopower managing life from ‘above’, there is also a deeply troubling aspect to how states and suprastate organizations – often with close relations to the World Trade Organization and a wider neoliberal politics – will operate such systems and who will benefit from them. Moreover, the reasons why such developing countries have not been able (or at times willing) to develop such health systems for themselves is casually overlooked. Here we might ponder on how more than two decades of neoliberal restructuring, massive national debts, corruption, arms selling/buying, and other factors have contributed to a state of affairs in which health-care systems in the developing world have been rendered moribund for the majority of their populations.

Bird spaces

The geographer Steve Hinchliffe has argued that ‘viral patterns are often tragic patterns. They are also sometimes revealing patterns’.⁵ Some of these revealing patterns have emerged in reports from the Thai-based organization Focus on the Global South on the emergent H5N1 avian flu outbreaks in Southeast Asia. They show how large export-oriented poultry factory corporations in Thailand, especially, have been seeking to extract commercial advantage from the recent outbreaks. Until 2004 Thailand was the fourth largest poultry exporter in the world, mostly to the EU and Japan. Thai corporations dominate the whole Southeast Asian region in a vertically integrated production process. Like the USA – which dominates the global poultry industry



– much of the production is done on highly intensive family-run farms that have little bargaining power with the huge corporate ‘integrators’ that provide the chicks and feed, and buy the product. Focus on the Global South point to how the Bangkok-based Charoen Pokphand Group (CP) has, in league with the Thai government, sought to put blame on small-scale poultry farmers for the transmission of avian flu from wild birds to domestic poultry, falsely claiming that large farms were free of bird flu.⁶ At the height of the outbreak in Thailand the deputy prime minister argued for the avian flu crisis to be turned into an opportunity – this opportunity was, of course, one only for CP and its like. Similarly, the corrupt and authoritarian Egyptian government sought to blame backyard and roof-top poultry production in rural and urban areas when H5N1 was confirmed there in February 2006 – and this at a time when the majority of the population are increasingly impoverished and undernourished.⁷

In this process small peasant farmers are likely to be denied their ability to produce their own food. Compensation for slaughtered poultry, if available, is often woefully inadequate and may have encouraged people not to report disease outbreaks. The crucial fact that peasant farmers are losing an important source of much-needed cheap food and income has been sorely missing in many discussions of the potential pandemic in mainstream media scare stories focusing on wild birds. Moreover, this opportunistic use of the avian flu outbreak by business and government elites for their own purposes is threatening to sabotage developing movements to encourage and improve urban and peri-urban agriculture that could (if best practices are encouraged and developed) improve access to food and provide much-needed income for some of the poorest people in the rapidly growing cities of the developing world.

Recently, the FAO has also argued that it is small-scale poultry producers that provide the main access point for highly pathogenic avian flu virus from wild birds. As the campaigning group GRAIN has argued, hardly a doubtful word has been said by the FAO and WHO about large-scale intensive poultry production in their various public reports on avian flu.⁸ Moreover, it seems that evidence for the supposed need to move poultry production into intensive units – as, it is claimed, these units have higher standards of biosecurity – is weak to say the least.

Looking more closely at the arguments blaming small-scale poultry production and wild birds problematizes them. First, it is claimed that avian flu is a problem among wild birds that is then easily transmissible to free-range or backyard poultry. Yet conservation organizations such as Birdlife have argued that the media depictions of H5N1 as a wild bird phenomenon just do not add up.⁹ Notably, the routes of H5N1 outbreaks

do not correspond to wild bird migrations. In the UK we have seen the media and the government implying that birds move geographically from China and Southeast Asia to Russia, Turkey, eastern Europe, then to western Europe and beyond in some inexorable flow from 'the Orient' – with all the connotations that still has. But this does not correspond to Birdlife's considerable knowledge of wild bird migrations. For example, they have argued that it is unconvincing to blame wild birds for the hotspots of avian flu around places like Qinghai lake in China. First, birds that died there did so after being there for several weeks. Second, the lake is surrounded by large poultry operations and an interlinked fish farm industry that uses chicken faeces as feed. Birdlife argue that it is more likely that the poultry operations are infecting the wild birds with their waste and that the subsequent outbreaks around the region show more of a correlation with road and railway connections than with bird migratory routes. Why, further, if wild birds were the vectors of this disease, is it not found in more of the main bird migratory routes, and why do countries such as Laos (situated close to Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia – where outbreaks have been greatest) only have outbreaks in the areas of the few factory farms (owned, incidentally, by the CP Group from Thailand)?

Avian flu strains are endemic in wild birds and probably have been so for millennia, yet until recently it has rarely killed birds, seeming to exhibit low evolutionary rates of change. While it is true that most of the sixty-two deaths of people in Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia and Egypt have been small farmers and their families, poultry production has grown enormously in recent decades in Asian regions. China alone produces over 9 million tonnes per annum, a tripling of production in the 1990s. Nearly all of this increase has taken place in intensive factory production units. Outbreaks of differing strains of avian flu have also been growing hugely over the past decade. As both GRAIN and Mike Davis (in *The Monster at Our Door*, 2005) argue, what has occurred fairly recently, and through complex interlinked social, economic, ecological interventions, is that avian influenza has taken on new qualities in recent years. As GRAIN argue:

The highly pathogenic strains of bird flu develop in poultry, most likely in poultry exposed to milder strains that live naturally in wild bird populations. Within crowded poultry operations, the mild virus evolves rapidly towards more pathogenic and highly transmissible forms, capable of jumping species and spreading back into wild birds, which are defenceless against the new strain. In this sense, H5N1 is a poultry virus killing wild birds, not the other way around.¹⁰

In a commentary on avian flu in the *Korea Herald* (14 November 2005), that great advocate of animal ethics Peter Singer also blames factory farming for causing highly pathogenic strains like H5N1. He argues that the billions of dollars so far spent by the US government on stockpiling flu vaccines (and on biosecurity worldwide), or on encouraging US pharmaceuticals companies to come up with a vaccine, is really a subsidy to the intensive poultry industry. Animal production in capitalism is full of such subsidies of course. It is also not often enough stated that in many ways modern factory production of meat encapsulates, and often leads, capitalist reorganizations and suffuses every aspect of society. Indeed, the networks of modern intensive farming are so vast we cannot see the 'bare life' of the animals for the industry.

Media panic or 'the monster at our door'?

It is often claimed that the potential avian flu pandemic has been hugely overstated, that the mass media have latched on to a story of potential catastrophe and wildly exaggerated the threat in order to profit from fears that they themselves have helped generate. It is likely that in some ways this is indeed the case. Various media sources have used

aspects of our indeterminate knowledges of avian flu to make their own points based on, for example, fears of other people's eating practices, and ways of raising animals, and of travelling – exploiting an ontological insecurity linked with Orientalist notions mixed into contemporary consumer practices.

Governments, businesses, media, scientific organizations, and even leftist critics such as Mike Davis have all been criticized for exaggerating the possibilities of avian flu. Claims have been made about profiteering by drug companies – especially the makers of Tamiflu – and patent systems that deny drugs to those most in need.¹¹ Yet, while valid in many ways, these critical claims about the avian flu scare as media panic miss other political processes working around it. This might also be to take a too developed-world perspective of the global and regional scales of food production. As such, it ignores the environmental degradation of this global trade, the exploitation of farmers forced into highly exploitative relations with CP and other food corporations in Southeast Asia (or for that matter the USA, and many other countries) and the control corporations have over the whole production process of poultry in countries like Thailand. It also ignores the ways in which US poultry producers are opportunistically looking for excuses to close down backyard poultry production in the developing worlds for their own benefit, and the role of supranational surveillance organizations like FAO, WHO, OIE, who, in their call for effective veterinary surveillance systems, seem to be playing into the hands of corporate intensive animal production. As such, it may well be to ignore how geopolitics is being brought further together with biopolitics in ways that extend the real subsumption of society under capital.

Nikolas Rose has recently argued that contemporary biopolitics has become molecular politics due, among other things, to developments in biomedicine.¹² But there is another sense in which molecular politics is also reconfigured around risk. Late capitalism is characterized by greater and longer circulations of bodies across borders – by increasingly globalized, speeded-up economies of exchange and circulation of myriad materials. This creates increased possibilities and risks for all kinds of mixings with other bodies and other phenomena, in forms that differ widely in the ways power and agency are acted and enacted in these spaces of circulation. There are increased opportunities for recombinations of viruses moving with greater ease geographically within and across differing spatial scales. This was shown in the recent SARS outbreak where, within months, the pathogen was transmitted to over thirty countries in every continent, through contacts made in hotels, airports, planes, and hospitals, and other spaces of intense mobility.

SARS probably emerged from a rare recombination of viruses – of avian and mammalian coronaviruses (a virus in the same family as the common cold) mutating and transferring in a highly virulent and contagious form to humans in and through the 'wet markets' of wild and non-domesticated farmed animals (such as civet cats) that have increased in recent years to cater to a burgeoning middle-class consumer demand in wealthier provinces of southern China, such as Guangdong, and in Hong Kong and Beijing, where the SARS outbreaks were worst.



SARS, like highly pathogenic avian flu, has highlighted the current inability of national and international veterinary and biomedical surveillance regimes to cope with such emergent pandemics. We are told that SARS was reputedly a rare event, emerging from wild animals (often referred to as bushmeat) and commercially farmed ‘wild’ animals being brought into contact with industrially produced poultry, pigs, and other animals in markets, creating in such spaces an environment for viruses to mix, mutate and spread into large urban populations of people. The bushmeat market, also often fuelled by migration, travel, commercial and illegal logging of forests (as well as the increasing tendency for the EU and Japan, for example, to buy out the fisheries of impoverished countries, leading to periodic shortages of protein in local populations), increases opportunities for potential mixings of viruses as more wild animals are hunted for food and brought into contact with people. Avian flu is potentially more extensive than SARS in its forms, being tied more tightly into the global poultry industry (in its myriad forms) and trade in animals (both legal and illegal).

Intra-active worlds

This draws attention to the complexities of intra-actions (a term that the feminist philosopher of science Karen Barad uses to emphasize that natures and cultures do not simply *interact*, but are always already mixed – intra-acting) in our diverse ecologies,¹³ to the many unruly bodies in our worlds and their potential to throw up all kinds of emergent forms of ‘life’ – some perhaps benign, others potentially pathogenic, others somewhere else, for now. The various strains of HPAI are only one example of a number of potential zoonoses (defined by WHO as diseases and infections which are ‘*naturally* transmitted between vertebrate animals and humans’, though this *naturally* hides the possibilities of what this may involve) that are emerging in different geographies. Yvonne Baskin, writing about invasive species (of which humans are the major example) argues that about three-quarters of the 156 emerging infectious diseases affecting people in the USA today are zoonoses.¹⁴ Taking a wider geographical view, we might argue that zoonoses are becoming one of the central concerns of global geopolitical–biopolitical medical surveillance in the twenty-first century.

Yet, in thinking about zoonoses like the current strain of highly pathogenic avian flu or SARS, we might begin to move in a direction which resists seeing these phenomena as specific objects with predetermined properties and boundaries that simply flit from other predetermined bodies, whether human or non-human: the model upon which much scientific and veterinary surveillance policy and practice seems to be based. As such, we might resist the urge to imagine that HPAI seems to do things by itself – killing some birds, or (tragically and painfully) killing some people, making other people very ill, and all the other things that happen around it. But, concomitantly, we might also avoid the tendency to see the potentialities and realities of avian flu as *just* the result of human activities that make these zoonoses do the things they seem to do. For both these positions rely on a view of natures battling and *interacting* against cultures, or vice versa, in particular contact zones. Given the complexity of many emergent human-to-animal diseases (and of everyday life generally), this overlooks the ways in which natures–cultures–technologies are always already mixed up and mixing up – *intra-acting* – in what we might better describe, think of and practise as technonatures or socionatures, bearing in mind that these mixings can happen in disparate ways, depending upon the different forms of intra-action involved.

We engage with our worlds in ways in which agency is relationally dispersed, where agency is an enactment, not a property that someone or something just has. We need to take a non-representationalist perspective engaging avian flu as an emergent phenomenon made tangible only within complex open-ended networks and discursive practices; to see highly pathogenic avian flu in terms of more-than-human worlds

– the boundaries of which potentially extend massively, and which always contain potentialities of an *excess* that can give rise to new productions of things. These complex spaces of avian flu are ‘bewildering spaces’, to use a term coined by Sarah Whatmore.¹⁵

We might then argue that avian flu does not exist in and of itself as an object (for even if it is argued by some that it can be identified in a scientific lab it is only rendered visible within specific agencies of observation). Avian flu, in its differing forms has diverse materialities. It is always a part of various bodies, ecologies, networks of (in)adequate technologies of surveillance and biosecurity, which include all kinds of rules, veterinary techniques, forms of production, transport networks, slaughtering practices, laws, and more. It may be emergent, but it seems there are many ways of seeking to bring about its move back into its previous background than are presently being admitted by global veterinary surveillance organizations. If so, this will be a complex, ongoing and difficult practice, one that needs to be integrated within goals to help provide good-quality, cheap food for the poorest in modernizing worlds, to end corporate exploitation and intensive rearing regimes, and to improve animal lives, whilst also reducing risk of viral mixings. Blaming wild birds, or seeking to ban small-scale poultry production at the expense of supposedly biosecure intensive factory farming units, is not going to make avian flu go away. Intensive factory-farmed production of poultry, pigs and other (formerly wild) animals looks more likely to be another intervention within complex political–economic–ecological systems that have helped facilitate the *involution*s (rather than evolution) of avian flu viruses into highly pathogenic new forms. Where the current concerns about zoonoses may help – if fear and panic are not allowed to dominate our actions in the search for the health and veterinary surveillance systems that are urgently needed in modernizing regions of the world – is in focusing on the development of another biopolitics: forms of biopower from below. What could these be? And how could they somehow include nonhumans in more open and ethical ways in new political practices?

Notes

1. Charles Elton, *Exploring the Animal World*, Allen & Unwin, London, 1933.
2. FAO press release, ‘Free as a Bird – or Under Surveillance? Plan for Global Wild Birds Tracking System’, 1/6/06, www.fao.org/ag/againfo/subjects/en/health/diseases-cards/special_avian.html.
3. FAO press release, 1 June 2006: ‘Wild Birds’ Role in HPAI Crisis Confirmed. But Scientific Conference Fingers Poultry Business’. This press release focuses on wild birds, despite the claim that scientists have pointed to the intensive poultry business as being the ‘factory’ of HPAI.
4. Nikolas Rose, ‘The Politics of Life Itself’, *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 18, no. 6, pp. 1–30.
5. S. Hinchliffe, ‘Viruses’, in S. Harrison et al., eds, *Patterned Ground: Entanglements of Nature and Culture*, Reaktion, London, 2004, p. 228.
6. Isabelle Delforge, *Thailand: From the Kitchen of the World to Food Sovereignty*, Focus on the Global South, September 2004, www.focusweb.org/content/view/499/; Chanida Chayapate and Isabelle Delforge, *The Politics of Bird Flu in Thailand*, Focus on the Global South, April 2004, www.focusweb.org/content/view/273/.
7. GRAIN, *The Top-Down Global Response to Bird Flu*, April 2006, www.grain.org/articles/?id=12.
8. GRAIN Briefing, *Fowl Play: The Poultry Industry’s Central Role in the Bird Flu Crisis*, February 2006, www.grain.org/front/?id=84.
9. See Birdlife’s website, www.birdlife.org/action/science/species/avian_flu/.
10. GRAIN Briefing, *Fowl Play*, p. 8.
11. GRAIN also point to how data collected by WHO-collaborating laboratories (many financed by the US government) on avian flu outbreaks is often not made public. Instead, it seems to be available to pharmaceuticals companies. See GRAIN, *The Top-Down Response to Bird Flu*, p. 2.
12. Rose, ‘The Politics of Life Itself’.
13. Karen Barad, ‘Meeting the Universe Halfway: Realism and Social Constructivism without Contradiction’, in L. Nelson and J. Nelson, eds, *Feminism, Science, and the Philosophy of Science*, Reidel, Dordrecht, 1996, pp. 161–94.
14. Yvonne Baskin, *A Plague of Rats and Rubbervines*, Island Press, Washington DC, 2002.
15. Sarah Whatmore, *Hybrid Geographies: Natures Cultures Spaces*, Routledge, London, 2002.

Mirrors without images

Mimesis and recognition in Lacan and Adorno

Vladimir Safatle

Mène-moi vers la vie
Au-delà de la grille basse
Qui me sépare de moi même
Qui divise tout sauf mes cendres
Sauf la terreur que j'ai de moi.

Paul Éluard

In the history of the relations between philosophy and psychoanalysis, there have been two major developments: one in France and the other in Germany. It is widely accepted that these intellectual experiences have taken significantly distinct paths. In Germany, the confrontation between philosophy and psychoanalysis was staged by the Frankfurt School through its strategy of introducing Freudian discoveries into the history of ideas. In France, the philosophical inquiry concerning psychoanalysis permeated several moments of contemporary thought. Nevertheless, the main agency of the confrontation was the Lacanian reconstruction of Freudian metapsychology.

It is commonly accepted that there is no shared dialogical field between the Frankfurt School and Jacques Lacan. The Frankfurt School initially attempted to build up a kind of archaeology of social bonds and socialization processes based on readings of Freud's theory of drives; an archaeology capable of guiding a renovation of the ambitions of social praxis, as well as the modalities of its critique. Jacques Lacan's way, on the other hand, seems to have followed another cartography. It is true that we can find a kind of Lacanian archaeology of social bonds, mainly if we consider the theory of the 'five' discourses. However, despite this interest in producing a theory of discourse, Lacan developed a clinical practice grounded mainly on the recognition of the blockage produced by the unconscious against processes of self-reflection. In this sense, Lacanian psychoanalysis does not admit any notion of positive synthesis capable of weaving a reconciliation between the emancipatory ambitions of consciousness and the radical negativity of the

unconscious. This leads us to understand the end of analysis as a process of *subjective destitution*. Such a process places psychoanalysis in opposition to the possible enlargement of consciousness's field of self-comprehension and of any possible disalienation of the subject, blocking the dialogue between Lacan and the emancipatory aspirations of the Frankfurt School. But perhaps we are already entitled to criticize this way of addressing the problem.

Recuperating the subject... through the object

Certainly, the notion of cure in the Lacanian clinic is not compatible either with Erich Fromm's ideas about processes of individual development and culturalism or with the utopic horizon of social reconciliation proposed by Marcuse. At the same time, the Lacanian clinic distances itself from the attempts proposed by Habermas and Honneth to construct a theory of intersubjectivity that takes into account psychoanalytic models.¹ However, with Jacques Lacan and Theodor Adorno we witness two moments in the history of ideas that are very close to one another. It is not the intention here simply to show the interface between these authors, but rather to develop the consequences of an acknowledgement of the convergence between their apparently distinct programmes.

To begin with, we know that both Adorno and Lacan mapped out their intellectual enterprises by means of a project of a *return to Freud*. If this movement is clear in Lacan, we must also remember the major role played by Adorno's reading of Freud. This reading influenced Adorno's philosophical project in a decisive way, in particular, the structure of his conception of the self-criticism of reason. Adorno's materialist stance becomes simply incomprehensible if we neglect what psychoanalysis offered him concerning the genesis of the self, the relation between drive and the structuring of thought, the role of identifications in

the determination of self-identity and the strength of narcissism in the colonization of social life forms. The psychoanalytic core of Adorno's theory is so evident that some commentators – for example, Honneth – see in it the cause for a certain 'sociological deficit' present in the fact that it is therefore not possible for Adorno to produce a true reflection on the *social* modes of organization of society.²

However, when it comes to a possible confluence between Lacan and Adorno, it becomes most clearly visible when we recall that both – in opposition to the major trends of contemporary thought – sought to renew ways to sustain the principle of subjectivity. Instead of assuming the discourse of the subject's death, or a return to the immanence of being, both were willing to sustain the principle of subjectivity without the thought of identity.

For these authors the subject is not a substantial entity on which processes of self-determination are based; rather, it is the locus of non-identity and of splitting. This operation gains legibility if we recall that the common Hegelian roots of Lacan's and Adorno's thought allowed them to develop an articulation between the subject and negation. The result was that non-identity, understood as a non-retrievable negativity that is fundamental to the structuring of a subjectivity that does not vanish into the universal medium of language, could become the Adornian utopian horizon, in the same way that it represents what needs to be recognized by the subject at the end of Lacanian analysis.

This idea of the subject as locus of non-identity may become clearer if we recall how the two thinkers – once again, contrary to the major trends of contemporary thought – sustained the importance of experience as a confrontation between subject and object. Lacan and Adorno did not abandon the subject–object dialectic because there is an experience of decentring that is fundamental for the determination of subjectivity and which is only given by a certain regime of *identification* between subject and object.

Such a regime should not be understood as based on the mechanisms of projection of the I onto the world of objects, or of assimilation of the object through a recollection that is capable of internalizing splittings produced by consciousness. Rather, this is about taking the subject to recognize that it has 'an objective core'³ (*einen Kern von Objekt*) that is not reducible to processes of individuation and reflexive appropriation. That is why subjectivity should no longer be understood exclusively through its reduction to the intersubjective ground that structures the symbolic

field of social interaction, but in the restoration of the confrontations that characterize the dialectics of subject and object.

Adorno called the mode of recognition that is fundamentally connected with the figure of the subject regarded as locus of non-identity, *mimesis*. This essay aims to show that the Adornian problematic of mimesis is not a mere symptom of a repressed tendency to return to *Naturphilosophie*. Rather, mimesis is the fundamental concept for a reorientation of discussions about the modes of recognition available to subjects, as we can see from the following statement:

If speculation on the state of reconciliation were permitted neither the undistinguished unity of subject and object nor their antithetical hostility would be conceivable in it; rather the communication of what was distinguished (*Kommunikation des Unterschiedenen*). Not until then would the concept of communication, as an objective concept, come into its own. The present one is so infamous because the best there is, the potential of an agreement between people and things, is betrayed to an interchange (*Mitteilung*) between subjects according to the requirements of subjective reason.⁴

This statement is often seen as the symptom of a philosophy that persists in considering the relationship subject/world exclusively as a confrontation between subject and object – a confrontation proper to the philosophy of consciousness – while neglecting the intersubjective structure that would determine the relationship with the object. This explains the necessity of rescuing a vague concept of mimesis as the promise of an agreement between people and things, in spite of the *reflexive* processes of understanding already present in daily communication.

We must nevertheless insist that such a reading inverts the poles and sees as 'negligence' what is in fact the result of a critique. What we have here is a critique of the annulment of the ontological dignity of what appears, as *resistance and opacity of the object*, by the intersubjective scheme of signification. On the other hand, we have also a critique of the annulment of the ontological dignity of the irreducibility of what, in the subject, does not accede to the positive determinations of the shared word in uses of language in ordinary life. Thus, a 'communication of what was distinguished' must be sensitive to this *chiasme* by means of which the subject encounters in the object the same opacity that it finds in certain modes of relationship to itself. This search for an alternative concept of communication moulded out of the confrontation between subject and object brings Adorno and Lacan close to each other.

Clinic and recognition

In relation to Lacan, it is accepted that the theme of recognition is linked to an initial moment of his thought still marked by a certain French Hegelianism. But this attempt to reconstruct the rationality of analytic praxis by means of intersubjective processes of desire and recognition is taken to have been abandoned by Lacan when his intellectual experience reached maturity. In its place, we find an attempt to defend pure singularities that go beyond any universalist demand for recognition. This led to statements such as ‘There is no universal that doesn’t contain an existence that denies it.’⁵ So it seems that Lacan performed a typically post-structuralist turn, apparent in the themes of the irreducibility of pure difference and non-structured multiplicities to be found in philosophers such as Derrida and Deleuze.

This defence of pure singularities, despite the maintenance of the recognition processes in the clinic, seems to have set Lacanian psychoanalysis on course for a return to a pre-reflexive immanence of being. As Lacan abandoned the universalizing aspiration of recognition, this immanence of being was to be conjugated in the particular, admitting only a soundless, monological *jouissance* that does not hide its proximity to psychosis. It is as if Lacan succumbed to the temptation of ‘closing the individual over himself’, as Gilles Gaston-Granger notes.⁶

However, the moment psychoanalysis tries to move away from the reflexivity intrinsic to a subject marked by the desire of being recognized, the criteria for establishing the truth of what is given in the field of experience are lost – unless we return, in a somewhat subterranean manner, to a simplified notion of *subjective certainty* which has no need of the Other to be legitimated. It is therefore necessary to show that the cure in the Lacanian clinic is inseparable from a movement of *subjectivation* that necessarily leads to the *self-objectivation* of the subject in a structured field; that it is impossible to think a clinic devoid of recognition procedures. What is the recognition regime that is able to respond to the imperatives of self-objectivation that are specific to the decentred Lacanian subject and to the opacity of the drive, of the sexual and of the body?

Psychoanalysis has to cope with a double claim. First, it has to be a critique of knowledge through the comprehension of consciousness as synonym of alienation. In this, it is a discourse of discordance and splitting between knowledge and truth. However, by its opposition to the immediate self-identity of consciousness, psychoanalysis cannot transform itself

into a hypostasis of difference, of *non-savoir* and of a discourse of disintegration of the subject. Within the analytic frame, this disintegration would produce nothing but psychosis and foreclosure of the Name-of-the-Father – that is, a fragmentation of identity characteristic of the paranoid deliriums of President Schreber. Hence the true challenge of Lacanian psychoanalysis is not to postulate the disintegration of the subject, but to find the strength of cure peculiar to those experiences of non-identity which break up both the circle of narcissistic certitudes of the I and the previously structured and controlled frame of intersubjective exchanges. Nevertheless, when we speak of an *experience* that is not a spiritual ascesis, we necessarily assume a formal horizon of recognition that is available to the subject. In the Lacanian case, this recognition is not totally carried out in the intersubjective field of language. On the contrary, it is dependent on the confrontation of the subject with the opacity of an object that causes its desire and that is not completely assimilable by the symbolic inscription of the signifier.

We may gain a better understanding of this point if we remember that in order to socialize itself in the intersubjective field of language the subject has to lose its symbiotic bonds with the objects of partial auto-erotic drives (or objects *a*). This is a major theme of psychoanalytic literature: initially, the baby lives in a state of symbiotic undifferentiation, which has to be broken up to allow socialization processes to operate. However, this breaking up implies losing that confrontation to which the subject is submitted prior to individuation by the image of the *corps propre* and by insertion in the socialization field of language. One of the characteristics of the Lacanian clinic consists in defending the necessity of the subject to confront itself again with these objects (which will continue to cause its desire), thus recovering what is ‘non-subjective in the subject’. Therefore, the self-objectivation of the subject, according to Lacan, is not connected to the expressive dimensions of socialized individuals. It is connected to the subject’s self-recognition in an object that bears neither its image nor the marks of its individuation. With this in mind, we approach the problem of the relation between mimesis and recognition in Lacan and Adorno.

Critique of intersubjectivity

What makes this strategy of self-objectivation necessary is the fact that Lacan has merged the mechanisms of *socialization* and the processes of *alienation*. This strict convergence is supported by a ‘totalizing critique of the reification of ordinary language’ common to

Lacan and Adorno. In both cases, ordinary language becomes the main space of reification and alienation. This leads both Lacan and Adorno to maintain that there is an irreducible tension between certain dimensions of subjectivity and the intersubjective linguistic field. This follows from the assertion of the impossibility of the subject's self-objectivation inside the alienated reality of modern societies.

Lacan even comes close to outlining a critique of instrumental rationality by showing that the empty speech of reified language produces a communication that is submitted 'to the enormous objectivation constituted by science, and it will allow the subject to forget his subjectivity'.⁷ This objectivation of instrumental discourse leads to 'the most profound alienation of the subject in our scientific civilization'.⁸ Within this instrumental dimension and context, Lacan speaks of language as a 'wall' that hinders the subject in establishing authentically intersubjective relationships. The consequences of this way of thinking become clear when Lacan abandons his sociohistorical statements to simply affirm:

The signifier, producing itself in the field of the Other, makes manifest the subject of its signification. But it functions as a signifier only to reduce the subject in question to being no more than a signifier, to petrify the subject in the same movement in which it calls the subject to function, to speak, as subject.⁹

That is to say, even the *intersubjective field of the signifying chain* can only make the subject speak by petrifying and dividing it, since: 'if it appears at one side as meaning, produced by the signifier, it appears at the other as *aphanisis*'.¹⁰ The subject appears *at the other side* as something non-objectifiable, as *aphanisis*, indicating a fundamental relation of inadequacy between subjectivity and intersubjectivity.

Adorno, in turn, will insist that the subject of our time faces a reality mutilated by the identitarian thought of the logic of equivalents intrinsic to the commodity form. This identitarian thought takes us necessarily in the direction of a reified language, where 'not only the qualities are dissolved in thought, but men are brought to actual conformity'.¹¹ This submission to the phantasmatic objectivity of fetishist abstraction establishes an inadequacy between the aspirations of singularity and the intersubjective field of language:

when public opinion has reached a state in which thought inevitably becomes a commodity, and language the means of promoting that commodity, then the attempt to trace the course of such devaluation

has to deny any allegiance to current linguistic and conceptual conventions, lest their world-historical consequences thwart it entirely.¹²

Nevertheless, it seems that the trajectories of Lacan and Adorno are not wholly convergent, since the Adornian diagnosis of the reification of language is the result of a historical assessment coupled with the developmental modes of capitalism, while the Lacanian diagnosis is a structural one. We must, however, insist on a certain *problematic historicism* peculiar to the Adornian critique of reification. Adorno is the first to maintain that the disqualification of the sensible, which appears as the major result of a reified language submitted to instrumental rationality, is a phenomenon that is indistinguishable from Western reason: 'Unity is the slogan from Parmenides to Russell. The destruction of gods and qualities alike is insisted upon'.¹³

The passages of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* devoted to this consideration are familiar. Axel Honneth has already pointed to a certain 'inversion' of the classic Marxist perspective in Adorno and Horkheimer, since 'in the totalizing view of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* commodity exchange is merely the historically developed form of instrumental rationality'.¹⁴ The roots of this rationality are to be found (and here Adorno could not be more Freudian) in the human process of self-preservation in face of the dangers of nature, and in the humanization of the drives. That is to say, the historical coordinates of the critique of political economy are submitted to a large-scale philosophy of history with a certain structural weight. With this in mind, we can try to think some problems concerning mimesis.

Mimesis, nature and estrangement

There is a certain 'hegemonic' interpretation of the problem of mimesis in Adorno, produced above all by Habermas, Wellmer and Honneth. Understood as the recuperation of a non-conceptual affinity that would escape the relation between subject and object determined by the cognitive-instrumental mode, the Adornian mimesis promises a reconciliation between subject and nature. This reconciliation is able to go beyond the subjugation of the diversity of sensible experience by the categorical structure of reason. However, thinking of reconciliations based on non-conceptual affinities appears to be ascribed to a perspective of 'return to the origins' by means of which 'one seeks to return below the rupture between culture and nature'.¹⁵

Such an interpretation presumes that the concept of nature in Adorno acts as a *sign of authenticity*. However, this cancels the possibility of a *dialecti-*



cal thought of nature, a thought in which nature is considered neither as a positive horizon of sense nor as a simple reified discursive construct. Yet this is in fact the direction of Adorno's thought. If mediation is a universal process, it is simply impossible that nature appears as locus of the origin. On the contrary, if 'the nature of which art seeks the image doesn't yet exist', it is not because Adorno is engaging in a negative theology, but because nature is defined precisely as *that which hinders* the integral indexation of existence by a concept. *Nature is a figure of the negative*. This is not strange to someone like Adorno, who articulates outer and inner nature and reads the problem of inner nature from the perspective of Freud's theory of drives.

Starting from this context, we can begin to understand Adorno's notion of mimesis. However, to grasp the specificity of this concept it is necessary to recall that mimesis aims to cope with four different problems: the truth content of analogical thinking which sustains magical practices and rituals; the tendency of the drives to regress to 'nature'; animal mimicry; and the contemporary aesthetic experience of confrontation with reified materials.

We know how modern reason refuses to assign cognitive content to mimesis, analogy and similarity, since 'magical' thinking would be precisely that thought still imprisoned in the chains of participation. But Adorno believes that the mimetic character of magical thinking has a truth-content, which, however, does not mean ignoring the rupture between nature and culture. It only means that magical thought is capable of positing certain identifying processes that are repressed by a

reason reduced to its instrumental condition. These processes concern above all the manner in which self-identity recognizes itself as a moment of difference. Lacan has shown this in a clear way in his comment on the 'iterative identification' of the Bororo Indian who says 'I am an ara':

Only the anti-dialectical mentality of a culture which, dominated by objectifying ends, tends to reduce all subjective activity to the ego's being can justify Van den Steinen's astonishment when confronted by a Bororo who said: 'I am an ara'. All the 'primitive mind' sociologists scurry about trying to fathom this profession of identity, which is no more surprising upon reflection than declaring, 'I'm a doctor' or 'I'm a citizen of the French Republic', and certainly presents fewer logical difficulties than claiming 'I'm a man', which at most can mean no more than 'I'm like the person who, in recognizing him to be a man, I constitute as someone who can recognize me as a man'. In the final analysis, these various formulations can be understood only in reference to the truth of 'I is an other' less dazzling to the poet's intuition than it is obvious from the psychoanalyst's viewpoint.¹⁶

This quotation shows that the self-identity's affirmation of the Bororo through identification with the other – an affirmation that, in this context, is necessarily a mimetic identification – reveals what is proper to modern individuation. If 'I am an ara' has the same value as 'I am a citizen of the French Republic' and 'I is an other', it is because in the three cases the reference to oneself only occurs through mediation with otherness. But if the 'anti-dialectic mentality' is surprised by the affinities between the subject and

an object of the world, this is because the identity of the modern I is based precisely on the denegation of the constitutive role of the mimetic identification with otherness. The I of 'modern man' is based on a simple negation of the constitutive role of opposition in determining identity.

These observations are entirely convergent with the major problems of Adornian thought. In the first place, we have to remember the way in which the problem of the truth-content of magical thought presents itself to Adorno. If rational thought needs to deny all cognitive force to mimesis, it is because what is sustained is 'the identity of the self that cannot disappear through identification with another, but takes possession of itself once and for all as an impenetrable mask'.¹⁷ The identity of the self would therefore be dependent on a fixed system of identities and categorical differences.



On the other hand, if the mimetic rationality of magical thinking could grasp the multiple affinities between what exists, it is because magical thinking is more open to recognizing the constitutive nature of identification. We can even say that magical thinking allows us to see how the fixed identity of objects is dissolved when thought takes into account the constitutive nature of opposing relations (and, in this context, opposition has the value of an identification that has not yet been posed).

However, if Adorno seeks in magical thinking the structure of identification that supports the determination of identities and the production of individuations, he is not able to abandon every positive concept of nature present therein. The assimilation of the I to the object through mimetism is not to be understood as a promise of return to the immanence of the archaic. This can explain why Adorno looked for a concept of nature, among others, in Freud's theory of drives. In this sense, let us follow a canonic affirmation of mimesis. Mimesis is the index of

the trend to lose oneself in the environment (*Umwelt*), instead of playing an active role in it, a tendency to let oneself go and sink back to nature. Freud called it the death drive (*Todestrieb*). (Caillois, *le mimetisme*).¹⁸

If Adorno sees in the death drive the coordinates of reconciliation with nature, there are several effects to be considered. The Freudian death drive exposes the libidinal economy by which the subject connects itself to nature understood as an inorganic space, the major figure of material opacity regarding reflection processes. In fact, Freud talks about a self-destruction of the person proper to the satisfaction of the death drive. However, *person* has to be understood here as the identity of the subject in the realm of a structured symbolic universe. This death related to the drive is therefore the phenomenological operator that designates the suspension of the symbolic regime of the production of identities. It marks the dissolution of the *organizing power* of the structures of socialization, which takes us to the rupture of the I as synthetic formation. This rupture is what Lacan calls 'second death' or 'symbolic death'. It was the Lacanian way of saving the strength of the negative as an opening to what is real in the subject beyond any Imaginary of the I.¹⁹ This becomes clearer if we consider Adorno's use of Roger Caillois's notion of *mimetisme*. This will help us to understand better this 'trend to lose oneself in the environment'.

We should bear in mind that with his concept of *legendary psychastenia*, Caillois tried to demonstrate that animal mimicry was not to be understood as a defence system, but as a 'tendency to transform itself in space' that implied disturbances of the 'feelings of personality, considering as the organism's feeling of distinction from its surroundings (*milieu*)'.²⁰ Speaking about this intrinsic mimetic tendency to get lost in the environment, Caillois affirms:

To these dispossessed souls, space seems to be a devouring force. Space pursues them, encircles them, digest them in a gigantic phagocytosis. It ends by replacing them. Then the body separates itself from thought, the individual breaks the boundary of his skin and occupies the other side of his senses. He tries to look at himself from any point whatever in space. He feels himself becoming space, dark space where things cannot be put. He is similar, not similar to something, but just similar.²¹

This dark space where we cannot put things (since it is not a categorizable space, the transcendental

condition for the constitution of a state of things) is a space that hinders us from being similar to *something determined*.

Thus, the mimetic imperative of self-recognition in death regarded as negation of the organising power of socialization structures (Freud) and in the exterior void of concepts (Caillois) indicates where the subject needs to recognize itself in order to affirm its non-identity. Such an articulation between Freud and Caillois, therefore, implies the identification with a negativity that comes from the object regarded as the motor of decentring. The problem of mimesis clarifies how the object marks the point in which the I no longer recognizes its image, a point in which the subject sees himself faced with a sensuousness that is 'materiality without image'. Mimesis is thus regarded as recognition of the subject in the opacity of what only offers itself as negation. And it is mimesis that indicates how to fulfil that promise of recognition which Adorno so surprisingly expressed, highlighted as follows:

Men are human only where they do not act, let alone posit (*setzen*) themselves as persons; the diffuseness of nature in which they are not persons resembles the lineamentation of an intelligible essence (*Wesen*), a Self that would be released from the 'I' (*jenes Selbst, das vom Ich erlöst wäre*). Contemporary art suggests something of this kind.²²

The recognition of subjects is dependent on their capacity to posit themselves, to identify themselves with that which no longer submits itself to the self-identical outlines of an I. If we think of mimesis as an identification operation with a nature regarded as a figure of the negative, we can understand how this recognition is articulated. At this point, we should introduce some considerations about the recourse to mimesis in Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*. This may explain how contemporary art may suggest something of this 'Self' that would be released from the 'I'.

Mimetic Schoenberg

An exhaustive analysis of the problem of mimesis in Adorno's aesthetics, mainly in his philosophy of music, would demand another piece. However, it is worthwhile stressing a major peculiarity of the Adornian recourse to mimesis in the aesthetic field. In Adornian aesthetics, mimesis is not directly connected to the imperative of reconciliation with the positive image of nature, as we might expect from a traditional reflection on mimesis in art. Adorno is extremely critical of projects that tried to restore something of this traditional reflection – for example, John Cage's programme of reconstructing musical rationality on

the basis of mimetic affinities with the non-structured facticity of the sonorous.

In fact, Adorno's demand passes through the necessity of art to posit its mimetic affinity with what is most dead and ruined in social reality. We must examine fully the consequences of statements such as: 'modern works relinquish themselves mimetically to reification, their principle of death'.²³ This is a strange statement, since the hegemonic trend tends to define modern art by a refusal of all mimetic affinity with reified society. On the other hand, the elevation to an aesthetic programme of the demand that the subject posit what concerns expression by means of a confrontation with reified materials seems a very strange idea of reconciliation: a reconciliation with what is dead. However, it is this demand that animates what Adorno called 'communication of what was distinguished', the grounds for the understanding between people and things. For,

If the subject is no longer able to speak directly, then at least it should – in accord with a modernism that has not pledged itself to absolute construction – speak through things (*Dinge*), through their alienated and mutilated form (*Gestalt*).²⁴

The subject can only speak through the alienated and mutilated form of things because the silence of the sensuous appears as resistance of the material against reification. This has nothing to do with some kind of return to the archaic or origin, as if there were an experience of pre-discursive spontaneity still not marked by fetishistic abstraction. This is merely about exploring the disruptive potential of experiences in which the subject sees itself in identification with objects that, beyond their condition of phantasmatic support of the commodity form, are only opaque materiality in which the I is no longer capable of projecting its image and its categorical structures. This could perhaps explain why

Those who regard the thingly (*Dinghafte*) as what is radically evil; who would like to dynamize everything which is, into pure contemporaneity, tend to be hostile towards the other, the alien (*Fremde*), whose name does not resound in alienation (*Entfremdung*) for nothing.²⁵

In Adorno's view, this was the lesson of Schoenberg. Often, when one speaks of Adorno's musical aesthetic, one asserts that it was the last radical defence of the rationality of the dodecaphonic technique. Adorno's Hegelianism speaks loud in his aesthetics, by his sustaining of a possible experience of the functional organicity of artworks grounded on the primacy of the

series and on the critique of the autonomy of particular moments and materials, a critique that appears through the problem of the fetishism of music.

However, one should not forget that, owing to an inversion always visible to dialectical thought, the rationality proper to dodecaphonic totality is criticized from the moment it transforms itself into *insensibility to the material*:

To be sure, the tritons, the major seventh and those intervals which extend beyond the octave have gained equal rights, but at a price of being placed upon the same level as the other.²⁶

This insensibility indicates the belief that operations of meaning are the strict result of positional plays determined by the series structure.

If Schoenberg maintained the motivic and thematic signature as a principle of expression that escapes the primacy of the series, Webern takes a step in the direction of the *fetishism of the row*, due to his belief that the construction is able to index all meaning occurrences in the artwork.

The self-determined law of the row truthfully becomes a fetish at the point when the conductor relies upon it a source of meaning. The fetishism of the rows (*Fetichismus der Reihe*) is striking in Webern's Piano Variations (op. 27) and the String Quartet (op. 28).²⁷

In these cases at least, Webern fetishizes the totality, since the material appears as that which can be dominated in a totality of relations. In fact, the material is transformed in the work's production system itself. The work no longer dissimulates, through its aesthetic appearance, its process of meaning production. Nevertheless, this full visibility is the figure of a principle of domination of the material which Adorno reads as a rationality distorted in the domination of nature.

It is interesting to note that Adorno criticizes Webern precisely because he attempts to think of an integral construction of the artwork in which everything is relation and all incidences of meaning are determined by means of positional plays. Because Adorno sees, in the principle of integral construction, 'something purely irrational hidden in the midst of rationalization',²⁸ he sometimes understands dodecaphony as a system of nature-domination in music, a 'rationality that comes close to superstition'.

Such discussion demonstrates how the true problem of Adorno's aesthetic lies not in the loss of the totality and functional organicity of artworks, as imagined by Lyotard,²⁹ but in the deposition of all possible resistance of the musical material. That is why Adorno can say that the radical gesture of Schoenberg is connected not to the refusal of tonality due to the primacy of

dodecaphonic series, but to the 'strength of forgetting', which in his last works allowed him to return to tonal material, this time transformed in a mutilated material with no strength to produce an experience of totality. He returns to fetishized material, but in order to reveal his estrangement. Due to this libidinal investment in what had become ruins 'he renounces his fidelity to the sole domination of the material – the very fidelity which he has once designed.... An artist, claims back for mankind freedom from art, a dialectical composer, he brings dialectic to a standstill.'³⁰ The biggest irony here lies in the fact that the tonal material is treated as a fragmentary exposition of a rest, as a manifestation of non-identity in the artwork.

To bring dialectics to a standstill is a gesture that comes at the moment in which the subject recognizes itself in a mutilated material that has become a kind of opaque rest, which represents the irreducibility of the non-artistic in art. Maybe the supreme ruse of dialectics lies herein, in the act of being able to silence in order to let the ruins speak. For Adorno, it would be a way to construe object relations that go beyond the fetishist fascination.

Specularity and opacity

Returning to Lacan, this discussion about mimesis seems very distant. In Lacan there is apparently no discussion whatsoever on the concept of 'nature'. However, if we follow the intuition of Adorno and try to derive a *negative* concept of nature (nature as something that resists the reflexivity of the concept), starting from the theory of drives, we find a path to tread within the Lacanian discourse.

Nonetheless, an initial approach to Lacan's thought would lead us to think that it is anti-mimetic par excellence. We should bear in mind that the realm of mimesis in Lacan seems to have a necessary connection with the dimension of dual and transitive relations, which in fact are symptoms of narcissist structures of apprehension of the object.

A major example here would be what Lacan calls 'the mirror stage'. Before reaching conceptual thinking, the baby orientates itself by means of mimetic operations. So, in order to guide its desire, the baby mimetizes an other in the position of an ideal type. Such introjection of the image of an other is the last stage within a process of rupture with the symbiotic undifferentiation with the mother and partial objects. By rupturing with these partial objects (breasts, excrement, eyes, voice), or objects *a*, which are located in the zone of interaction with its mother, the baby finally gets an image of its *corps propre* that is responsible for the organization of a corporal scheme.

However, this mimetic assumption of ideal roles does not represent a consolidation of a communicational relationship between subjects. Lacan tried to demonstrate that the figures of aggressivity and rivalry in the relationship with the other were structural symptoms of the impossibility of the I to assume the constitutive role of the other in the determination of its own identity. So, the result of the mimetic assumption of ideal roles would be narcissistic confusion between the I and the other, a confusion through which the I constitutes processes of self-reference starting from reference-to-the-other, at the same time that consciousness denies this dependence. This is the reason why Lacan points out that we must consider narcissism as an imaginary relationship fundamental to the inter-human relationship.



Yet if this is the problem, we could postulate that the centrality of mimetic identification with the other must liberate the subject from the identitary illusions of the I, leading it to assume the prior position of intersubjective relationships in the constitution of socialized subjects. Perhaps the expectations located in mimesis could be realized when we comprehend correctly what finally are intersubjective relationships.

Nevertheless, we should bear in mind that, if processes of socialization and of individuation operate initially through the introjection of the image of an other that gives form to the I, then the revelation of the dynamics of introjection and projection could only lead the subject to comprehend socialization as neces-

sary alienation of itself in the image of an other; that is, to comprehend that relationships, the dynamics of desire, as well as broader expectations of the subject of knowledge, are formed from the other.

With socialization mechanisms regarded as alienation processes, there are, broadly speaking, two ways of taking the subject beyond narcissistic confusion with the other. The first is to insist on a constitutive transcendence of the subject. This transcendence would imply the absence of every single mimetic affinity between the subject and that which appears in the empirical field. In Lacan, this strategy appears in the taking of desire as pure negativity, as a primordial 'lack-of-being' that poses non-adequacy between the subject and empirical objects. For the subject to recognize itself in the pure negativity of desire would be a way to heal it from the illusions of narcissism and alienation.

It is important to note, however, that Lacan will relativize this appeal to a transcendence of the subject. Gradually he will admit that the true potential of non-identity will not come from a certain negative transcendence of desire – even more as Lacan will understand that desire, far from being a primordial lack (that can be seen in the eyes of the Other), is caused by those partial objects that had got lost in the processes of socialization and formation of the *corps propre*. It is as if the formation of self-identity never ceases to produce a remainder that persists beyond socialized desire.

In principle, this second strategy can be taken as a kind of astute way of returning to the archaic and the amorphous regarded as a cure protocol – a return animated by the nostalgia of a prediscursive state of undifferentiation. After all, Lacan himself sometimes speaks of the 'lost object', referring to what remains as a 'remainder' of the socialization processes. However, what is really at stake here is the confirmation that the subjects may place themselves in something that is not integrally submitted to individuation. This operation is fundamental in order to allow us to see how 'to use the force of the subject to break through the deception of constitutive subjectivity'.³¹ This is not at all about an operation of return, but about the comprehension of the subject as a space of tension between socialization demands and a recognition of the irreducibility of the opacity of objects of drives that do not conform to the image of the I.

This implies a way to recuperate levels of mimetic affinity between the subject and an object that is not just a narcissistic one. As for Adorno, this affinity signifies disorientation of the identitarian structures

constitutive of the I, since the subject recognizes itself in that which, in the body, has the status of an object opaque to self-reflection identity. Here again the object is what marks the locus in which the subject sees itself facing a sensuousness that is 'materiality without image' and whose confrontation implies a perpetual decentring, by insisting on the recuperation of the sensuous as materiality without image that Lacan called, at times, the object *a* as 'flesh'.

Still, we should ask how Lacan believes that an experience of this nature could operate in the clinic and how it could allow a reconfiguration of relations of recognition among subjects. In this regard, it is important to note that Lacan derived his notion of analytic progress from the 'traversing of the phantasm'. In our context, we could simply state that such traversing is organically related to the question on the status of the category of object. While understanding the object only as a narcissistic projection, the subject will never be able to go beyond the phantasm. However, the phantasm offers the coordinates for the signification of empirical objects; it is the 'index of absolute signification'. Hence, what appears after the traversing of the phantasm is necessarily emptied of the signification that makes it singular, emptied of structural coordinates of value. In summary, it appears as something opaque to the determinations of identity.

An example of this traversing is the way in which Lacan recovers a certain 'phenomenology of the gaze' presented by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* – that is, the intersubjective deadlock which for Sartre appears mainly in loving relationships. For Lacan, it is the phenomenological description of a typical narcissistic confusion derived from a projective structure that tends to reduce the object to a support of the phantasm.

Let us recall the structure of this deadlock described by Sartre. The lover wants to be the gaze in which the freedom of the other agrees to get lost, a gaze under which the other accepts being transformed into an object. Thus, so long as I put myself in the position of the subject, I will never have before me another desiring gaze, a gaze that personifies the other. I will only have a reified gaze that is transformed into a narcissistic object in which I see only my own image. I can only have before me a gaze under the condition that I situate myself as object. In this way, the intersubjective recognition of a being that, in Sartre, is fundamentally transcendence would therefore be doomed to failure. The gaze (of consciousness) always reduces the other to the condition of an object.

Taking into account the long tradition of the philosophy of consciousness that makes use of optical

metaphors to cope with the self-reflective processes of consciousness, Lacan points out that the gaze is a special object because it is always elided within intersubjective relationships. 'The gaze is specified as unapprehensible' he says,³² in the sense of being non-objectifiable. This is a way to insist that something fundamental to the transcendent subject has no place in the intersubjective field. But instead of entering into the deadlock connected with the operations of a philosophy of consciousness, Lacan insists on the possibility that something that finds no place in the relationship between subjects can be posed by means of a confrontation between subject and object. To achieve this, the subject needs to have the experience that 'on the side of things, there is the gaze'.³³

To say that on the side of the things, there is the gaze may appear simply as a vague way of talking about the necessity of a critique capable of illuminating those relationships between subjects that are reified as relationships between things, especially if we take into account that the background to this debate is the intersubjective structure of loving relationships. Nevertheless, Lacan's aim is something rather different. For Lacan, the claim that there is a gaze that comes from things is to insist that the subject can recognize itself in the dimension of an object that is no longer based on the logic of the narcissistic phantasm. This position is possible for Lacan because the gaze appears, in his metapsychology, precisely as one of those objects *a* through which the subject was connected to relationships of symbiotic indifferenciation before the processes of socialization. Within this context, the gaze is not the source of expression of desire in its phantasmatic search for a narcissistic object. Rather, the gaze is the non-specular object that is beyond the expressive claims of the I and connected to a drive that is fundamentally the death drive. In this sense, it is not surprising that at the moment of Seminar XI dedicated to the discussion on the phenomenology of the gaze, Lacan refers to Roger Caillois in order to remind us that, as well as in Adorno's work, animal mimicry explains how a subject is able to recognize itself as a stain (*tache*), as an opaque spot; finally, how it is able to see its gaze where representation, with its fixed identities, oscillates.³⁴

In essence, it is as if Lacan is commenting on a proposition by Merleau-Ponty, another author present in Seminar XI:

Thus since the seer is caught up in what he sees, it is still himself he sees: there is a fundamental narcissism in all vision. And thus, for the same reason, the vision he exercises also undergoes from

the things, such that, as many painters have said: I feel myself looked at by the things, my activity is equally passivity – which is the second and more profound sense of narcissism.³⁵

That is to say, the second and deepest sense of narcissism is a certain inversion that makes the object – formerly submitted to my narcissistic image – appear as the point in which my gaze returns to myself as something that is strange to me. When I feel looked at by things that were previously totally reduced to narcissistic protocols, I find myself facing something that doesn't allow me to hypostasize the concept of identity. This experience, which Freud called *Unheimlichkeit*, is constitutive of a certain redemption of mimesis as a major protocol of the analytical clinic. There are further experiences like these to be explored, but this was the way in which both Lacan and Adorno attempted to use the force of the subject to break through the deception of constitutive subjectivity.

Translated by Angelika Kohnke

Notes

1. For a different point of view, see Peter Dews, *Logics of Disintegration*, Verso, London, 1996.
2. 'In the place of the sociological question concerning the modes of social integration and social conflict there appeared the question concerning the reciprocal influence of individual psychic drives and economic reproduction – that is, the possible rapprochement of psychoanalysis and the analysis of economic system', Axel Honneth, *Critique of Power*, MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 1991, p. 101.
3. Theodor Adorno, 'Subject and Object', in *The Adorno Reader*, ed. Brian O'Connor, Blackwell, Oxford, 2000, p. 143.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 140.
5. Jacques Lacan, *Autres écrits*, Seuil, Paris, 2001, p. 451.
6. Gilles Gaston-Granger, *Pensée formelle et sciences de l'homme*, Aubier, Paris, 1960, p. 192.
7. Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, W.W. Norton, New York, 2002, p. 282.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 281.
9. Jacques Lacan, *Seminar XI*, W.W. Norton, New York, 1977, p. 207.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 211.
11. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Verso, London, 1997, p. 12.
12. *Ibid.*, p. xii.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
14. Honneth, *Critique of Power*, p. 38.
15. Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt, 1995, p. 513.
16. Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, p. 24.
17. Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 10.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 227.
19. Richard Boothby understands this point as follows: 'For Lacan, the disintegration force of the death drive is aimed not at the integrity of the biological organism, as Freud had concluded, but rather at the imaginary coherence of the ego.' Richard Boothby, *Freud as Philosopher: Metapsychology after Lacan*, Routledge, New York, 2001, p. 151.
20. Roger Caillois, 'Mimicry and Legendary Psychastenia', trans. John Shepley, *October* 31, Winter 1984; see www.generation-online.org/p/focaillois.htm.
21. *Ibid.*
22. Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectic*, Continuum, New York, 1983, p. 277.
23. Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1997, p. 133.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 118.
25. Adorno, *Negative Dialectic*, p. 191.
26. Theodor Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, Continuum, London, 2003, p. 76.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 109.
28. Adorno, 'The Aging of New Music', in *Essays on Music*, University of California Press, 2002, p. 189.
29. Jean-François Lyotard, *Des dispositifs pulsionnels*, Christian Bourgeois, Paris, 1980, p. 114.
30. Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, pp. 123–4, translation modified.
31. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p. xx.
32. Lacan, *Seminar XI*, p. 83.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 109.
34. 'Mimicry reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called an *itself* that is behind.' Lacan, *Seminar XI*, p. 99.
35. Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston IL, 1968, p. 139.

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Vocabulary of European Philosophies, Part 2

Following the publication of ‘Subject’ in *RP* 138, we present here a trio of related entries from Barbara Cassin (ed.), *Vocabulaire Européen des Philosophies: Dictionnaire des Intraduisibles* (Editions du Seuil/Dictionnaires Le Robert, 2004): ‘Gegenstand/Objekt’, ‘Object’ and ‘Res’. Within the *Vocabulary*’s reconstruction of the complex, multilingual translational history underlying the diversity of modern philosophical uses of ‘subject’ – at once philologically meticulous and philosophically polemical – the opposition of subject to object appears as part of only one of three main groups of meanings associated with the term ‘subject’. Furthermore, in its most basic sense of subjectness (*subjectité* in French, *Subjektheit* in German) – derived from Aristotle’s *hupokeimenon* via the Latin *subiectum* – the meanings of ‘subject’ are shown to overlap with those of ‘thing’ and ‘pragma’ (*res* and *causa*). We are thus alerted to a fundamental difference between the philosophical histories of ‘object’ and ‘thing’ that is often suppressed in English, in which the terms are frequently used synonymously, even in philosophical discussions of texts that are structured around this very difference. Grouping together the *Vocabulary*’s entries for ‘Gegenstand/Objekt’, ‘Object’ and ‘Res’ allows something of the contradictory richness of this dual history to appear. And once again, as was the case in ‘Subject’, Kant is a pivotal figure.

Kant’s profound, epochal transformation of the concept of objectivity was dependent upon a conceptual distinction internal to the general notion of an object that is marked in German by the difference between the terms *Gegenstand* and *Objekt*, in their mutual distinction from *Ding* – the term used in the Wolffian school of rationalism to determine metaphysical thinghood. (Disappointingly, there is no separate entry in the *Vocabulary* for *Ding*. The mark of the ambiguous residue of metaphysical realism in Kant’s critical idealism, it later became an important word for both Heidegger and Lacan.)

In English, the distinction between *Gegenstand* and *Objekt* is annihilated in Norman Kemp Smith’s famous translation of *Critique of Pure Reason* (1929, reissued 2003), in which the terms are translated indifferently

as ‘object’. Yet as Dominique Pradelle shows, the distinction involves ‘an etymological reawakening’ upon which Kant’s critical revolution depended. Like that revolution itself, however, the precise contours of the distinction remain in dispute. Pradelle argues that ‘terminologically the distinction between appearance and thing-in-itself corresponds to the distinction between *Gegenstand* and *Objekt* in the original text’, thereby directly aligning *Objekt* with *Ding*, on the basis of Kant’s use of the expression ‘object in itself’. Others have placed more emphasis on the threefold nature of the chain, *Gegenstand–Objekt–Ding*, and hence upon the intermediate status of *Objekt* in Kant’s discourse.

Nonetheless, this intermediate status is given its due in Pradelle’s brilliant exposition of the ‘degrees of phenomenal objectivity’ in Kant. This also functions as a conceptual transition to the Husserlian lexicon, in the second half of the entry, within which these degrees are transformed into a ‘multiplicity of types of object’, the ontological status of which is bracketed. In Husserl, it is *Gegenständlichkeit* that poses the main translational difficulty. (One question raised by this account for the ‘Subject’ entry concerns the contribution of Husserlian phenomenology to the concept of the subject. Husserl is strikingly absent there, along with Hegel.)

The entries by Olivier Boulnois on ‘Object’ and Jean-François Courtine on ‘Res’ underline the strength of the *Vocabulary*’s treatment of medieval philosophy, in identifying both new conceptual productions and transformations of Greek concepts, respectively. In the latter case, Courtine’s entry is especially effective in showing the mediating role of Arabic philosophy in this process, and the enduring philosophical significance of the developments, particularly in the seventeenth century (‘the golden age of Scotism’). Each indicates something of the extent to which, given its profound historical deficit, Anglo-American philosophical culture would benefit from the presence of the *Vocabulaire* as a whole in English.

The translations that follow are once again by David Macey, edited by Barbara Cassin and Peter Osborne.

PO

Gegenstand/Objekt GERMAN

► OBJECT, and *CHOSE*, *EPOKHÊ*, ESSENCE, GEFÜHL, INTENTION, PERCEPTION, REALITY, REPRESENTATION, RES, SACHERHALT, SENS, SUJET, THING, TRUTH, WERT

It is really in the so-called transcendental philosophies, which regard objective meaning or objects as the product of acts on the part of the subject, that the translation difficulties pertaining to the register of objectivity arise. They relate for the most part to distinctions between levels of objectivation, or in other words to stages in the production of objective meaning. This leads to a real lexical proliferation that is difficult to translate into English, or into anything other than the original language. Two noteworthy distinctions do however emerge. By splitting the object into a ‘phenomenon’ [*Erscheinung*] and a ‘thing-in-itself’ [*Ding an sich*] Kant divides the lexicon of objectivity into two, whilst Husserl’s rejection of the notion of a thing-in-itself does away with that duality. Levels of objectivation are, for Kant, also related to the doctrine of the faculties and synthetic categories (the table of categories) and, therefore, to the structure of the subject, whilst Husserl’s rejection of the Copernican revolution and the doctrine of faculties relates them only to the stratification of objective meaning unveiled by essential intuition [*Wesenchau*].

I. Kant: *Objekt* and *Gegenstand*, between phenomenon [*Erscheinung*] and thing-in-itself [*Ding an sich*]

Where the theme of objectivity is concerned, the transition to critical idealism was an etymological reawakening. *Gegenstand* and *Objekt* were introduced to translate the Latin *objectum*, which comes from *objicio* (‘throw in the way of’, ‘expose’). The German *gegen* adds the idea of ‘directing towards’ to that of manifestation. It also introduces the idea of resistance: the primary meaning of *entgegenstehen* (the noun is *Gegenstand*) is *oppositum esse*, and the Old High German *gaganstentida* has the meaning of *obstacula*; and *Stand* (= *stans*) means ‘that which stands’ and then ‘that which subsists, that which lasts’. The philosophical term *Gegenstand* is thus heir to three registers: *das Gegenüberstehende* (‘that which stands in front of me’, ‘that which is op-posed to me’); the *terminus ad quem* of a faculty (*Gegenstand der Empfindung der Wahrnehmung*; ‘object of sensation, of perception’); and substance or substantiality. In the pre-critical period, Kant, following the tradition of classical thought, makes the register of op-position (phenomenality) overlap with that of substance (reality in itself). The turn to transcendental idealism represents an attempt to find the two earlier meanings beneath that of an ‘object subsisting in itself’ and to think them as a systematic unit: the object is the ‘op-posite’ [*vis-à-vis*] constituted by acts of objectivation on the part of the faculties (sensibility, imagination, understanding) and their functions, but the thing-in-itself is still its unknowable epistemological foundation.

A. The split between the phenomenon and the thing-in-itself

In the Latin of the *Dissertatio* of 1770, we find two series of antinomic ontological equations: *objectivum* = *reale* = *subjectum irrelativum*, *subjectivum* = *ideale* = *sensibile* = *subjectivum relativum*. *Objectivum* is the opposite of the *subjectivum*, of that which resides in or is related to the subject and is therefore identified with the intelligible (which, unlike the sensible, does not vary from one individual to another) and with *realitas* (as opposed to *idealitas*, which is a characteristic of subjective representations or ideas, but not of existing objects). Kant therefore contrasts *lex subjectiva*, *lex quaedam menti insita* or even *conditiones subjecto propriae* (‘subjective law’, ‘situated in the mind’, ‘conditions specific to the subject’: space and time, § 29), with *conditio objectiva*, such as *forma objective sive substantiarum coordinatio* (the objective condition, objective form as coordination of substances). He also refuses to accord time and space the status of ‘*objectivum aliquid et reale* [something objective, or in other words the real]’ (§ 14–15), and makes them a ‘*coordinatio idealis et subjecti* [an ideal, or, in other words, subjective coordination]’. Hence the twofold meaning of *objectum*, which corresponds to the two etymological registers: on the one hand *res*, ‘*existens in se*’, ‘*objectum intellectus*’ (thing-in-itself, the intelligible cause of sensible affections); on the other, *phaenomenon*, ‘*objectum sensuum*’:

Phaenomena ceu causata testantur de praesentia objecti, quod contra Idealismum.

[‘Phenomena ... being caused, witness the presence of the object, contrary to idealism.’]

§ 4.

Quaecunque ad sensus nostros referuntur ut objecta, sunt Phaenomena.

[‘Everything that is related to our senses as object is a phenomenon.’]

§ 12, trans. amended.

Despite this amphibology, the term *objectum* already tends to be reserved for the phenomenal object and to be divorced from the register of ‘existence in itself’; Section IV, which deals with the formal principle of the intelligible world (and therefore objects in themselves), replaces the term *objectum* with the terms *res*, *substantia*, *aliquid*, and *omnia*. That is why it would be preferable not to translate *quaecunque* as ‘all things’ (*toutes les choses qui...* in Mouy’s French translation), which implies a reification of phenomena, and to reserve *chose* (thing’) for the *res intelligibilis*.

This amphibology is more pronounced in the critical period, but there is one major displacement. ‘Object’ still has, of course, its double meaning of ‘thing-in-itself’ (designated by the expressions *Ding an sich*, *Objekt an sich*, *Gegenstand an sich*, *Noumenon*, *das Erscheinende*, or in other words ‘thing-in-itself’, ‘object-in-itself’, ‘noumenon’ and ‘appearing’) and ‘phenomenon’ (*Objekt*, *Gegenstand*, *Erscheinung*). But the transition to transcendental idealism brings about a decisive displacement: things in themselves are unknowable to the finite subject, and even to that subject’s intellect; ‘object-in-itself’ therefore ceases to mean purely intellectual reality, as opposed to sensible reality, and comes to designate that which relates to neither sensibility nor the intellect. In critical idealism, ‘phenomenon’ monopolizes the meaning of objectivity for all finite subjects, and sense-intuition, which now becomes the minimal condition for possible experience, is also a condition for all objective validity and all denotation:

Also beziehen sich alle Begriffe und mit ihnen alle Grundsätze [...] auf empirische Anschauungen, d.i. auf Data zur möglichen Erfahrung. Ohne dieses haben sie gar keine objective Gültigkeit.

[Thus all concepts and with them all principles ... are nevertheless related to empirical intuitions, i.e. to *data* for possible experience. Without this they have no objective validity at all.]

Critique of Pure Reason, A 239, B 298.

(‘Objective validity’ is equivalent to meaning, signification, ‘relating to the object’ or, to adopt Frege’s terminology, denotation. See SENS.)

Objectivity thus appropriates the etymological meaning of ‘manifested to’, as ‘appearing to’ sensibility through feelings: *Objectum* = *Gegen-stand* = *phaenomenon* = *ob-jectum* = *Dawider* = op-posed [vis-à-vis] to the *intuitus derivatus*.

• see box 1

B. Different concepts of objectivity in itself

Does this mean that ‘phenomenon’ monopolizes all the meanings of objectivity? No, because, even though it does not designate any object that can be known, the concept of the thing-in-itself still has several essential functions in transcendental idealism. This concept is, as it happens, deceptive, as the ‘in-itself’ implies the exclusion of all relations, but, far from thinking it solely on the basis of its ontological subsistence, Kant defines it in terms of the Copernican revolution as the *terminus ad quem* of the faculties (infinite intuition, understanding, pure reason and practical reason). From that perspective, the ‘correlation’ opened up by the Copernican revolution has the effect of giving it several meanings.

The first concept of the object-in-itself corresponds to the positive meaning of noumenon, to the pure object of the understanding, as given to intellectual intuition or to an *intuitus originarius* that creates its object:

Wenn ich aber Dinge annehme, dies bloss Gegenstände des Verstandes sind, und gleichwohl, als solche, einer Anschauung obgleich nicht der sinnlichen (als coram intuitu intellectuali) gegeben werden können; so würden dergleichen Dinge Noumena (Intelligibilia) heissen.

[If, however, I suppose there to be things that are merely objects of the understanding and that, nevertheless can be given to an intuition, although not to sensible intuition (as *coram intuitu intellectuali*), then such things would be called *noumena* (*intelligibilia*).]

Critique of Pure Reason, A 249.

Noumena and phenomena are therefore defined in relation to infinite/finite, creative/receptive and primary/derivative intuition. Playing upon the contrasting particles *ent-* and *gegen-*, Heidegger characterizes them as *Entstand* (being-as-taking-its-origin-from-original-intuition) and *Gegen-stand* or *Dawider* (being opposed to derivative intuition) (see *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, pp. 82 ff). Given that our intuition cannot be other than sensible and that we cannot demonstrate the possibility of intellectual intuition, such a concept has no objective reality; or, in other words, no denotation and no content.

The second concept of the object-in-itself is the negative concept of the noumenon, which corresponds to the terms ‘transcendental object’ (*transzendentes Objekt*), ‘object in general’ (*Gegenstand überhaupt*) and ‘something in general’ (*Etwas überhaupt*). We can know nothing about the noumenon, but if we wish to avoid Berkeleyan idealism we must attribute to phenomena, in so far as they are mere representations, a relationship with something that is not a representation but the ontological cause of intuitions; this ‘object’ has the twofold function of restricting sensibility’s claims to give objects-in-themselves (and therefore to guarantee the transcendental ideality of phenomena) and to guarantee that they denote empirical reality:

Da Erscheinungen nichts als Vorstellungen sind, so bezieht sie der Verstand auf ein Etwas, als den Gegenstand der sinnlichen Anschauung; aber dieses Etwas ist insofern nur das transzendente Objekt. Diese bedeutet aber ein Etwas = x, wovon wir gar nichts wissen.

[Since appearances are nothing but representations, the understanding relates them to a something, as the object of sensible intuition; but this something is to that extent only the transcendental object. This signifies, however, a something = X, of which we know nothing at all.]

I, A 250.

This object is defined elsewhere as ‘*die bloss intelligible Ursache der Erscheinungen überhaupt* [the merely intelligible cause of appearances in general]’ (ibid., A 494, B 522) and as ‘*das, was in allen unseren empirischen Begriffen überhaupt Beziehung auf einen Gegenstand, d.i. objective Realität verschaffen kann* [that which in all our empirical concepts in general can provide relations to an object, i.e. objective reality]’ (ibid., A 109).

To the extent that no category can be applied to it in order to determine it, this transcendental is, of course, not a definite ‘object’: it is a pure X, ‘the concept of an object in general [*der Begriff eines*

Box 1 Translating Kant’s doublet

The classic problem facing Kant’s translators is that posed by the *Gegenstand/Objekt* doublet. Existing French and English translations collapse the terms by translating them both as ‘object’. Is it desirable, or even necessary, to emphasize that terminologically the distinction between appearance and thing-in-itself corresponds to the distinction between *Gegenstand* and *Objekt* in the original text? E. Martineau raises the problem in the introduction to the French translation of Heidegger’s lectures on the *Critique of Pure Reason* and suggests the adoption of *ob-jet* (ob-ject) for ‘phenomenon’ (the hyphen suggests resistance to intuition by isolating the ‘ob’) and ‘*objet*’ for the thing-in-itself. The problem is that, as the French translators of Eisler’s *Kant-Lexicon* note (p. 750), Kant very often uses the terms synonymously to refer to both the phenomenon and the thing-in-itself: no distinction is made between the expressions *transzendentaler Gegenstand* and *transzendentaler Objekt* (transcendental object) or between *Gegenstand in sich* and *Objekt in sich* (object in itself). However, Kant often uses the terms simultaneously to produce a contrast, as in the *Prolegomena* § 19: ‘*Das Objekt bleibt an sich selbst immer unbekannt* [The object in itself always remains unknown]’, but when the sense-representation relationship is determined by the categories, ‘*so wird der Gegenstand durch dieses*

Verhältnis bestimmt [then the ob-ject is determined through this relation]’. The *ob-jet/objet* doublet would therefore have to be used on a contextual basis, and should not strictly correspond to the *Gegenstand/Objekt* doublet. The use of this doublet is problematic because Kant sometimes uses the term *Gegenstand* to refer to a genus comprising the species ‘phenomenon’ and ‘thing-in-itself’, as in the passage Martineau cites to exemplify his distinction:

Die Transzendentalphilosophie betrachtet nur den Verstand, und Vernunft selbst in einem System aller Begriffen und Grundsätze, die sich auf Gegenstände überhaupt beziehen, ohne Objekte anzunehmen, die gegeben wären (Ontologia); die Physiologie der reinen Vernunft betrachtet Natur, d.i. den Inbegriff gegebener Gegenstände (sie mögen nun der Sinnen, oder, wenn man will, einer anderen Art von Anschauung gegeben sein).

[Transcendental philosophy considers only the understanding, and reason itself in a system of all concepts and principles that are related to objects in general, without assuming objects that would be given (*Ontologia*); the physiology of pure reason considers *Nature*, i.e. the sum total of *given* objects (whether they are given by the senses or, if one will, by another kind of intuition).]

Critique of Pure Reason, A 845, B 873, trans. amended.

Gegenstandes überhaupt], ‘the totally indeterminate thought of something in general [*der gänzlich unbestimmte Gedanke von Etwas überhaupt*]’. It is the ‘ob-’ in ‘object’, and it guarantees the unitary denotation of our representations as a correlate of transcendental apperception, which is the formal unity of self-consciousness.

The third concept is that of the idea of reason. This is a ‘purely intelligible object’, or an ‘object of pure thought’ (*‘bloss intelligibler Gegenstand’*, ‘*Gegenstand des reinen Denkens*’, *ibid.*, A 286–7 ff, B 342–3), or in other words the suprasensible object of *metaphysica specialis* (the soul, the world, God). Reason claims to be able to determine them with the help of the categories alone, in the absence of any sense-data. As sensibility is a precondition for any relationship with an object, the categories, being pure forms of thought, can define only *entia rationis*, *leere Begriffe ohne Gegenstand* (‘concepts void of any object’, *ibid.*, A 292, B 348), *hyperbolische Objekte*, *reine Verstandeswesen* (*besser: Gedankenwesen*), (‘hyperbolic objects’, ‘pure beings of understanding (or, more accurately, of thought)’, *Prolegomena*, § 45, AK, 4, p. 332), or in other words suprasensible objects with no objective reality or denotation.

The final concept of the object is a correlate of practical reason. Suprasensible ideas have no denotation for speculative reason, but they do have one for practical reason because they are necessary preconditions for the observation of the moral law. The immortality of the soul and the freedom and existence of God thus have an ‘objective reality’; they are ‘objects’ in so far as they are necessary correlates of rational faith, even though no intuition guarantees their objective reality:

Nun bekommen sie durch ein apodiktisches praktisches Gesetz also notwendige Bedingungen der Möglichkeit dessen, was dieses sich zum Objekte machen gebietet, objective Realität, d.i. wir werden durch jenes angesprochen, dass sie Objekte haben, ohne doch, wie sich ihr Begriff auf ein Objekt bezieht, anzeigen zu können.

[They acquire objective reality through an apodictic practical law, as necessary conditions of the possibility of this law, which requires they be made objects, i.e. they show by this that they have objects, but we cannot indicate how their concept refers to an object.]

Kritik der praktischen Vernunft, AK 5, p. 135.

‘Objectivity’ and ‘objective reality’ certainly mean ‘that which subsists and exists independently of our knowledge’, but they exist as necessary correlates of the practical reason that postulates their existence.

C. Degrees of phenomenal objectivity

In so far as it is a phenomenon, the object is thought as a correlate of the objectifying functions of thought. In general terms, the critical problem is that of the transition from purely subjective representation, which is only valid for me (*bloss subjective*), to a representation that has both a relationship with an object (*Gegenständlichkeit, Beziehung auf ein Objekt*) and an objective representation that is universally valid (*Objektivität*). The blanket use of ‘objectivity’ masks both the distinction and Kant’s solution, which is to assimilate *Gegenständlichkeit* (which can also be translated as ‘objectuality’) to *Objektivität* (for which we will reserve the term ‘objectivity’), in the sense of necessary validity (*notwendige Gültigkeit*) and universal validity (*Allgemeingültigkeit*):

Es sind daher objective Gültigkeit und notwendige Allgemeingültigkeit (für jedermann) Wechselbegriffe, und ob wir gleich das Objekt an sich nicht kennen, so ist doch, wenn wir ein Urteil als gemeingültig und mithin notwendig ansehen, eben darunter die objective Gültigkeit verstanden.

[Objective validity and necessary universal validity (for everyone) are therefore interchangeable concepts, and although we do not know the object in itself, nonetheless, if we regard a judgement as universally valid and hence necessary, objective validity is understood to be included.]

Prolegomena § 19, AK, 4, p. 298.

Objectivity is therefore no longer the opposite of subjectivity as such, but of the ‘mere subjectivity (*blosse Subjektivität*)’ and ‘purely subjective validity (*bloss subjektive Gültigkeit*)’ of sensible changes in the subject; it is identified with the *a priori* aspect of the subject, namely the pure intuitions and categories that supply the relationship with the object:

Dass es a priori erkannt werden kann, bedeutet: dass es ein Objekt habe und nicht bloss subjektive Modifikation sei.

[The fact that (which is given by experience) can be known a priori means that it has an object, and is not just a subjective modification.]

Reflexionen, 5216.

The concept of ‘object’ is, however, a generic concept the many meanings of which depend upon the levels of objectivation that guarantee the denotation, universality and necessity of the phenomenon. The plurivocal concept of ‘objective reality’ is therefore divided into levels bound up with the transcendental (formal, material and general) conditions that define the modalities (possible, actual or necessary) and cor-

relate to the various scholastic–Cartesian concepts of ‘reality’ (*quidditas* or *realitas objectiva*, *quodditas* or *realitas actualis*, *necessitas* or *ens causatum*). Each successive level eliminates anything that is purely subjective (*blosss subjektiv*): the quality of sensation, the *ens imaginarium* and contingency.

– At the mathematical level, *realitas objectiva* (*essentia*, *possibilitas*) is not an object that is simply present there-before-us (*da-seiendes*) but stripped of its secondary qualities, and constituted solely by its prime qualities (magnitudes) as conditions for the construction of space and time. It is in other words a possible object; this is the sense of ‘object’ (*gegenständlicher Sinn*), as opposed to the *nihil negativum* which is empty object without concept (*‘leererer Gegenstand ohne Begriff’*, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 292):

[die] Bedingungen des Raumes und der Bestimmung desselben [...] haben ihre objective Realität, d.i., sie gehen auf mögliche dinge, weil sie die Form der Erfahrung überhaupt a priori enthalten.

[the conditions of space and of its determinations [...] have their objective reality, i.e. they pertain to possible things, because they contain in themselves a priori the form of experience in general.

Ibid., A 221, B 268.

– At the dynamic level, *realitas actualis existentia* is actuality (*Wirklichkeit*), or the object given by perception with a sensible content that guarantees its empirical reality or denotation (*Gegenständlichkeit*, *Beziehung auf einen Gegenstand*), as opposed to the *ens rationis* and *ens imaginarium*, which is an intuition or concept without an object.

[wir müssen] immer eine Anschauung bei Hand haben, um [...] die objektive Realität des reinen Verstandesbegriff darzulegen.

[We must always have available an intuition for it to display the objective reality of the pure concept of the understanding.]

Ibid., B 288.

Finally, the *ens creatum sive causatum*, when stripped of all its theological meanings, corresponds to ‘material necessity in existence’ (*materiale Notwendigkeit im Dasein*), or in other words to submission to the principle of causality and the necessary rules of the understanding in the apprehension of phenomena:

Dasjenige an der Erscheinung was die Bedingung dieser notwendigen Regel der Apprehension enthält, ist das Objekt.

[That in the appearance which contains the condition of this necessary rule of apprehension is the object.]

Ibid., A 191, B 236.

The idea that time has a causal order prescribes a rule for the subjective process of apprehension, and allows us to move from a subjective sequence of representations to the representation of an objective sequence, from *Erscheinung* to *Objekt*; in this sense, ‘object’ does not simply designate an existing object, but that which has a universal and necessary validity. Objectivity as objective validity is therefore not fully identified with denotation, and introduces a further demand: the demand for the principle of reason or causality, which inserts all objects into the necessary order of the causation of phenomena and which allows the natural science to constitute a reality that is identical for all subjects (*allgemeingültig*). Care must be taken not to confuse this intersubjective validity with the mere *claim* to *subjective universality* characteristic of judgements of taste, because taste is no more than a universal consent that is devoid of any concept, and therefore of objectivity (*Kritik der Urteilskraft* § 8, AK. V, pp. 213–16; *Critique of Judgement*, § 8).

– A final concept of objectivity emerges at the practical level, which also raises the critical question of the objectivity of our principles of action. There is such a thing as a phenomenal object of practice, namely the object of desire as actualization of the will; but whilst the principle of the determination of action is an empirical object, namely the feeling of pleasure or pain or the distinction between good and bad, action has no objective validity because its object is an *a posteriori* material object (*Critique of Practical Reason*, AK, 5, p. 21: *Objekt = Materie*) and is therefore purely subjective. If it is to have an objective validity, its object must be an object that is *necessary* to the faculty of desiring, and therefore an object whose intersubjective validity is guaranteed by its formal, *a priori* character – i.e. the form of the law – which is the principle that distinguishes good (*Gut*) from evil (*Böse*). As in the case of pure reason, a distinction therefore has to be made between *Gegenständlichkeit* and *Objektivität* (‘objectuality’ and objectivity), the latter being guaranteed by a priority or in other words necessity and universality.

Unter einem Begriffe eines Gegenstandes der praktischen Vernunft verstehe ich die Vorstellung eines Objekts als einer möglichen Wirkung durch Freiheit.

[By a concept of an object of practical reason I understand the representation of an effect possible through freedom.]

Critique of Practical Reason, AK, 5, p. 57.

Die alleinigen Objekte einer praktischen Vernunft sind also die vom Guten und Bösen. Denn durch

das erstere versteht man einen notwendigen Gegenstand des Begehrungs, durch das zweite des Verabscheuungsvermögens, beides nach einem Prinzip der Vernunft

[The sole objects of a practical reason are those of the *good* and the *evil*. By the former one understands a necessary object of the faculty of desire, and by the latter, a necessary object of aversion, both according to a principle of reason.]

Ibid., p. 58.

II. Husserl: from object to *Gegenständlichkeit*

Husserl's lexicon of objectivity presents the same kind of difficulty as Kant's in that it is technically extensive and made more complex by the distinction between types of object and objectivation. At the same time it is simpler than Kant's because the *epokhê* [ἐποχή] disposes of the dissociation of the object into a phenomenon and a thing-in-itself, and reduces 'object' to meaning 'phenomenon'.

A. Multiplicity of types of object

Husserl's slogan is *Rückgang auf die Sache selbst*, which is translated as 'back to things themselves'. And yet '*Sachen sind nicht ohne weiteres Natur-sachen* [things are not simply mere things belonging to nature]' (*Ideen* I, § 19, *Hua* III/1, p. 42; *Ideas* I, p. 36), but anything that can be given to intuitive self-evidence (*Selbstgegenbenheit*), as opposed to that which is simply intended ('*bloss vermeint*'). It follows that there are many thematic types of object. Husserl uses both *Gegenständlichkeit* and *Gegenstand*. The former term is best translated into French as *objectité* (Suzanne Bachelard, Elie-Kelekl-Schérer) rather than as *objectivité* (Ricoeur), and into English as 'something objective' or 'objectity', rather than 'objectivity' (used by Boyce Gibson and Kersten) or 'objective correlate' (Findlay), as this avoids any confusion with the character of that which has objective validity (*Objektivität*, see *infra*):

Ich wähle öfters den unbestimmteren Ausdruck Gegenständlichkeit, weil es sich hier überall nicht bloss um Gegenstände im engeren Sinn, Sondern auch um Sachverhalte, Merkmale, um unselbständige reale oder kategoriale Formen, u. dgl. handelt.

[I often make use of the vaguer expression 'objectity' (*Gegenständlichkeit*), since we are here never limited to objects in the narrower sense, but have also to do with states of affairs, properties and non-independent forms etc., whether real or categorial.]

Hua XIX/1, p. 45; *Logical Investigations*, Book II, Investigation 1, § 9, n4, trans. amended.

A number, value or nation is therefore an 'objectity', just like a tree. Let us analyse this differentiation of the 'object' lexicon.

1. Natural things and grounded objectities

Objectities designate forms of object that are grounded in the infrastructure of material nature and that have superstructural layers of meaning. These are the 'new types of objectity of a higher order' (*Ideen* § 152, *Hua* III/1, p. 354) that Husserl describes as *Gegenstand*, *Objekt*, *Gegenständlichkeit*, *Objektivität* (*Ideen* I, § 152, *Hua* III/1, p. 221): animate beings (*Animalien*), objects of value (*Wertobjekte* or *Wertobjektivitäten*; see *WERT*), use objects (*praktische Objekte* or *Gebrauchsobjekte*), cultural formations (*konkrete Kulturgebilde*: state, law, ethics, etc.). The difficulty lies in the distinction between the natural infrastructure of an object with value (*wertiger Gegenstand*), the abstract layer grounded in it (*das Wert*, or value as correlate of an evaluation, 'objectified value') and the concrete objectity that results from their fusion (*Wertgegenstand*, where the *Naturobjekt* fuses with the *Wert*, the 'object with value'):

Wir sprechen von der blossen 'Sache', die werte ist, die Wertcharakter, Wertheit hat; demgegenüber vom konkreten Werte selbst oder der Wertobjektivität.

[We shall speak of the mere 'thing' which is valuable, which has a value-characteristic, which has value-quality; in contradistinction, we speak of concrete value itself or the value-objectiveness.]

Ideen I § 95, *Hua* III/1, p. 221; *Ideas* I, p. 232.

I initially see a primitive object in a museum as just a thing. I then realize that it has a use-value (*Gebrauchssinn*), incorporate that value into it, and perceive as a use-object (*Gebrauchsobjekt*). The French and English languages do not share German's ability to create compound words to capture this fusion: there is a danger that *objet-valeur* ['value-object'] will be confused with the (abstract) objectivated value of an object with value [*objet portant valeur* (Ricoeur)]; the expressions *chose-évaluée* and 'evaluated-thing' do more to capture their fusion. In general terms, different levels of objectivation and the distinction between abstract and concrete objectities create a problem for the French and English languages.

2. Singular objects and essences

Husserl also extends the domain of objectities by including essences as objects of a specific intuition alongside singular objects:

Das Wesen (Eidos) ist ein neuartiger Gegenstand. [...] Auch Wesenerschauung ist eben Anschauung, wie eidetischer Gegenstand eben Gegenstand ist.

[The essence (*Eidos*) is a new sort of object. [...] Seeing an essence is also precisely intuition, *just as an eidetic object is precisely an object.*]

Ideen I § 3, Hua III/1, p. 14; *Ideas I*, p. 9.

The difficulty is not how to translate the term *Gegenstand* here, but how to understand it: if we render it as ‘object’, we must keep in mind ‘the generalization of concepts of intuition and object’ (*Verallgemeinerung der Begriff ‘Anschauung’ und ‘Gegenstand’*). This is not an analogy based upon the model of sense-objects; singular objects and essences are understood to be kinds of ‘anything whatsoever’, of ‘the universal concept of object, of the object as anything whatsoever [*des allgemeinen Gegenstandsbegriffs, des Gegenstand als irgen etwas*]’ (*Ideen I* § 22, Hua III/1, p. 47; *Ideas I*, p. 41). Husserl generalizes the state of being an object (*Objektheit*) to fields other than singularities, and at the same time denounces those who confuse real and ideal objectivities:

Besagt Gegenstand und Reales, Wirklichkeit und reale Wirklichkeit ein und dasselbe, dann ist die Auffassung von Ideen als Gegenständen und Wirklichkeiten allerdings verkehrte ‘platonische Hypostasierung’.

[If *object* and *something real*, *actuality* and *real actuality* have one and the same sense, then the conception of ideas as objects and actualities is indeed a perverse ‘Platonic hypostatization’.]

Ideen I § 22, Hua III/1, p. 47; *Ideas I*, p. 41.

The term *Wirklichkeiten*, which corresponds to the generalized concept of an object, does not refer to *réalités* (Ricoeur) or *realities* (Boyce Gibson) in the sense of ‘natural realities’, but to anything with the characteristic of *Wirklichkeit*, and encompasses different types of ideality (*vielerlei Ideale*: the tone-scale, the digit 2, a circle, a proposition, etc.)

3 Syntactical objectivities

To turn to essences: the idea of a formal ontology extends objectivity to the domain of syntax. Material ontologies consider kinds of concrete objects (things, animals, men, etc.), whilst formal ontology considers the formal region (*formale Region*) of any object whatever ‘the empty form of any region whatever [*dies leere Form von Region überhaupt*]’ (*Ideen I* § 10, Hua III/1, p. 26; *Ideas I*, p. 21). ‘Object’ in the logical sense refers to any subject of possible predication and is not restricted to concrete individuals as proto-objectivities (*Urgegenständlichkeiten*) or ultimate substrata (*letzte Substrate*); it includes ‘syntactical or categorical objectivities [*syntaktische oder kategoriale*

Gegenständlichkeiten]’ (*Ideen* § 11, Hua III/1, pp. 28–9; *Ideas I*, p. 23, trans. amended) derived from the former by syntactical constructions:

‘Gegenstand’ is ein Titel für mancherlei, aber zusammengehörige Gestaltungen, z. B. ‘Ding’, ‘Eigenschaft’, ‘Relation’, ‘Sachverhalt’, ‘Menge’, ‘Ordnung’ usw, die [...] auf eine Art Gegenständlichkeit, die sozusagen den Vorzug der Urgegenständlichkeit hat zurückweisen.

[‘Object’ is a name for various formations which nonetheless belong together – for example, ‘physical thing’, ‘property’, ‘relationship’, ‘predicatively formed affair-complex’, ‘aggregate’, ‘ordered set’ [...] which] point back to one kind of objectivity that, so to speak, takes precedence as the *primal objectivity*.]

Ideen § 10, Hua III/1, p. 25; *Ideas I*, p. 20.

Such ‘objects’ are purely logical basic concepts, or the formal determinations of the object as something in general (*ein irgend Etwas*) when taken as the substratum of a statement. They are objects of a higher order because they are derived from the ultimate substrata known as perceptive objects. Thus, the state of things ‘snow is white’ is an object in the same sense that snow is an object, but it is of a higher order because it implies an awareness of the substratum, the property and the relation between the two. It is the total or aggregate object of polythetic consciousnesses (*Gesamt-Gegenstand polytheischer Bewusstseins*). It is a mistake to translate *Sachverhalt* (see *SACHVERHALT*) as *état-de-chose* or ‘state-of-things’, as it is not a nature-thing (*Naturding*), and can refer to any logical subject at any level. The English ‘predicatively formed affair-complex’ does much more to capture its predicative origin and general character and even improves upon ‘state of affairs’.

B. Doing away with the object in itself; levels of meaning of intentional objects

The *epokhê* does away with the Kantian amphibology of the object (*Erscheinung* and ‘*Ding an sich*’) because shortcircuiting (*ausschalten*) the natural thesis means bracketing (*einklammern*) any object it posits, and therefore any ‘in itself’. The object is thus shown to be an ‘intentional object’ or ‘noema’; the terms refer to the object-meaning intended and constituted by consciousness:

Ähnlich wie die Wahrnehmung hat jedes Erlebnis [...] sein ‘Intentionales Objekt’, d.i. seinen gegenständlichen Sinn.

[Like perception, every intensive mental process [...] has its ‘intentional object’ i.e. its objective sense.]

Ideen I § 90, Hua III/1, p. 206; *Ideas I*, p. 217.

An intentional object is not an object in the sense that it exists in itself, but an object in the sense in which we speak of ‘the object of attention’. It is the correlate of an activity or its *terminus ad quem* (or *Worauf* – towards which – as Heidegger puts it). It is not an actual thing (*das wirkliche Ding*) but a being-sense (*Seinssinn*) that is constituted when consciousness bestows sense: the noema ‘Tree’ does not burn! As the term *gegenständlich* refers to a relationship with an object, we will translate it in French as ‘objectal’ or ‘objectuel’ and in English as ‘objectal’ or ‘objectual’, so as to distinguish it from ‘objective’, which describes something with an intersubjective validity. Any object that has been reduced to an object-sense correlative to a conscious intention, reduced to a noema correlative to a noesis, therefore just as the same noesis can be broken down into a plurality of partial intentions, an analogous distinction can be made within a noema between different levels of objective sense corresponding to different degrees of objectivation; just as we also found, in Kant, a stratification of the object of sense and of objectivity that relates to the constituent operations of the transcendental subject.

1. The double meaning of the concept of reality: *Reell* and *Real*

The reduction of objectivity to the intentional object must not mask the fact that the meaning of the concept of ‘reality’ is split. The two senses of ‘being’ are designated by the German adjectives *reell* and *real*, or *immanent* and *transcendent*. *Reell* applies to that which has consciousness’s mode of being and which is given in the absolute sense; anything with a material nature (*Naturding*) is *real* (in German) and given by adumbrations of foreshadowing: the tree I perceive is *real*, but my perception of the tree is *reell*, included in my consciousness and therefore *irreal* or not included in material nature. If we translate both *real* and *reell* as *réel* (Ricoeur, S. Bachelard) and *real* in English (Boyce Gibson), we will fail to grasp the essential distinction between the modes of being of consciousness and of objects, of mental process (*Erlebnis*) and the thing (*Ding*), ‘des *reellen Bestands der Wahrnehmung* [the real content of perception]’ and ‘des *transzendenten Objekts* [transcendent objects]’ (*Ideen* § 41, Hua III/1, p. 83; *Ideas* I, p. 89). It would be an error to translate *irreal* as *irréel* in French or as ‘unreal’ in English because that might suggest that mental processes are unreal, whereas they are absolute givens. *Irreal* refers to anything that does not have the mode of being of an object in the world, and should be translated into English as ‘irreal’, whilst *irreell* should be translated as

‘not-really immanent’ and not as ‘not-really’. Husserl is using a lexicon inherited from German idealism, in which *Realphilosophie* referred to the philosophy of labour, nature and the family (cf. Hegel’s Jena *Realphilosophie*). *Real* is the opposite of anything metaphysical or to do with the philosophy of mind; it extends the concept of the *real* to anything belonging to the world, and contrasts it with ideal and syntactical objects (see TRUTH).

2. Immanent objectivities

Whilst the vocabulary of objectivity becomes more complex as we move upwards to include higher-order objects, it also becomes more complex as we move downwards to examine the abstract components of concrete objects: these are immanent objects, or in other words not objects that are situated in the world, but unities identified by consciousness. Thus, the time of consciousness is not Heraclitean or formless, but already informed by permanent units:

Das Erlebnis, die wir jetzt erleben, wird uns in der unmittelbaren Reflexion gegenständlich, und es stellt sich in ihm immerfort dasselbe Gegenständliche dar: derselbe Ton.

[The mental process which we are now undergoing becomes objectual to us in immediate reflection: the self-same tone which has just existed as an actual ‘now’ remains henceforth the same tone.]

Die Idee der Phänomenologie, Hua II, p. 67; *The Idea of Phenomenology*, p. 52, trans. amended.

This tone is certainly an ‘object’ in the sense that it is a unit apprehended by consciousness, but it is not a natural object (*Reales, Naturgegenstand*). This is why it is so difficult to translate expressions that designate immanent ‘objects’ such as *Zeitobjekt*.

In der Wahrnehmung mit ihrer Retention konstituiert sich das ursprüngliche Zeitobjekt.

[The original time-object is constituted in perception, along with the retention of consciousness of *what is perceived*.]

Die Idee der Phänomenologie, Hua II, p. 71; *The Idea of Phenomenology*, p. 56, trans. amended.

The term should be translated into French as *tempo-objet* (Granel) or *objet de temps* and not as *objet temporal* (Dussort, Lowit), and into English as ‘time-object’ ‘tempo-object’ or ‘object-of-time’, and not as ‘temporal object’ – because, whilst all natural objects are ‘temporal’ in that they are inserted into objective time, a melody is an immanent given of consciousness, and therefore a ‘tempo-object’, or a pure thing that lasts but has no spatial or causal characteristics.

The same applies to the abstract stratum of spatiality, which defines concrete objects in relation to itself but abstracts from the natural things: *res extensae*. Once again, *res extensa* should be translated into French as *spatio-objet* or *chose-spatiale* (with a hyphen), and not as *chose étendue* or *chose spatiale*, and into English as ‘spatio-object’, ‘object-of-space’ or ‘spreading-object’, and not as ‘spatial object’ – because, whilst every *Naturding* is extensive, *res extensa* is nothing more than extension, if we ignore its materiality and its insertion into the causal order of nature: a ghost or a rainbow is pure appearance. These levels are in their turn dissociated into more abstract levels. *Res extensa*, for example, is dissociated into ‘things’ relating to each of the senses (*Sinnendinge: Sehdinge, Tastdinge*, etc.). These are not *choses sensibles* or *choses sensorielles* (Ricoeur), ‘sensory things’ or ‘things of sense’ (Boyce Gibson) – any *Naturding* is sensory – but ‘things pertaining to the senses’ (Cairns), ‘things-of-the-senses’ or things pertaining to each sense. We can translate it by using the Latin *sensualia* (as in Escoubas’s French translation of *Ideen* II). *Sehding* can be translated into Latin as *visuale* (Escoubas) and into French as *chose-visuelle* (‘with a hyphen) or even *chose-de-vue*, but neither as *chose visuelle* (without a hyphen) nor *chose visible* (Ricoeur). In English, it can be rendered as ‘visual-thing’, ‘thing of sight’, or ‘merely visible thing’, but not as ‘visual thing’ or ‘visible thing’. Any *Naturding* is visible (and tangible, audible and so on), but the *Sehding* is a pure thing-of-sight which has only visual properties (for example, the patch of red I see when I close my eyes).

3. Objects ‘simpliciter’ and complete objects

An analysis of intentional objects and of the ways in which they are given allows us to make a distinction between the broad and narrow meanings of noema: the central kernel or pure objective sense, or the central noematic moment (*zentraler Kern, purer gegenständlicher Sinn*) is contrasted with the full intentional object or the object in the how of its modes of givenness (*volles intentionales Objekt, ‘Gegenstand im Wie seiner Gegebenheitsweisen’*). The same tree can be seen from different angles and in different seasons; its predicates may change, but it is still the same tree. It can be perceived, remembered, imagined and named: the ‘same’ is its minimal objective sense (*gegenständlicher Sinn*), ignoring the acts of apprehension (perception, memory, etc.) that give the tree the *Aktcharaktere* of the ‘perceived’ ‘remembered’ and so on, and it is contrasted with the *Objekt in Wie*: the perceived tree, remembered tree, etc.

[...] dass verschiedene Begriff von unmodifizierten Objektivitäten unterscheidbar sein müssen, von denen der ‘Gegenstand schlechthin’, nämlich das Identische, das einmal wahrgenommen, das andere Mal direkt vergegenwärtigt, das dritte Mal in einem Gemälde bildlich dargestellt ist u. dgl. nur einen zentralen Begriff andeutet.

[...] we must distinguish different concepts of *unmodified objectivities*, of which the ‘object *simpliciter*’, namely the something identical which is perceived at one time, another time directly presentiated, a third time presented pictorially in a painting, and the like, indicates only *one* central concept.]

Ideen I, § 91, Hua III/1, p. 211; *Ideas* I, p. 222.

The expressions ‘pure objectual sense’ (*purere gegenständlicher Sinn*), noematic core or nucleus (*noematischer Kern*) and central core (*zentraler Kern*) thus refer to a layer of meaning in the full object, namely the level we reach if we ignore the determinations inherent in the ‘how’ of subjective intentionality; here, the concept of ‘objectivity’ therefore means the absence of subjective modifications, and ‘pure object’ means a correlate existing prior to any change of meaning relating to the character of acts.

4. The distinction between noematic meaning and determinable ‘object’

We said earlier that Husserl reduces objectivity to intentional meaning or the noematic object and excludes the thing-in-itself, and that the kernel of the noematic sense was the specifically ‘objective’ moment, which we obtain by eliminating the inherent characteristics of the how of the subjective intention (remembered, imagined, etc.). The archifoundational meaning of the object is, however, not reducible to either the noematic sense or the noematic core, but to an ultimate noematic layer: that of the object as pure ‘X’, a pure ‘something’ or the unchanging substratum of variable determinations:

Es scheidet sich als zentrales noematisches Moment aus: der ‘Gegenstand’, das ‘Objekt’ das ‘Identische’ das ‘bestimmbare Subjekt seiner möglichen Prädikate – das pure X in Abstraktion von allen Prädikaten – und es scheidet sich [...] von den Prädikatennoemen. [...] derart, dass der charakterisierte Kern ein wandelbarer und der ‘Gegenstand’ das pure Subjekt der Prädikate, eben ein identisches ist. [...] Kein ‘Sinn’ ohne das ‘etwas’ und wieder ohne ‘bestimmenden Inhalt’.

[It becomes separated as central noematic moment: the ‘object’, the ‘Object’, the ‘Identical’, the ‘determinable subject of its possible predicates’ – the *pure X in abstraction from all predicates* – and it becomes separated [...] from these predicate-

noemas. [...] the characterized core is a changeable one and the 'object', the pure subject of the predication, is precisely an identical one. [...] No 'sense' without the 'something' and, again, without 'determining content'.]

Ideen I, § 131, Hua III/1, pp. 302–3;
Ideas I, pp. 13–15.

What does this tell us about the meaning of the 'object' concept, which is usually signalled by the use of inverted commas? How does it differ from the usual concept of the intentional object, and from the concept of the *object simpliciter* or noematic core? It is the noetico-noematic parallelism that allows us to understand this: just as any intention towards an object can, at the analytic level, be broken down into partial intentions, any noematic sense can be broken down into different strata of partial sense – the fundamental stratum being that of the noematic core (the same church, irrespective of whether it is perceived, remembered, etc.) or, more profoundly, that of the 'pure object' (the same church as material thing, irrespective of its spiritual properties). Conversely, at the synthetic level, no intention, whatever changes may affect the subject, is limited to one or another state of the object; it intends the *same* object (if the church has been destroyed, or if the tree is on fire, the rubble or ashes are still the remains of the object, even though it is no longer recognizable). Any intentional object is therefore grounded in a minimal pure intentionality of a pure, permanent substratum which guarantees the identity of the object. The 'object' concept is a pure *hupokeimenon* [ὑποκειμένον], a pure 'this-there' or 'something' existing prior to any determination, and defined only by its permanence and determinability. This brings us back to the function of Kant's concept of a transcendental object or *Objekt überhaupt*, or category of substance; in the absence of the object's transcendent existence, it founds the identity of the objective correlate thanks to the permanence of an empty intention; that there can be no meaning without 'something', means that the undetermined relationship with object X (the first chapter of Part IV of Husserl's *Ideas I* is entitled 'The Noematic Sense and the Relation to the Object') precedes any relationship with a determinate object, and that formal ontology, or the theory of the pure 'something', has a foundational status for material ontologies. Strictly speaking, this incidence of the concept should, as in Kant, be translated as 'ob-ject' in order to signal that it is permanently op-posed to (*vis-à-vis pour*) consciousness in order to distinguish it from an object with a determinate noematic sense.

5. The Double Meaning of 'Objectivity': *Objektivität* and *Gegenständlichkeit*

Unlike *Gegenständlichkeit*, the concept of *Objektivität*, which is translated into English as 'objectivity', does not refer to a relationship with an objectivity, but to the highest level of objectivation, namely intersubjective validity. The objective thing (*objectives Ding*) is the 'intersubjectively identical thing [*das intersubjektiv identische Ding*]' (*Ideen I*, § 151, Hua III/1, p. 352; *Ideas I*, p. 363), which is a 'constitutive unity of higher order' (*eine constitutive Einheit höherer Ordnung*) in so far as it is a constituted intersubjectivity relating to an indefinite plurality of subjects bound together by a reciprocal comprehension 'for which *one* thing is to be intersubjectively given and identified as the same actuality [*für welche ein Ding als dasselbe objektiv Wirkliche intersubjektiv zu geben und zu identifizieren ist*]' (*Ideen I*, § 135, Hua III/1, pp. 310–11; *Ideas I*, p. 323, trans. amended). The highest level of objectivity, pertaining to an infinitely open community, is therefore 'the true thing' (*das wahre Ding*) that Husserl calls the *das physikalische Ding* (*Ideen I*, § 42, Hua III/1, p. 85; *Ideas I*, p. 90), which is not simply Ricoeur's '*chose physique*' or 'Boyce Gibson's 'physical thing', but the thing as conceived in physics, just as *das physikalische Wahre* refers not to the 'physical truth', but to the truth sought by the science of physics, which strips nature of its subjective-relative qualities. The 'true thing' is not the thing in itself as the intelligible cause of all apprehension, but the superstructural mathematical thought built on the world of phenomenal objects.

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Object, objective being

Gr.	<i>antikeimenon</i> [ἀντικείμενον]
Lat.	<i>objici, objectum; esse objective</i>
Fr.	<i>objet</i>
Germ.	<i>Objekt</i>

► BEING, CHOSE, ERSCHENUNG, ES GIBT, GEGENSTAND, INTENTION, PERCEPTION, PHENOMENON, REALITY, REPRESENTATION, SEIN, SUBJECT, TATSACHE, THING, TRUTH, VORHANDEN

The word *object* has not always existed, and nor has the concept to which it refers, but we constantly project it onto texts in which it does not appear.

I. Antikeimenon, or thought without an object

Do we have to accept that, even though the word itself is not always there, the ‘object’ concept is as old as philosophy? In reality, Plato and Aristotle constantly analyse the relationship between the faculties and their terminus but do not have an autonomous term to describe it. Although ‘object’ is not present in the original Greek, translators constantly introduce it and, thanks to a retrospective illusion, project onto the ancient authors the Latin vocabulary we have inherited from medieval philosophy.

When Plato talks about the faculties and ‘what they refer to’, he always uses an involved periphrasis. He does of course mention the relationship between the ability to know or to desire and the order of things it desires or knows. But he can only do so thanks to the play of syntax: thirst ‘will never be for anything other than what it is in its nature to be for, namely drink itself’ (*Republic* IV 437e; trans. G.M.A. Gaube, rvd. C.D.C. Reeve). Chambry’s French translation (*Les Belles Lettres*, 1931, 10th edn, 1996, p. 34) has ‘*elle ne saurait être le désir d’autre chose que de son objet naturel* [could not be anything but its natural object]’ (emphasis added). Similarly, knowledge in itself ‘is knowledge of what can be learned itself’ (IV, 438c). Chambry has ‘*ou de l’objet, quel qu’il soit qu’il faut assigner à la science*’ (p. 35, emphasis added), whilst ‘In the case of power, I use only what it is set over (*eph’ hōi*) and what it does’ (*Republic* V 477d) is rendered in French as ‘*je ne considère que son objet et ses effets* [I consider only the object and its effects]’ (p. 94). The link established by Plato’s Greek is extremely supple, as it is restricted to a relative pronoun; a literal translation is heavy and awkward; it is much lighter if the term *objet* is projected on to Plato in order to explain the meaning of Plato’s text, the only problem being that such a translation

introduces a concept for which there is no semantic support. For Plato, the corresponding terms are ‘twin births’ (*Theaetetus* 156b 1; trans. M.J. Levett, rev. M. Burnyeat). The powers of the soul and what they are set over are correlates, but there is in their correlation what Plato calls a power (*dunameis*; δυνάμεις), which has no terminological correlate in the order of things. What the French translations – anachronistically but, to the modern mind, inevitably call an *objet* – has no name in Plato.

Being more concerned with classification, Aristotle groups powers and what they take as their themes into the broader category of opposites. Powers (*dunameis*) are defined in terms of their activities and actions, which are in turn defined by their differentia (*antikeimena*): ‘if we are to express what each is, viz. what the thinking power is, or the perceptive, or the nutritive, we must go further back and give an account of thinking or perceiving’ (*De Anima* II, 4, 415a 20). If the analysis is to begin with ‘their opposites (*antikeimena*)’ and ‘if the investigation of the functions precedes that of the parts, the further question suggests itself: ought we not before either to consider the opposites (*antikeimena*), for example, of sense or thought? (ibid., I, 1, 402b 15). The French text reads ‘*on pourrait se demander si la recherche de leurs opposés (antikeimena) ne devrait pas encore les précéder, par exemple le sensible avant la faculté sensitive, et l’intelligible avant l’intellect*’ and a note added to the new (1982) edition remarks ‘Here, the word *antikeimena* therefore means the objects of sensibility and the intellect’. The first meaning of *antikeimenon* is ‘opposite’ in a positional sense, as *On the Heavens* reminds us: ‘fire and earth move not to infinity but to opposite points’ (I, 10, 277a 23; trans. J.L. Stocks cf. II, 2, 284b 22 and see Bonitz’s comments, 1870, 64a 18). Each faculty differs from the others because the activity precedes the faculty and gives it its specificity: ‘the activity of the sense-object and that of the sense-organ

are one and the same, but what it is for each to be is not the same' (*On the Soul*, III, 2, 425b 25). But every activity is first defined with reference to its opposite, that is to say the type of property that affects every faculty of the soul: they are what Jacques de Venise's accurate translation calls *opposita* (*circa* 1130).

Are we therefore to conclude that Aristotle has found a name for something that remained nameless in Plato? Does *antikeimenon* have to be interpreted as meaning an opposition between object and power? This is a retrospective illusion, but it would be easy to succumb to it. Yet Aristotle's thought does not prefigure the medieval and modern concept of 'object'. It is not as though the secret recesses of his very general language contained subsequent developments and prepared the ground for later distinctions, or as though later interpreters had succeeded in discovering a latent meaning that was already secretly present and which they have inherited.

First of all, Aristotle simply does not integrate Plato's terminology into a more precise vocabulary; he merely inscribes the relationship of correlation observed by Plato within a much more general classificatory concept. *Antikeimenon* is in fact a very broad class whose correlates are no more than a particular case: 'We call opposites contradictories, and contraries and relative terms, and privation and possession, and the extremes from which and into which generation and dissolution take place' (*Metaphysics*, Delta 1018a, 20-21; trans. W.D. Ross). Relational terms are a genus which has its own species: 'the measurable to the measure, the knowable to knowledge and the perceptible to perception' (Delta 15, 1020b, 31-2). Far from containing *in nuce* the distinctions with which the concept of *objectum* is laden, the Aristotelian notion of *antikeimenon* simply allows things to be grouped together: it puts cognitive correlation into a hierarchy of more general terms.

What is more, a correlative relationship is symmetrical and can be inverted: knowledge can in its turn become the opposite of the knowable (*Categories*, X, 11b, 29-30; VII, 6b, 34-6; trans. J.L. Ackrill). The medieval and modern concept of 'object' is asymmetrical: it can never be said that knowledge is the 'object of what is known'. The meaning of 'opposite' is much broader than that of the later 'object': the opposition signifies a general reciprocal relationship which is much broader than the particular case of the powers of the soul and their theme and it therefore does not define the status of the faculty's goal. What a faculty knows is primarily the thing itself in the manifestation of its essence and its properties, and not an object

defined solely by its correspondence to the faculty: the faculty is governed by being, and it is not the object that defines the faculty (*Metaphysics*, Delta, 15, 1021a, 26b 3; Iota 6, 1057a 7-12).

II. *Objectum*: an obstacle to sight

The very word *object* designates the act of 'standing opposite', *objici* (Latin). Once again, have we to accept that the word designating it, and therefore the concept that comes with it, was already in use in Ancient Rome?

Classical Latin certainly used the past participle of *objicio* ('to put before, hold before, as protection or obstacle') and in the *Germania* (VIII, 1) Tacitus nicely describes women urging on an army by 'thrusting their bosoms before them' [*objectu pectorum*] (*On Britain and Germany*, trans. H. Mattingly). Latin also uses the masculine noun *objectus*, which derives from *objectum*, to mean 'that which is put before' or 'obstacle' (or an *obstant*), 'spectacle' and, more specifically, 'apparition' or 'phenomenon'. But the coining of the neuter *objectum* corresponds to a new conceptual demand.

The new demand comes from the theory of perception, where it implies activity on the part of the faculties of the soul. According to Augustine, who follows Plato's theory of vision, vision is the product of the encounter that takes place between the gaze that springs from the eye, and the colour that emanates from a thing. The eye emits a ray 'by which we touch all that we see ... If you wish to see further and if some object is interposed [*interponatur*], the ray breaks against the body thrown in front of it [*corpus objectum*], and it is not permitted to go further towards that which you wish to see' (Augustine, *Sermo* 267, ch. X, 10; PL, t. 38, col. 1262). Here, the *objectus* is the the *obstans*, the body that is interposed between the seeing and the seen [*la visée et la vue*], the obstacle that puts what I am aiming at – the terminus of my operation – out of reach. The *objectus* is a hindrance to the activity of vision; it is not its objective. The past participle *objectum* does not designate the thing I am looking at, but that which, because it stands before the seer, breaks the axis of the gaze and obfuscates the transparency of its vision.

This active theory of vision has a paradoxical effect: its terminus is always an obstacle whose shadow limits the pure light cast by the gaze and, conversely, the obstacle is an *objectum*. The pseudo-Robert Grosseteste, commenting in *circa* 1230 on Augustine's text, turns the past participle into a noun: 'The spiritual ray that leaves the eye is not affected by the external object

[*non immutator ab objecto extra*]’ (Ludwig Baur, ed., *Die philosophischen Werke des Robert Grosseteste, Bischofs von Lincoln*, p. 255, ll. 15–19). *Objectu* is no longer an adjective describing a quality but, in all probability, a grammatical neuter and subsisting term. The counter-position is no longer an accident affecting or frustrating perception: it refers to a positive property of the visible.

The ‘object’ concept is constructed when the term *objectum* superimposes two determinations: the old etymological sense of interposing, and the new meaning, derived from Aristotle’s problematic, in which the terminus of the faculty is relative. The usage is clarified and established by the pseudo-Grosseteste:

But they add that there are different objects and different motors for both the natural appetite and the deliberative faculty. There are therefore also different acts and different powers.

pseudo-Robert Grosseteste, in L. Bauer, *ibid.*, p. 265, l. 42–4.

Even though the pseudo-Grosseteste is the sole author of the embryonic concept of an object, if we look at his sources (Augustine and Aristotle), we cannot rule out the possibility that it is a tool that was forged in the Faculty of Arts and popularized anonymously shortly before he described it. (A number of attestations between 1225 and 1230 suggest that this is the case: *Summa Duacensis*, ed. P. Glorieux, pp. 43, 40; *De anima et de potenciis eius* [1225], first in French in *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 66, 1982, pp. 223, 232, 244, 250; it first appears in the title of the anonymous *De potentiae animae et objectis* [between 1220 and 1230], in D.A. Callus, ed., *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale*, 19, 1952, pp. 147–8).

It is in Philippe le Chancelier’s *Quaestiones de anima* that the concepts of subject and object are first related to one another:

Una [potentia] enim simpliciter est quae est una in subjecto et objecto, duplex quae est una in subjecto, duplicata in objecto.

[It is indeed an absolutely unique [‘power’], which is in the subject and in the object; it is the double of that in the subject, but reduplicated in the object.]

Quaestiones de anima, ed. L.W. Keeler, p. 39.

The object is no longer just an interposed obstacle, and is clearly recognized as being the theme specific to the act of knowing. It may even help us to distinguish the various faculties, as it pre-exists them. This is why pseudo-Grosseteste feels entitled to cite the text of the

De Anima and to translate *antikeimena* as *objecta*, and not as ‘opposites’, as Jacques de Venise rendered it. This translation becomes standard in the second half of the twelfth century, even in Guillaume de Moerbeke’s new version of the *De Anima*.

A decisive turning point is reached when Aristotle’s psychology fuses with Augustine’s theory of vision: the faculties of the soul are no longer simply open to the motor and multiform being with which they identify in the act of cognition, but are determined by the prior nature of their specific object. What is known is no longer the face of the thing itself, but the obstacle standing in the way of the soul’s gaze, and which takes away the act’s transparency. Knowledge is no longer the mere reception of an actualized being whose potential has been set in motion, but the ricochet of a beam that is emitted by the intellect and that returns to the intellect after having rebounded off its terminus. It is no longer a direct face-to-face encounter between the thing that is known and the knowing intellect, which are united in a common act, but the reverberation of the intention on the ‘objectivity’ that gives the thing a characteristic stratum. The truth is now metamorphosed into being the adequacy of the powers of the soul to the corresponding objects.

Quidam habitus sunt in anima et in ratione habituum [...] alii sunt qui in ratione obiectorum, et sicut veritas et falsitas quia obicuntur intelligente.

[Some habitus exist in the soul as habitus, and they are therefore in themselves either in the soul or in man; others exist there as objects, and such are truth and falsity, because they are thrust before the intellect.]

Roger Bacon, *Questiones supra libros prime philosophie Aristoteles*, in *Opera ... Inedita Rogeri Bacon*, ed. R. Steele and F. Delorme, vol. X, p. 193.

III. *Esse objective*, or the ontology of objects in general

The concept of *esse objective* (objective being) lexicalizes this development: what is present to pure thought is not imprinted on it as a perception that is passively received by the senses, but as the product of an intention; it is present as the object of our representation: ‘Once this thing is known as it exists in nature, it objectively shines inside [*intus objective lucet*] the intelligence itself’ (Henry of Ghent, *Quodlibet* V, quest. 26, f. 205 N; cf. V, quest. 14, f. 175). ‘Objective being’ refers to the being of the thing that is the object of the intention, and therefore in so far as it is both immanent (represented) and transcendental (representing). When

it encounters an external object, the agency of the intellect produces that object within the intellect as a real accident in the soul. It then gives it a universal status: the form 'man' can be applied to all men. 'We have an internal object for our act of intellection, even though we need an external object in order to feel' (*Quodlibet*, XIII, art. 2 § [20] 60, ed. F. Alluntis, p. 470). And Duns Scotus stresses that the being of the thing remains the same, regardless of whether or not its object exists: the objective being of Caesar remains identical, regardless of whether or not Caesar exists, just as the statue of Caesar continues to represent him both in his absence and in his existence. Objective being is universal, abstract and immanent to the mind.

Duns Scotus thus establishes the main features of the modern theory of objective being or of objective reality that is handed down to Suárez, Descartes and Kant: 'That which constitutes an idea or a mental representation, and not a substantial and independent reality, is objective or exists objectively' (Lalande, *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie*, 'Etre objectif', 1968, p. 695).

The coining of the term *object* and its compounds demonstrates that it is a complete illusion to suppose that concepts are eternal. It demonstrates that the retrospective illusion of the interpreters and translators who slip the new concept into old texts is at once dangerous and constantly recurrent. It also demonstrates the extent to which the basic concepts of metaphysics are bound up with the evolution of the vocabulary that allows us to name them.

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AMSTERDAM

Res, Ens LATIN – Eng. thing, something

Arab	say' [شيء] ma'nā [المعنى]
Fr.	Chose, quelque chose
Gr.	khrẽma [χρημα], pragma [πράγμα] ti [τι], ousia [οὐσία], on [ὄν], onta [ὄντα]
Germ.	Ding, Sache, etwas
Ital.	cosa, qualcosa
Span.	cosa, algo

► *CHOSE* and *BEING*, ESSENCE, GEGENSTAND, HOMONYM, INTENTION, LOGOS, EGO, *NEGATION*, *NOTHINGNESS*, OBJECT, REALITY, SACHVERHALT, SEIN, SENS, SIGN, SIGNIFIER, THING

Nothing, apart from its remarkable indeterminacy, predestined the Latin word *res* to enjoy such a long philosophical career. Its history stretches from Cicero via the Latin scholastics and the German metaphysical scholastics of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and on to Brentano's 'reism'. It has migrated from rhetoric to the economic, juridical and logical fields and, finally, to the metaphysical field. It has become not only a possible equivalent for what is regarded as the most common of terms – *to on* [τὸ ὄν], being or existent. It also extends beyond that sense and can come close to meaning, so to speak, either something or nothing (*aliquid/nihil*). It has also become an absolutely primary or supratranscendental term. At a different semantic level, the derivatives *realis* and *realitas* open up the field of formality and possibility

I. The Stoics and Aristotelian semantics: *pragma*, from the thing itself to the incorporeal

There is probably a close parallel between the philosophical history of the word *res* and that of the Greek term *pragma* [πράγμα], whose primary meaning is juridical and rhetorical (Aristotle, *Topics* 1, 18, 108a; *Rhetoric* 3, 14, 1415b 4). *Pragma* refers to the fact or matter that is to be discussed, debated and judged in a trial (*die Streitsache, um die es vor Gericht geht*; W. Wieland, *Die aristotelische Physik*, p. 170) and not simply to a material and individual reality that is either given or immediately present. That is why the same term can be used to characterize what is meant by a word or proposition, or the meaning or the state of what is being discussed. This is certainly the way Plato uses the term in *Letter VII*, 341c: *to pragma auto* [τὸ πᾶν αὐτό] does not mean 'the thing in itself', but the subject or matter in hand, 'the problems with which I am concerned' or the 'matter' that is in dispute. And it is possible to see this passage from Plato as the ultimate anchoring point for the phenomenological maxim, in both its Husserlian and its Heideggerian forms: *Zu den Sachen selbst, Zur Sache selbst*. Latin translators from Boethius to Guillaume de Moerbeke had no difficulty in using the term *res ipsa* to capture all these meanings.

The *logos-pragma* [λόγος/πράγμα], or *onoma-pragma* [ὄνομα/πράγμα] dichotomy is easily transposed into Latin, thanks mainly to Boethius's translations of the *De Interpretatione*, but the term *res* does not refer

exclusively to a singular material reality, external to discourse and transcending discourse. It will also be recalled that in the famous opening of the *De Interpretatione*, Aristotle makes a distinction between *pragmata* [πράγματα] and *pathēmata tēs psukhēs* [παθήματα τῆς ψυχῆς], or between the affections in the soul that reflect them; their symbols and signs are 'spoken sounds' (*phōnai* [φωναί]). *Pragmata* have more to do with states of things than with material and singular things (see SIGN). Cf. Aristotle *Metaphysics*, Delta 29 (trans. W.D. Ross): the fact that 'the diagonal of a square is commensurate with the side' or that 'you are sitting' are examples of statements of a state of things, of a 'being such-and-such' that must be always false or sometimes true and sometimes false (see L.M. De Rijk, 'Logos and Pragma in Plato and Aristotle', in L.M. De Rijk and H.A.G. Baakhuis, eds, *Logos and Pragma. Essays on the Philosophy of Language in Honour of Professor Gabriel Nuchelmanns*, Aristarium Supplementa III).

This comment allows us to correct in passing the all-too-common interpretation of the famous passage in the *Sophistical Refutations* where the Stagirite points out that the things themselves that are being discussed cannot be introduced into the discussion and that words have to be used in their place as symbols: 'ἐπεὶ γὰρ οὐκ ἔστιν αὐτὰ τὰ πράγματα διαλέγεσθαι φέροντας, ἀλλὰ τοῖς ὀνόμασιν ἀντὶ τῶν πραγμάτων χρώμεθα ὡς συμβόλοις [It is impossible in a discussion to bring in the actual things discussed; we use their names as symbols instead of them]' (*Sophistical*

Refutations 165a 6–16, trans. W. Pickard-Cambridge). ‘Actual things’ does not refer primarily to an extra-mental or a-semantic reality (a stone, bull or ass), which would indeed be difficult to introduce into the discussion, but to the matter under discussion (‘*die Sache, um die es in der Aussage geht; [...] etwas, worum es in der Rede geht*, Wieland: 159–60) [Contra, see HOMONYM B 3, and Box 1 below).

According to Sextus Empiricus (*Adversus mathematicos* VIII, 11–12; SVF II, 166; A.A Long and D.N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* vol. 2, 33B, p. 191), the Stoics made a distinction between three different entities: the ‘signifier’ (*to sêmainon* [τὸ σημαίνον], meaning the vocal form or voice (*phônê* [φωνή], ‘utterance’, in Long and Sedley); what is signified (*to sêmainomenon* [τὸ σημαινόμενον], ‘the signification’ in Long–Sedley), which is the *pragma*, the conceptual content or the intentional object indicated by the voice, (‘the actual state of affairs revealed by an utterance’, the intension, De Rijk); and its extra-linguistic correlate, the external substrate, *to ekstos hupokeimenon* [τὸ ἐκτὸς ὑποκείμενον], namely the event, *to tugkhanon* [τὸ τυγχάνον] (the ‘referent’, De Rijk; the ‘name-bearer’, Long and Sedley, vol. 1, p. 197; see SIGNIFIER). Max Pohlenz points out that in Hellenistic usage, *ta tugkhanonta* [τὰ τυγχάνοντα] should be understood to be an abbreviation for *ha tugkhanai onta* [ἃ τυγχάνει ὄντα], that which is, that which is encountered, which finds itself there’ (*Die Stoa*, vol. 2, p. 22) (see Pierre Hadot, ‘Sur les divers sens du mot *pragma* dans la tradition philosophique grecque’, in *Études de philosophie ancienne*, pp. 61–76).

• See box 1

II. The Latin juridico-economic heritage: *res/ bona, res/causa, res/verba*

Whilst the term *res* does have a specifically Latin and pre-philosophical history, it probably relates to the sphere of goods (*bona*), property, wealth and self-interest, as we can see from Latin comedy (e.g. Plautus, *Pseudologus*, 338: ‘It is not in your interest [*ex tua re non est*]’), and from normal expressions such as *rem augere* (‘to increase one’s fortune’) or *in rem esse alicui* (‘to be in someone’s interest’). The latter meaning is probably etymologically correct if it is true that, as Ernout and Meillet (*Dictionnaire étymologique*) claim, the term is related to the Sanskrit *revan* (wealth). This juridico-economic meaning is implicit in many compound expressions, such as *res sua*, *alienate*, *privata*, *publica*, *venalis*, *extra commercium*, *mobilis*, *immobilis*, *in patrimonio*, *extra patrimonium*, and even *res corporalis*. Here, the

expression refers to things that are material, sensible and tangible, as distinct from *res incorporales* such as property rights (Gaius, *Institutiones* II, 12–14). In the legal domain, a distinction is made between *res* (the case in general, the fact or facts) and *causa* (the charge of which the accused will be found innocent or guilty) (*de re et cause judicare*, Cicero, *Partitiones oratoriae* IX, 30; *De Finibus* I, 5, 15; II, 2, 5; II, 2, 6).

In the general context of Latin rhetoric, the term *res* refers indiscriminately to the topic dealt within a speech and to that speech’s object (*re de qua agitur*). The role of the orator is to expound a question or issue (*rem exponere, rem narrare*). If he fails to understand the issue or the *status questionae* (the *res subjectae*, Quintilian *De institutione oratoria* II, 21, 4), there is a danger that rhetoric will degenerate into chatter about this and that (Cicero, *De oratore* I, 6, 20: ‘*Oratio [...] nisi subest res ab oratore percepta et cognita, inanem quondam habet elocutionem et paene puerilem*; ... unless there is such knowledge, well-grasped and comprehended by the speaker, then there must be something empty and almost childish in the utterance’, trans. E.W. Sutton).

The word *res* (like the Greek *pragma*) can, however, also refer to *thoughts*, as in Quintilian’s description of *oratio*: ‘*Orationem ... omnem constare rebus et verbis*’, which correspond to, respectively, the *inventio* (where *res* = thoughts) and the *dispositio*, or the speech in the true sense. Juridical rhetoric makes a classic distinction between the ‘case’ that is to be judged and the *circumstantiae rei* – the study of the *circumstantiae*, as clarified by the questions that follow. They refer back to Aristotle’s categories: *quid, quale, quantum ad aliquid*. The rhetorical tradition also classes *topoi* (*loci*) on the basis of the *res–persona* distinction (Quintilian *ibid.*, V, 10, 23; Cicero, *De inventione* I, 24, 34).

III. *Res/corpus*

Despite a few passages in Tertullian, who likens thingness to corporeality, *res* does not appear to have initially been understood as meaning *solida* or to have been associated with *corpus*. The way Tertullian uses and defines the word *substantia* (*ipsa substantia est corpus rei cuiusque*) strongly suggests that, once it lost its initial economic connotations, *res* was essentially indeterminate (cf. J. Moingt, *Théologie trinitaire de Tertullien*, four volumes including a valuable index and glossary). It is probably the indeterminacy of the term that allows clever attempts to transpose or explicate the Greek *ousia* [οὐσία]. ‘*Quomodo dicetur ousia – res necessaria, natura continens, fundamen-*

Box 1 How to say ‘thing’ in Greek

► LEX (box 1, ‘Gnômon’), PRAXIS, SEX (box 1, ‘Masculine, Feminine, Neuter’), VORHANDEN

If we take as our starting point a vernacular term such as the French *chose* or English *thing*, the most common way of translating it back into the Greek is obviously the neuter, and especially the neuter form of substantialized participles, which we render as best we can by adding ‘*chose*’ [thing] or ‘*objet*’ [object] (see for example ‘Aistheton’, SENS, box 1; on the article ‘To’ and ‘auto’, cf. box 2 in I) or even the neuter form of relative pronouns and demonstratives. F. Ildefonse and J. Lallot make the innovatory suggestion that the beginning of Aristotle’s *Categories* should be translated as: ‘*On dit homonymes les items (hôn, ὄν) qui n’ont de commun qu’un nom*’. (‘Items that have only a name in common are said to be homonyms’; trans. Ackrill). But they are no more than expletive ‘things’ that exist by default or thanks to a projection (see OBJECT). It is the same with the indefinite *ti* (τι) which, when stressed, functions as an interrogative (‘What?’, ‘Which?’); the only equivalent is ‘something’ (*kalon ti*, καλόν τι, ‘something beautiful’), even when, in Stoic doctrine, it refers to the strange and remarkable supreme genus of *quid* (‘something’, *to ti*, τὸ τι), which of course includes both bodies and incorporeals (Seneca Letter XVIII, 24). Cicero also calls this *res*, and Plotinus finds this ‘incomprehensible’ (*Enneades* VI, 1, 25, 6–10).

There are, however, direct and ‘semanticized’ ways of saying in Greek what we understand by ‘thing’ in the full sense of the term. They involve using the Latin *res* and *causa*, even though the two words are not, as we shall see, equivalent. This gives us two competing words, each marked by its etymology: *pragma* and *khrema* (χρῆμα).

Pragma derives from *prassô* (πράσσω), which is used by Homer only as an intransitive verb (to go on to the end, to go through), but which is regularly used in a transitive sense (to complete, finish, work on, practise). More concrete than *praxis* (πράξις), which refers to activity in the strict sense, *pragma* refers to the reason for or outcome of that activity: ‘thing’ as it relates to an action, task, matter, a concrete reality or an object. When used in the singular, it refers at once to that which is at stake or at issue (in a trial, for example), that which is actual and real, and that which is the case. In one way or another, what is at stake is the thing itself, ‘*die Sache selbst*’ (*auto to pragma*; αὐτὸ τὸ πρᾶγμα)

and the expression is much closer to the original juridical and economic meanings of *res* than to the ‘object of thought’. But the plural *pragmata* is much more concrete: it refers to the ‘realities’ of the external world in which we act, namely to things that have happened, to the ‘facts’ and things we are dealing with, and public or private ‘matters’; it is the term most commonly used in philosophy to refer to objects in the world, including natural realities, to the extent that living and knowing men are involved (‘If exterior things are a plurality and in movement’, Melissus, 30 A 5 DK, I, p. 260, 974a 25, for example). This, incidentally, is why I cannot accept Pierre Hadot’s interpretation of the beginning of the *Sophistical Refutations* (see above); the reason why Aristotle sees homonymy as the fatal flaw in language in this passage is that there are indeed more ‘things’ than there are words, that there are more concrete realities to be discussed than there are words available in natural language (cf. B. Cassin, *L’Effet sophistique*, pp. 344–7 and n8, pp. 386 f). This work-related ‘reality’ might in one respect be compared with *Wirklichkeit*, which is also related to a *Wirken*, or ‘effective implementation’ (see REALITY, VI); neither *pragmata* nor *Wirklichkeit* are simple or immediate ontological ‘givens’, like *phainomena* (φαινόμενα) or *onta* (ὄντα), which appear and remain without any reference to any operation (see ERSCHEINUNG, ESTI and box 1 [*Phôs phainô*] in LIGHT).

The other term, *khrema*, carries even greater implications of the human. It is related to the vast family derived from *khre* (χρή), ‘it must’ in the sense of ‘it is needed’, and centred on *khraômai* (χράομαι), ‘to discover how something is used’, ‘to resort to for one’s own use’. Often understood as being related to *kheir* (χείρ), ‘hand’ (Heidegger himself relates it to *vorhanden*; see VORHANDEN), but also related to *khairô* (χαίρω), ‘to rejoice’ (Chantaine sv ‘Khraomai’, p. 1275), *khraomai* means ‘to use’, in the sense of borrowing something from a neighbour, as well as in the sense of consulting an oracle (whose answer is *khreismos*, χρησμός). There are underlying implications of ‘lack and desire’ and further implications of ‘relating to someone’, ‘devoting oneself to’ and ‘undergoing’. We get some idea of the term’s thematic breadth if we compare it with the adverb *parakhrema* (‘immediately’; liter-

ally ‘ready for use’), the noun *khreia*, meaning ‘use’ but also a function such as military ‘service’ or grammatical or rhetorical usage (*chrie* = the exploitation of commonplaces in an oratorical exercise). This shows that a *krema* is a thing in so far as it is used and is of importance (the poet is, we read in Plato, *Ion* 534b, ‘an airy thing, winged and holy’ because he is an especially important and functional link in the chain that extends from the god and the muse to the rhapsode and the listener); the plural *khremata* is regularly used to mean ‘riches’ or ‘resources’ (the modern Greek *khrema* means ‘money’). *Khrema* is, notes Gernet (p. 11, and n32) ‘the classical economic notion’. This determination of ‘thing’ by its use and function, in the sense that wealth is determined by expenditure, is very present in Antiphon’s texts (where the miser whose riches were buried beneath a tree has to console himself thus: ‘When it was yours, you did not know how to make use of it’ [οὐδ’ ... ἐχρῶ], 87 B 54 DK; cf. B. Cassin, *L’Effet sophistique*, pp. 325–6, to Aristotle ‘spending and giving seem to be the using of wealth’ *Nicomachean Ethics*, III, 4, 1120a 4–9, trans. W.D. Ross, rev. J.O. Urmson).

Khremata is therefore the word that, in both the celebrated fragment from Anaxagoras (*‘homou panta khremata ên [ὁμοῦ πάντα χρήματα ἦν]*; all things were together’, B7 B 54 DK) and that from Protagoras (*‘pantôn khrematôn metron estin anthrôpos*; man is the measure of all things’, 80 B 1 DK II, p. 263, 3–4), is always translated as *things* (*alle Dinge*, Diels-Kranz). We have to proceed with some caution here, particularly as it is by no means obvious that we are talking about phenomena and existents. These are the equivalents proposed by Sextus (*Pyrrhoniæ hypotyposean*

I, 216) and ratified by Heidegger in his attempt to turn Anaxagoras and Protagoras into Parmenidean pre-Socratics. Protagoras merely adds a nice touch of moderation to the unveiling of *alêtheia* [ἀλήθεια] (cf. B. Cassin, *L’Effet sophistique*, pp. 108–10, 225–36). It seems more accurate to say that man, who lives among *khremata* and who is therefore caught up in a general economy of flows and expenditure, stops the flow through his action, breaks down *pragmata* and causes those *pragmata* to constitute a world. We then take seriously the implications of the words and the way they are used in the texts.

In the singular, the link between *pragma* and *res* is logical, even though the inventive sequel of history belongs to *res* alone. But in the plural, a distinction has to be made between at least two series of ‘things’ in Greek: those which are given and that relate to phenomena and phenomenology, and those which are acted upon and which have to do with human involvement, practice and use. Those things, which are called *pragmata* and *khremata*, escape the history of ontology.

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tum omnium? [How is *ousia* – the necessary thing which by nature comprehends the basis of all things – to be translated?], asks Seneca in the famous Letter 58, which begins by deploring the poverty of Latin’s vocabulary as the author attempts to expound Plato’s philosophy: ‘*Quanta verborum nobis paupertas, immo egestas sit, numquam magis quam hodierno die intellexi* [Today I realized more clearly than ever before our native poverty – dereliction rather – in the matter of vocabulary]’ (*Letters to Lucilius*, tr. T.E. Phillips Barker). In his *Topics*, Cicero also plays on the generality of a term that can refer both to things that exist (*earum rerum quae sunt*), such as *fundus*, *penus*,

aedes, *parietes*, *pecus* ... and intelligible things such as *ususcapio*, *tutela* and *agnation*, which do not have any *substantia corporis*.

[...] *unum earum rerum quae sunt, alterum earum quae intelliguntur. Esse eas dico quae cerni tangere possunt, ut fundus, aedes, parietatem stillicidium, mancipium, pecudem, suppellectilem, penus et cetera; quo ex genere quaedam interdum vobis definienda sunt. Non esse ea dico quae tangi demonstrare non possunt, cerni tamen animo atque intellegi possunt, ut si ususcapionem, si tutelam, si gentem, si agnationem definias, quarum rerum nullum subest corpus ...*

[...one class comprehend things that exist, and the other things that are apprehended only by the mind. By things that exist, I mean such as can be seen and touched: for example, farm, wall, rain-water, slave, animal, furniture, food, etc.; sometimes you have to define objects of this class. On the other hand, by things that do not exist I mean those which cannot be touched or pointed out, but can, for all that, be perceived by the mind and comprehended; for example you might define acquisition by long possession guardianship, *gens*, *agnation*; of these things there is no corporal substrate...]

Topics VI, 27, trans. amended.

J. Lohmann notes, for his part, that when he translates the doctrine of the Stoics, which he expounds as though it were self-evident and which makes *ti* the most general concept, Cicero naturally uses the term *res*: *res* can easily be divided into things that exist (*quae sunt*) and things that are intelligible (*quae intelliguntur*); it is possible to say that the latter do not exist (*Vom ursprünglichen Sinn der aristotelischen Syllogistik*, in *Lexis: Studien zur Sprachphilosophie, Sprachgeschichte und Begriffsforschung* I, 1951, pp. 205–36). The linguistic dichotomy on which Lohmann claims to base his argument must be at least relativized if we think of a certain passage in Dionysius Thrax (*Grammatici Graeci* I, 1, ed. G. Uhlig, p. 24, 3) : ‘A noun is a part of speech that can be declined and meaning a body (*sôma*) or an incorporeal (*pragma*): a body such as ‘stone’ or an incorporeal such as ‘education’ (cited in P. Hadot, *Études de philosophie ancienne*). ‘We may regret the fact that we are obliged to translate *pragma* as “incorporeal”, as that term obviously has nothing to do with the etymology of *pragma*, but all other translations appear to be impossible’, concludes Hadot. Not quite impossible, if we think of Donatus’s Latin translation (*Grammatici Latini* t. 4, p. 355, 5, ed. Keil), which Hadot himself cites in a note: ‘*Pars orationis cum casu corpus aut rem proprie communiterve significans* ... [That part of speech which, when declined, means, either in the strict sense or in more general terms, ‘body’ or ‘incorporeal’ (*res*) ...]’.

The term’s generality and indeterminacy explain why *res* can be so naturally used to translate the Greek *onta* [ὄντα] into the plural, and why it acquires a slightly different sense, depending upon which determinant is applied to it or which secondary opposition intervenes in what was originally a neutral usage. It is therefore possible to speak of *res gestae* to describe the events related by a historian, to further specify its meaning by using an adjective that takes on a whole semantic charge (*res publica*, *res divina*, *res familiaris*, *res militaris*, *res navalis*, *res rustica*, *res naturalis*,

res adversae, *res secundae*...), or even to make a distinction between *res* and *sermo*, *res* and *verbum* (on this canonical distinction, see especially Cicero, *De natura deorum* I, 16, ed. A.S. Pease, vol. 1, p. 168 and note). The Augustinian version of this distinction (*On Christian Teaching* II, 1–4) remains standard throughout the Middle Ages, but it could already be found in Cicero, Quintilian and Boethius.

IV. From Augustine to Abelard: *res/signa* and *res/verba*

The remarkable thing about Augustine’s distinction is that it is based upon the primary and general sense of *res*: all things, apprehended in a way that is as yet quite indeterminate, and without any distinction as to region, status or mode of being. It is therefore the poorest and most extensive term and can, at first, be grasped only in a negative sense: ‘*Proprie autem nunc res appelavi, quae non sunt ad significandum aliquid adhibentur, sicuti est lignum ... pecus, atque huiusmodi caetera* [What I now call things in the strict sense are things such as logs, stones, sheep and so on, which are not employed to signify something]’ (*On Christian Teaching* I, 2, 2; trans. R.P.H. Green). In other words, this passage is about apprehending things that are no more than things, and that are not also signs like ‘the log ... that Moses threw into the bitter waters’.

Everything that can possibly be taught can be categorized on the basis of the primary *res/signa* or *res/verba* dichotomy because the verb is primarily defined by its transitive function of signification (*De magistro* 4, 7), and because it is in the nature of the sign that it should refer to something other than itself or, in the last analysis, to an external reality: ‘*Res autem ipsa, qua iam verbum non est, neque in mente conceptio* [the thing itself is already neither a word nor a conception in the mind]’, according to the (pseudo-Augustinian) *Principia dialecticae* (ch. 5).

The sign itself is of course already a thing-sign (*‘ita res sunt, ut aliarum etiam signa sint rerum’*) and must have a certain concrete reality (*vox*, *dictio*, *intellectus*), precisely if it is to fulfil its signifying and transitive function. It must refer to something else because of a polarity that probably plays a determinant role: the polarity between inside and outside, which mirrors the relationship in speech between the thing (signified) – *res* – and the linguistic sign. From the Augustinian perspective, the sign is certainly not reducible to a linguistic sign with a phonic or mental reality; because of the secondary and overdetermined dichotomy with *res*, the category of ‘sign’ also includes natural signs and the *signum sacrum* known as the *sacramentum*.

When used in the plural and associated with *natura*, *ordo* and *proprietas*, the word refers to all things or to the totality of creation (men, animals and material realities) as in John Scotus Erigena's expression *universitas rerum*. But the term's meaning can be extended so far as to refer to 'something in general' (*aliquid*) – '*solemus enim usu dicere rem, quidquid aliquo modo dicimus esse aliquid* [We normally say to apply the term thing (*rem*) to anything that we say is something (*aliquid*)]' (Anselm, *Epistula de Incarnatione Verbi* II, ed. F.S. Schmidt, p. 12, 5–6) – or to an 'abstract reality'.

Anselm's distinction between *enuntiatio* and *res enuntiata* also reveals the general tendency to use *res* to refer to a state of things. In the *De veritate*, in particular, Anselm looks at what makes a statement true, even when the enunciation denies that it is true; in this case, the statement can still be described as true because '*etiam quando negat esse quod non est [...] sic enuntiat quemadmodum res est* [even when it denies the existence of what does not exist ... it states that the thing exists]' (ibid., II, 177, 17).

When, especially in his *Dialectica*, Pierre Abelard examines the meaning of a proposition (its *dictum*; see *DICTUM*), he describes the objective content of the act of thinking as a '*quasi-res*'; thanks to various intellections and the corresponding *dictiones* (for example *cursus*, *currit*), it can refer to the same 'thing', even when the latter is not a singular external *res*. In his valuable *Notes de lexicographie abélardienne*, Jolivet examines in detail several passages in the *Logica ingredientibus* where we can see the word *res* changing its meaning. It thus acquires a remarkable ambiguity as it can, in a 'non-realist' way, designate the signified of universal propositions or terms, as well as a particular and substantial thing; it is possible that there is no *res subjectia* corresponding to the *res propositionis* (J. Jolivet, 'Éléments pour une étude des rapports entre la grammaire et l'ontologie au Moyen Âge', in *Aspects de la pensée médiévale*, pp. 203–32).

V. Avicenna and translations of Avicenna: *wugud*

Leaving aside the analyses of Augustine, Anselm or Abelard, one of the major events in the history of the word *res* in the Latin West is without any doubt the translation, direct or indirect, of Ibn Sina's *Métaphysique du shif'* [الشفاء]. In Chapter 5 of Book I and Chapter 1 of Book V, Avicenna sets himself the task of showing what is meant by 'existent' (*al-Wugud* [وجود], *ens*; see Box A, and *Wugud* in *VORHANDEN*) and 'thing' (*al-say* [الشيء], *res*) and their first divisions

(Ibn Sina, *Al-Shifa*, ed. Al-Ilaiyyat, G.C, Anawati and Sa'id Zayed; Avicenna latinus, *Liber de philosophia prima sive scientia divina*, ed. S. van Riet, with a one-volume Arabic–Latin/Latin–Arabic lexicon). They are 'ideas inscribed in the soul by a first impression', and 'the things most fitting to be represented by themselves'. The existent and the thing (*ens* and *res*) lie at the origin of all representations. Attention should therefore be drawn to them and they should be made obvious; they should not be known in the true sense of that term, as the names or signs used for that purpose would be secondary and more obscure than the things themselves. Turning more specifically to 'thing', it can be described as 'what a statement is about (*res est de quo potest aliquid vere enuntiari*)' (Avicenna latinus, ibid., I, 33, 37–8).

Such a thing does not necessarily have to exist as one concrete subject among others; it suffices for it to be intended or posited in the soul (*potest res habere esse in intellectu, et non in exterioribus*). What defines it is in effect primarily the *certitudo qua est quod est*, or the certainty (*haqiqa* [حقيقة]) that ensures its *esse proprium* (ibid., 34, 55–6; 35, 58). There is therefore a difference between the concept of 'thing' and that of 'existent' or 'actual' (*ens*); the thing (*res*) is in effect always defined by its own *certitudo*, or the *quidditas* (*mahiyya* [ماهية]) that makes a thing what it is. Chapter 1 of Book V, which deals with 'things in general and their mode of being' (*de rebus communibus et quomodo est esse earum*) confirms this analysis by elucidating the original status of the signified as such (the famous *equinitas tantum*, for example). It is neither universal nor singular but indifferent with respect to later specifications, or in other words not subject to conditions of generality or particularity, etc.

Definitio enim equinitatis est praeter definitionem universalitatis nec universalitas continetur in definitione equinitatis. Equinitas etenim habet definitionem quae eget universalitate, sed est cui accedit universalitas. Unde ipsa equinitas non est aliud nisi equinitas tantum; ipsa enim in se nec est multa nec unum, nec est existens in his sensibilibus nec in anima, nec est aliquid horum potentia vel effectum, ita ut hoc contineatur intra essentiam equinitatis, sed ex hoc quod est equinitas tantum.

[For the definition of equinity is not the definition of universality, and universality does not enter into the definition of equinity. Equinity has in fact a definition that does not require the definition of universality, but universality happens to it. In itself, it is neither one nor several, and exists neither in reality nor in the soul, nor in one of those things which are in potentiality or in act, in the sense that

this would result in equinity, and exists only in so far as it is equinity.]

Avicenna latinus, *Liber de philosophia prima*, ed. Van Riet, p 228, 29–36. (On all this, see Alain de Libera, *La Querelle des universaux*, especially pp. 201–2. On the accepted medieval doctrine and the doctrine of ‘indifference of essence’, see Alain de Libera, *L’Art des généralités*, pp. 576 f.)

Avicenna posits (I, 5, 34–5) that ‘for every thing there is a nature through which it is what it is.’ A triangle, for example, has a ‘certainty thanks to which it is a triangle, just as whiteness has a certainty thanks to which it is whiteness’. Essence thus has a being of its own that is distinct from the existence that is asserted in a judgement. Avicenna’s thesis therefore posits an equivalence between certainty proper (*haqiqa*), being proper, and quiddity (*mahiyya*), and contrasts it with being or, more accurately, existence (*al-wujud*) in the sense of assertion (*intentio esse affirmativi*) (cf. A.-M. Goichon, *La Distinction de l’essence et de l’existence d’après Ibn Sina*, pp. 31–5). In Latin, the series becomes: *certitudo propria*–*esse proprium*–*quidditas*, and it is this that makes possible the doctrine of an *esse essentiae*, or the being specific to essence that can be apprehended over and beyond being or non-being (‘outside being’ or *ausserseiend*, to use Meinong’s

terminology; see SEIN). It is thus possible to consider the animal in itself, to envisage its essence per se, ignoring everything that is accidental about it; taken in itself, essence is, as we have seen, neither general or universal, nor particular or singular, and nor (and this is probably the essential point) is it in the soul nor outside the soul. Because of its own being, the animal is ‘neither individual, nor one nor multiple’ but merely animal (*ex hoc esse animal tantum – equinitas est tantum equinitas*). Even though it may, as Alain de Libera suggests (*L’Art des généralités*, p. 58), be based on a misunderstanding, the thesis enjoyed great popularity from the second half of the thirteenth century onwards, when there was much discussion of the validity and import of the difference between *esse essentiae* (*esse esentiale, habituale, quidditativum*) and *esse existentiae* or *esse actuale* (Thomas Aquinas, Henry of Ghent, Duns Scotus...).

• see box 2

VI. Scholastic distinctions: *res a reor, res rata*

To go back to the Latin thirteenth century: medieval philosophers attempted to reduce the dangerous polysemy of the term *res* by making a tripartite distinc-

Box 2 Say’, thing, and Say’iyya, reality

Jolivet convincingly demonstrates (‘Aux Origines de l’ontologie d’Ibn Sina’ in J. Jolivet and R. Rashed, eds, *Études sur Avicenne*, Les Belles Lettres, Paris, 1984, pp. 11–28, and *Annuaire de l’École pratique des hautes études*, [Section IV, Sciences religieuses], vol. 84, pp. 389–94; vol. 85, pp. 381–6; vol. 86, pp. 373–9; vol. 88, pp. 401–5) that the Arabic terms *say’* (thing) and *say’iyya* [الشئانية] (‘thingness’ or, more accurately, reality) have a history of their own that is quite independent of the history of Aristotle’s *pragma* and bound up with debates within Islamic theology about non-existence. According to Avicenna, we find an echo of this in Sahrastani (‘L’Inexistant est-il une chose ou non?’, in A. Guillaume, ed. *Nihaya*, 1934, ch. 7, cited J. Jolivet, ‘Aux Origines’, p. 17), but the origins of the debate go back to al-Kindi and al-Farabi, and to the positions of the mu’tazlite *kalam*, for whom a thing is that which is known, and anything non-existent is a thing.

This formal and thing-centred ontology, as elaborated from al-Farabi and Ibn Sina onwards,

develops algebra as a science that is common to arithmetic and geometry, but does so outside the framework of Aristotelian epistemology. It introduces, as an unknown, a thing (*res, al-say*) that can be either a number or a geometric magnitude (R. Rashed, ‘Mathématiques et philosophie chez Avicenne’, in *Études sur Avicenne*, pp. 29–35). We therefore have here the outline of a new ontology in which it is possible to talk about an object with no determinate characteristics, and even to know it, but impossible to represent it accurately. In the Latin translations of Arabic algebra that began to appear in the late thirteenth century, the term that was ultimately used to refer to the unknown is therefore *res (res ignota)*, whilst the word *cosa* appears in vernacular Italian texts on mathematics in later centuries (cf. G. Crapulli, ‘Res e cosa (cossa) nelle terminologia algebrica del sec. XVIe’; P. Costabile-Pietro Redondi, ‘Sémantèse de res/cose/cossa’, in M. Fattori and M. Bianchi, eds, *Res, Ilè Colloquio Internazionale del Lessico Intellettuale Europeo*, Edizioni dell’Ateneo, Rome, 1982, pp. 179–96).

tion, which remained traditional until the seventeenth century among representatives of what has wrongly been called ‘late’ [*tardive*] or even ‘retarded’ [*attardé*] scholasticism. That description is a product of the powerful retrospective illusion that insists that there was a totally uncritical adoption of the thesis of the Cartesian break and of the new *Instauratio magna*. It tends to be forgotten that the seventeenth century can be legitimately described as the golden age of Scotism.

(a) In his *Commentaire des sentences* (1250–51), St Bonaventure therefore makes a tripartite distinction between the meanings of *res*. It remains a standard distinction throughout the scholastic period:

Dicendum quod res accipitur communiter et proprie et magis proprie – Res, secundum quod communiter dicitur, dicitur a reor, reris, et sic comprehendit omne illud, quod cadit in cognitione, sive res exterius, sive in sola opinione. – Proprie vero dicitur res a ratus, rata, ratum, secundum quod ratum dicitur esse illud quod non tantummodo est in cognitione, immo est in rerum natura, sive sit ens in se, sive in alio; et hoc modo res convertitur cum ente. – Tertio modo dicitur res magis proprie, secundum quod dicitur a ratus, rata, ratum, prout ratum dicitur illud quod est ens per se et fixum; et sic res dicitur solum de creaturis et substantiis per se entibus.

[We will say that the term *res* can be understood in a general sense, in a proper sense and in the most proper sense; the term *res* in general is said to derive from *reor, reris* (count, calculate, think, believe) and it thus encompasses all that comes to knowledge, be it an external *thing* or a thing that is present only in the mind (equivalent to Aristotle’s *doxaston* [δοξαστόν], as distinct from *episteton* [ἐπιστητόν]) (*Second Analytics* II, 33, 88b, 30ff). – But in its proper sense ‘thing’ is termed *ratus, rata, ratum*, from ‘that which is confirmed and ratified’; as we apply *ratum* (ratified) to that which exists not only within knowledge but in the nature of real things, no matter we are speaking of what exists in itself or in something else; and in that sense the term ‘*res*’ can be converted into ‘existent’ (*ens*). – Third, and in the most proper sense, *res* is said to derive from *ratus, rata, ratum*; that which exists through itself and is fixed is said to be *ratum*; and thus only creatures and existents that subsist through themselves can be called *res*.]

Opera omnia, ed. Collegii a S. Bonaventura, II, dist. 37, dub. 1, p. 876a.

This is a remarkable passage, but its fantastic etymologies and the repeated use of differently stressed forms of the term *ratum/ratum* also raise translation problems. The most surprising thing is that the etymology of the word *res* is more or less clear, as it derives from the Indo-Iranian. The etymology of the verb

reor, reris, ratus sum, reri is unknown, but it is not related to *res*. The legists derived *ratahabitio* from *pro rata parte*, which was current in classical Latin; it refers to the ratification that intervenes in, for example, the division of an inheritance. The expression *ratum facere aliquid* became accepted in the sense of ‘ratify’ or ‘approve’ (A. Ernout and A. Meillet, p. 570). It is therefore quite understandable that *ratum* should have acquired the meaning ‘that which is confirmed or ratified by the mind’. The slippage was probably inevitable if we recall that *ratio*, in the sense of ‘counting’ and ‘calculation’, is related to *reor, reris*, even in the common expressions *rationem reddere, rationem habere*. But counting one’s wealth (*res*) and ratifying through thought are obviously two different things! The meaning of *magis proprie*, or of the stressed *ratum*, can then be extended and become a characteristic of that which is fixed and firm (*ratum et firmum*), or of that which is effectively and ‘really’ ratified.

The fate of the tripartite division we have just described is all the more remarkable in that it was probably Bonaventure who introduced or coined the term *ratitudo* to clarify the third meaning:

Res dicitur a reor, reris, quod dicit actum a parte animae; et alio modo res venit ad hoc est ratus, quod dicit stabilitatem a parte naturae; et sic res dicit stabilitatem sive ratitudinem ex parte entitatis.

[*Res* is said to be a *reor, reris* when it refers to an act on the part of the soul’ on the other hand, *res* comes from that which is *ratus* (ratified), that which relates to stability on the part of nature; and *res* therefore applies to stability or ratification on the side of the entity]

Opera omnia I, dist. 25, dub. III, p. 446b.

• see box 3

(b) Henry of Ghent (d. 1293) in his turn makes a distinction between a *res secundum opinionem*, which is purely mental, and a *res secundum veritatem*, which is characterized by an inner certainty, and which takes us from contingency to necessity, from psychology to metaphysics. This again is a *res a ratitudine* corresponding to an extra-mental reality (*aliquid extra intellectum*) which has the certainty that makes it a certain thing (cf. J. Paulus, *Henri de Gand*, pp. 23–5).

The major distinction introduced by Henry of Ghent is as follows:

1. *Res primo modo est res secundum opinionem tantum, et dicitur a reor, reris, quod idem est quod opinor, opinaris, quae tantum res est secundum opinionem, ad modum quo ab intellectu concipitur, scilicet in ratione totius, ut est mons aureus, vel hircocervus, habens medietatem cervi et medietatem hirci [...]*

Box 3 *Res rata, res a reor, ratitudo, Ding a denken*

Medieval thought regards *res* either as a supplementary transcendental or as another name for being.

Thomas Aquinas explain the *ens* (being)/*res* (thing) doublet in terms of the concepts of essence and existence; ‘the term *res* derives from quiddity’ but, given that essence can have either a singular being outside the soul or a being that is apprehended in the soul, ‘the term *res* refers to both: to that which is in the soul to the extent that *res* comes from *reor*, *reris*, and to that which exists outside the soul to the extent that *res* means a being that is consistent (*ratum*) and firm in its nature’ (*Sententiae* I d. 25, q. 1, a. 4, ed. Mandonnet, Paris 1929, t. 3, p. 612). ‘Being’ thus refers directly to the act of being (*esse*), whilst *res* refers both to quiddity in so far as it is thought (*a reor*, *reris*) and in so far as it exists (*res rata*). *Res* refers indiscriminately to the thing that is thought and the thing that exists, but does not carry the full weight of Thomist metaphysics, which is oriented towards the existent’s act of being.

With Henry of Ghent, in contrast, it is *res* that comes to the fore. According to Henry, the definition of *res* covers the double determination of possible: that which can be simply thought, that is, logically and in non-contradictory fashion, or that which has a certain consistency in its possibility, or in other words that which is real in so far as it has an essence. The first sense covers everything that is not pure nothingness, all objects of opinion, including chimeras, fictions and possible worlds that can never become real. The second sense refers to that which has an essence – that is to say, which has an idea or a positive model in the mind of God. The two meanings of *res* must be contrasted: *res a reor*, *reris* (to think, believe, esteem, represent), namely *res* in the etymological sense, refers to any object of opinion, whether or not it has an essence, and *res a ratitudine* (*ratitudo* is a medieval neologism denoting solidity), or in other words a *res* that has a certain consistency and designates an essence with an *exemplum* in God.

The intention of any created thing (*res*) is different to the being of essence; the being of essence is a nature and an essence; and a thing is said to be a thing (*res*) on the basis of ‘I think, you think’ (*reor*, *reris*) and because of its consistency (*ratitudine*).

Henry of Ghent, *Summa questionum ordinariarum* art. 21, q. 4, ans. 1270 0.

The ambiguity of *res* raises doubts about the interpretation of the nature of metaphysics: should being be regarded as a correlate of our most universal and therefore most primordial representation, or as a possibility because it imitates a divine model and partakes of its essence? Is it simply a representation of what is logically possible (non-contradictory), including fictions, chimera, secondary intentions, etc., or a representation of what is really possible (grounded in a relationship with the nature of the divine)? This basic oscillation between a logic of representation and a metaphysics of partaking, which we also find in Henry of Ghent’s theory of analogy, will be resolved by Duns Scotus.

According to Scotus, a *res* endowed with a real possibility does not derive that possibility from a relationship with God, but from the consistency of quiddity itself, and neither existence nor essence abhors it. What being does the intelligible have? Not pure fiction, which is forged by the imagination, but a real possibility which has a consistent being that is *ratum* (*res a ratitudo*) and not a being that is merely thought (*res a reor*). It is a being that is ‘distinct from fictions from the outset, a thing that does not abhor the being or essence or the being of existence’ (Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* I, d 36 § 48, vol. 6, p. 290). Being is *ratum* only because of its own consistency, because this one is such, and because that one is different. It is formal coherence that founds non-contradiction, and not vice versa; being relayed by the omnipotence of God, it results in production in existence.

Suárez assumes this analysis of the two meanings of *res* when he writes:

Res is predicated quidditatively because it means a veritable and solid quiddity (*rata*) in the absolute sense, and which is not ordered by existence (*esse*).

Disputationes metaphysicae II, 4, 2, *Opera omnia*, ed. C. Berton, vol. 25, p. 88.

The most proper name of being is, precisely, *res*, or in other words the order of quiddities, or of that which does not abhor being. ‘*Res* indicates only the quiddity of the thing in the formal sense, and the solid (*rata*) or real essence of the being’ (*Disputationes metaphysicae* III, 2, 1, p. 107). ‘Reality’ refers here not to actual existence, but to the formal perfection of essence.

More audaciously still, Clauberg's *Ontosophia* (§ 7–8) combines the etymologies by harmonizing the Greek, Latin and German to such an extent as to identify *res* with pure representability:

Aio omne ens posse dici, hoc est, nominari, voce viva vel scripta enuntiari. Hinc, Sache – res – a sagen, dicere [...] Ipsum: res, si non a reor, est a ῥέω, loquor [...] Praetera, omne ens potest cogitari seu intelligi, ideoque cogitabile et intelligibile appellatur [...] Ding – res – et denken – cogitare – eiusdem sont originis.

Metaphysica de ente, quae rectius ontosophia, 3rd edn (1664), cited in J.-F. Courtine, *Suárez et le système de la métaphysique*, p. 261.

That this fantastic study in comparative etymology is untranslatable goes without saying.

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In a first sense, it is opinion alone that makes something a *res*, and it is said to be a *reor*, *reris*, which is the same thing as *opinor*, *opinaris*, and it is only opinion that makes it a *res*, depending on the way it is conceived by the intellect, namely according to the rationality of a (composite) whole such as the gold-mountain or the goat-deer, which is half goat and half deer...

Henry of Ghent, *Quodlibet*, ed. Badius, 5, 2, fol. 154 D 7, 1 fol. 258 B.

Duns Scotus (1265–1308) also attempts to reduce the ambiguity of the term *res*. In the *Quodlibets*, he initially introduces a tripartite distinction but, unlike Henry of Ghent, he distinguishes between two types of *ratitudo*, which plays the role of the *certitudo* Avicenna attributes to quiddities: '*Unaquaeque enim res habet certitudinem qua est id quod est*' (*Ordinatio* 1, 3, 2 ed. Vat, t. 3, p. 184, 14–17). The neologism *ratitudo* enjoyed remarkable good fortune right down to Suárez's *Disputationes metaphysicae* (IV s.2. n2).

Certain writers, such as Pierre d'Auriole (d. 1322) attempt to reduce the series of distinctions to the basic polarity of essence and existence:

Res sumitur dupliciter, uno modo pro re essentiali – et sic non est verum quod esse lapidis sit sua realitas – vel pro realitate actuali, et sic est verum; unde in lapide actualiter existente sunt duae realitates, una quidam essentialis, puta lapiditas, et alia accidentalis, puta actualitas.

[*Res* is understood in two senses, as, on the one hand the essential *res* [a synonym for *essential*], in which case it is not true is that the being of stone is its reality; and, on the other, as actual reality, in which case it is true; there are therefore two reali-

ties in the stone that exists; one is essential, namely its stoniness, and the other is accidental, namely its actuality.]

Pierre d'Auriole, *Peter Aureoli Scriptum super Primum Sententiarum*, ed. Burnyaert, I, dist. 1, q. 21, n60.

Other authors, in contrast, introduce more distinctions in order to allow for the existence of reason or of chimeras.

(c) We find a distant echo of this in the *Exercitationes et Epistolae varii Argumenti* of the Dutch 'Cartesian' J. Clauberg:

Mens quando rem eandem considerat, ut extra notionem in seipsa, et ut est in notione representata, videt hoc aliquid esse fundamentale, notionem autem suam aliquid umbratile et intentionale. Unde res etiam seu ens absolutum rectissime dividitur, quod sit vel fundamentale, quod specialiter et kat' exohkên [κατ' ἐξοχήν] reale dici solet, quod primo et propriissime est et producit aliquid, etc., vel intentionale, quod non est nec facit aliquid solide et proprie sicut reale (fundamentale) et est tamem quasi umbra et similitudo eius, quae nos illud facit cognoscere, unde communiter notio rei vel idea appellatur.

[When the mind considers the same thing, as it is in itself and regardless of the notion, and as it is represented in the notion, it clearly sees that, in the first case, that this something is fundamental, whereas its notion is something shadowy and intentional. That is why, when taken absolutely, the thing or, if we prefer, the being can most properly be divided as follows: either it is fundamental and is usually said to be real in the specific sense and par excellence, and it is this that exists first and most properly,

which produces something, etc.; or it is said to be intentional in that it is not and does not produce anything solid and proper, in the same way as that which is real (fundamental), and yet it is like a shadow and semblance of the latter, and this allows us to know it, and that it is commonly called the notion or idea of the thing.]

J. Clauberg, *Exercitationes* XVI, p. 621,
in *Opera omnia philosophica*.

And yet, in the same work the same Clauberg also introduces a quadripartite division:

Res primo sumitur latissime pro omni cogitabili, nam quidquid sub cogitationem nostram cadit, sive verum sive fictum, sive possibile sive impossibile, sive actuale sit, interdum rei nomine appellatur. Nec dubitatur, quin accidens hoc significatu latissimo res dici queat. – Secundo res accipitur minus late pro omni eo quod est aliquid, non nihil, et sic reale ens opponitur enti rationis, nempe ubi Authores sub illa (reali) modalem quoque distinctionem complectuntur, quoniam aliquid est, non nihil, not ens rationis, non figmentum. – Tertio stricte sumitur res pro substantia, atque ita res opponitur modo, distinctio realis opponitur modalis proprie dictae [...] – Quarto strictius adhuc reale opponitur intentionali, quo sensu etiam res et signa rerum distinguuntur, nec interim negatur intentionale ens esse aliquid, prout signa etiam non sunt nihil. Hanc vocis illius acceptionem si respiciamus, dicere possumus, dari nonnulla accidentia, quae non sint realia, sed intentionalia, dari alia plurima, quae realia sunt.

[*Res* is understood first of all in the broadest sense as meaning everything that can be thought, for everything that falls under our thought, be it true or fictive, possible or impossible or actual, receives the name ‘thing’. There is no doubt that in this most expanded sense the accident can equally be said to be a ‘thing’. In a second sense, *res* is understood in a narrower sense as meaning everything that is something and not nothing, as real being is contrasted with the being of reason, as is still the case with those authors who subsume the modal distinction beneath the first (real) distinction. In the third sense, *res* is understood as meaning substance, and is therefore contrasted with the modal distinction, whilst the real distinction is contrasted with the modal distinction in the true sense [...] In a fourth and even stricter sense, the ‘real’ is contrasted with the intentional, in the sense that a distinction is made between things and their signs, though this is not to deny that an intentional being is also a thing to the extent that signs themselves are not nothing. If we consider the last acception, we can say that some accidents are not real but intentional, and that many others are real.]

Exercitationes XVIII, p. 665.

• see box 4

Despite or because of these proliferating distinctions, many thinkers maintain that the fundamental meaning of *res* is the concrete object that exists outside the soul as a singular individual. Such is the *res secundum esse*: the *res posita* or, in other words, the *res singularis* (Ockham, *Sent* I, dist. 2, q. 7): ‘Any positive reality [existent] outside the soul is by that very fact singular [*Omnis res positiva extra animam eo ipso est singularis*]’.

VII. *Res* as transcendental and supertranscendental term

The broader definitions of the term *res* and its extension beyond the *ens* that is defined as *ens ratum* (firm, stable and ontologically ratified) tend to make it a transcendental term, or even the first transcendental term. From Gerard of Cremona onwards, *res* is counted as a transcendental term. Aquinas himself sometimes equates *ens* with *res* (*Summa Theologica* 1a, q. 48, a. 2), even though his thematic exposition makes a careful distinction between the two (*De veritate*, q. 1, a. 1). In his *Disputationes dialecticae*, L. Valla attempts to reduce the six transcendentals to *res*, which is the first and most important of them all: ‘*Ex his sex, quae nunc quasi de regno contendunt non aliter res erit rex, quam Darius*’. *Aliquid* can also be broken down into or further specified as ‘*alia res*’ and *unum* into ‘*una res*’, etc. When *res* is defined in this transcendental sense as subsuming all other convertible properties, it is no longer contrasted with anything, except of course the void or nothingness: ‘*nihil habet repugnans nisi ipsum nihil*’ (I, pp. 646–8).

Even though they are openly critical of Valla’s anti-Aristotelian thesis, many writers, like Fonseca (1528–1599) or Suárez, do not hesitate to make *res* a transcendental term just like *ens*, or even to make the two completely synonymous: ‘*Sex porro transcendentia esse dicuntur, Ens, Unum, Verum, Bonum, Aliquid, Res*’ (Fonseca, *Institutionum dialecticarum libri octo*, ed. J. Ferreira Gomes, Book I, ch. 28, p. 62). Having recalled the common thesis of the five transcendentals or passions that are convertible with being, Suárez notes, however, that ‘There are many who think that *res* is a more essential predicate (*magis essentiale praedicatum*) than being itself’ (*Disputationes metaphysicae*, III, 2, 1), and does not signal that he has any serious disagreements with that thesis because, as he himself contends, ‘*res* is no more than a formal expression of the quiddity of the thing, or in other words its real and ratified essence (*solum dicit de formali rei quidditatem, et ratam seu realem essentiam entis*).’

Box 4 Res in Goclenius's *Lexicon*

The famous *Lexicon philosophicum* of R. Goclenius (1547–1628) brought the main ancient distinctions together in 1613:

In philosophia res sumitur communissime, communiter et strictissime seu appropriate:

– *Communissime ut includat etiam modum rei, pro omni eo quod non est nihil. Hoc autem potest intelligi dupliciter:*

(a) *Primum enim illud est nihil quod includit contradictionem et excludit omne esse et extra intellectum et in intellectu. Quod enim sic includit contradictionem, sicut non potest esse extra intellectum seu animam; ita non potest esse aliquid intelligibile, id est aliquid ens in intellectu seu anima, quia numquam contradictorium cum contradictorio constituit unum intelligibile, neque ut objectum cum objecto, neque ut modus cum objecto.*

(b) *Secundo dicitur nihil quia nec est, nec esse potest aliquod ens extra animam. Id est primo modo Res accipitur omnino communissime, ut extendat se ad quodcunque non includens contradictionem, sive sit ens rationis (quod praecise habet esse in intellectu considerante) sive sit ens reale (quod praecise habet aliquam entitatem extra intellectus considerationem).*

– *Altero modo minus communiter pro ente, quod habet vel habere potest aliquam entitatem citra considerationem intellectus. Primo modo dicimus intentiones logicales esse res rationis. Relationes rationis esse res rationis et tamen ista non possunt esse extra intellectum: Non igitur nomen rei ex usu loquendi astringitur seu contrahitur ad rem extra animam. Ac in hoc intellectu communissimo (ut res dicitur quodlibet conceptibile non includens contradictionem) sive ista communitas sit analogiae, sive univocationis, posset res poni primum objectum intellectus, quia nihil potest esse intelligibile, quod non eo modo rationem entis includat, quomodo etiam quaecunque scientia, sive sit realis, sive rationis, est de Re.*

In secundo membro primi istius membri dicitur res, quae habet vel habere potest entitatem extra animam: hoc modo accipit Avicenna in Metaph. c. 5.

– *Res strictissime per synecdochen accipitur pro ente potissimo, id est, cui per se et primo convenit esse, quod est substantia sola. Ita igitur accidentia excluduntur. Sic virtus non est res seu ens, nisi quia est rei seu entis.*

Aristotle, *Metaphysics* VII, 1, 1028a 15–25.

[In philosophy, the term *res* is understood to mean most commonly, commonly, and in the strictest or most appropriate sense:

– In the most common sense, it is understood as including the mode of all that is not nothing.

This can be understood in two ways:

(a) first, it is ‘nothing’ that implies a contradiction and that excludes any being both outside the intellect and in the intellect. Indeed, that which implies a contradiction and which cannot be outside the intellect or soul, cannot be something intelligible, that is something in the intellect or soul, because the contradictory plus the contradictory (an object plus an object, or a mode plus an object) can never constitute something intelligible.

(b) second, it is ‘nothing’ because it neither is nor can be outside the soul. In an absolutely common sense, *res* is therefore extended to mean everything that does not imply a contradiction, be it a being of reason (which has, precisely, being in the intellect that considers it), or an actual being (that has some being outside the consideration of the intellect).

– *Res* is also less commonly understood in a different sense as meaning a being that has or may have some entity independently of the consideration of the intellect. In the first sense, we say that logical intentions are ‘*res rationis*’ or ‘things of reason’. Rational relations are things of reason, and yet they cannot be outside the intellect; according to linguistic usage, *res* is therefore not restricted to reality outside the soul. And according to this most general understanding (as applied to everything that is conceivable and does not imply any contradiction) – and whether this shared characteristic is analogical or univocal is of little importance – *res* can be the first object of the intellect, because nothing can be intelligible unless it includes, ipso facto, its *raison d’être*, just as any science, real or rational, must deal with some thing.

In the second division of this first part, *res* is said of that which has or can have an entity outside the soul; that is the meaning accepted by Avicenna in his *Metaphysics* (*Liber de philosophia prima, sive scientia divina, Tractatus primus* c. 5, ed. S. Van Riet, I, pp. 34–5)

– In the strictest sense, *res* is understood, by synecdoche, to mean a primary being, or in other words the being that befits being in itself and primarily, namely substance alone. And in that sense, accidents are precluded. Quality is therefore neither *res* nor being, except in so far as it is a quality of the thing or being.

In his *Tractatus de transcendentibus*, which is part of a *Totius philosophiae compendium* published in Lyons in 1563 (I, p. 460, col. 1), Chrysostome Javelli, on the other hand, still makes a more truly Thomist distinction: ‘*Ens sumitur ab esse, Res autem a essentia*’ (‘The participle “being” comes from the verb “to be”, and the “thing” comes from the “essence”’). He then reaches the somewhat curious conclusion that *ens* can be applied to both *de ente reali et de ente rationis*, whereas *Res* applies only to *entia realia*, or those *entia* that ‘have essence or quiddity’. *Res* can be identified with being (*ens*) only if the latter is understood in the nominal sense, or in the sense of ‘*ens nominaliter sumptum*’ (which is of course the basis of Suárez’s argument with Cajetan). In the *Disputationes*, Suárez brings out the full implications of the distinction between the two acceptations of ‘being’: *ens* taken as participle and *ens* taken as noun – a distinction which, it should be noted, is no more comprehensible in Latin than it is in English or French (at least where the present participle of the verb ‘to be’ is concerned, whilst a distinction has, at least since Vaugelas, been made between the participle as an invariable verbal form, and the participle as a qualifying or verbal adjective, as in the French *différant/différent, excellent/excellent, divaguant/divagant*; cf. differing/different, excelling/excellent, etc.).

To the extent that it derives directly from the verb *sum*, *ens* is to be understood as a participle that names the *actus essendi* or fact of existence: ‘to be’ and ‘to exist’ are one and the same, as the meaning of the term *ens* (‘being’) indicates; it in fact derives from the verb *sum* (I am), and is the verb’s participle. But the verb *sum* (I am), as understood in the absolute sense, means the act of being or existing (‘*Quae opinio fundata est in significatione vocis entis; derivatur enim a verbo sum, estque participium eius; verbum autem sum, absolute dictum, significant actum essendi, seu existendi; esse enim et existere idem est*’, Suárez, *ibid.*, II 4, 1). The same term can certainly also be clarified as *ens nominaliter sumptum* (*ens ut nomen*), if we note that this time its proper and adequate meaning is *id quod est* (‘that which is’). But the *id quod est* can in its turn be understood as meaning ‘that which has or, more accurately, exercises the act of being or existing’ or, in other words, ‘that which is being’ in the sense of ‘existing’: that which is *actu* (actually); or as meaning what is *potentia* (potentially), what is being because it can be, because it is already the possible subject of a real predication. We say of man in general that he is an animal, leaving aside the question of whether or not he is *actu*, if he *exists* or *is being* (‘*significat ergo*

adaequata “ens”, id quod est [...], id est, quod habet actum essendi seu existendi, ut idem sit ens, quod existens; dicit ergo ens de formali esse seu existentiam, quae est extra rerum quidditatem’). Yet Suárez rejects the thesis (attributed here to Dominique Soto) that ‘being’ cannot predicate the *in quid* (quidditively or essentially) of all things, because it always implies a reference to being (‘*habitus ad esse*’), understood this time as *actus essendi*. The *actus essendi* can partake of the created being, but it still remains external to its essence:

Dicit ens semper esse participium verbi sum sicut existens, verbi existo, et de formali significare esse, de materiali vero, quod habet esse postea vero declarat, ens non solum significare quod actu est, sicut existens, sed quod est actu vel potentia, quia de homine non existente vere dicitur esse ens, sicut esse animal vel substantiam, et nihilominus concludit ens non dici quidditative de rebus, praesertim creatis, quia dicit habitudinem ad esse, quod est extra essentiam creaturae.

[As being is, according to him, always used as the participle of the verb *I am*, just as ‘existent’ is the participle of the verb *I exist*, and just as its formal meaning is ‘being’, but its material meaning is ‘that which has being’; he then clarifies his thesis by saying that ‘being’ means not only what actually is, in the sense of existing, but that which is, either actually or potentially, because it can truthfully be said of a man who does not exist that he is a being, just as he is an animal or substance, and he nonetheless concludes that the quiddity of things, and especially of things created, is not said to have being, because it signifies a relationship with being that is external to the essence of the creature.]

Suárez, *Disputationes metaphysicae* II, 4.

If we replace the *habitus ad esse* within the nominal meaning of ‘being’, we necessarily contrast it with *ens* and *res*: *res*, unlike *ens*, can be predicated *in quid* of all that is (i.e. also of that which has not been actualized), because it means nothing but quiddity itself in its absolute truth and as ratified by the understanding, without the intervention of some constraint to be or to exist. The same is not true of ‘being’, which never means quiddity in the absolute sense, and always means quiddity *sub ratione essendi*, or in other words ‘in as much it can be’ (*id quod est potentia*) in the sense of that which can receive *esse* (‘*et in hoc consistit differentia inter ens et res, quod res quidditative praedicatur, quia significat quidditatem veram et ratam absolute, et sine ordine ad esse; ens autem non praedicatur quidditative, quia non significat absolute quidditatem, sed sub ratione essendi, seu quatenus potest habere esse*’, *Disputa-*

tiones metaphysicae II, 4, 2). Suárez does not follow his argument to its logical conclusion, which would be to make the *res* an agency (one hesitates to say ‘a being’) that is greater than existence, as it would encompass both existence and quiddity – the *esse essentiae* of the (pseudo-)Avicennan tradition – to abandon the convertibility of the transcendentals, and to make ‘thing’ a super-transcendental term. As it is he simply identifies *ens* with *res*: the difference between the terms is purely nominal and due to their linguistic origins (*in etymologica nominum*):

Unde obiter colligo, ens in vi nominis sumptum, et rem, idem omnino esse seu significare, solumque differe in etymologia nominum; nam res dicitur a quidditate, quatenus est aliquid firmum et ratum, id est non fictum, qua ratione dicitur quidditas realis; ens vero in praedicata significatione dicit id, quod habet essentiam realem; eandem ergo omnino rem seu rationem realem important.

[I therefore also conclude that ‘being’ taken as a word and ‘being’ taken as thing (*res*) are absolutely identical and mean the same, and that the only difference lies in the etymology of the two terms. For *res* is said of quiddity in so far as it is something firm and ratified, or, in other words, non-fictive, which is why it is called real quiddity; whereas ‘being’ (*ens*) applies, in the meaning under consideration here, to that which has a real essence; they therefore refer to the same *res* or to the same real reason.]

Suárez, *Disputationes metaphysicae* II, 4, 2.

It is Henry of Ghent’s analysis that provides the real basis for this tendency – which has been described as ‘essentialist’ (E. Gilson) – to make *ens* a transcendental term, and this tends to make it an absolutely general term that is identical with *etwas*, *something* or *aliquid* in the sense of *non-nihil*. Clauberg sees this very clearly when he interprets *res* in *latissima acceptione* as *Intelligibile seu Cogitabile* (*Exercitationes* XLV, p. 668), or in other words as a supertranscendent or ‘super-transcendental’ term, even though there is no reason to make any distinction between the two adjectives in this case (cf. J.P. Doyle, ‘Super-transcendental Nothing...’).

As Kobusch (‘*Das Seinder als transzendentaler...*’) has clearly shown, the philosophical history of the word *res* clearly makes *ens rationalis* the most general concept defining the sphere of what can be thought (*cogitabile*). Within it, we can identify the field of the *ens reale*, which merges with that of the possible, understood as meaning non-contradictory (*potentiale objectivum*). Whilst, in philosophical terms, the Latin *res* was initially a translation of the Greek

pragma, most writers of the late scholastic period and of *Schulmetaphysik* see it as a transposition of the indeterminate *ti*. This is why certain authors are not content to count it as a transcendental, or to make it the first transcendental, and imagine the new and still more general category of super-transcendental terms. The English *thing* or *something*, French *chose*, the Latin *aliquid* and the German *etwas* are exemplary illustrations.

Jean-François Courtine

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Conferences

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Art and Immaterial Labour

Saturday 10 February 2007

Art's materiality has been the focus of fierce debate since claims about the 'dematerialization' of art were made in New York at the end of the 1960s. More recently, in the very different context of libertarian political debates in Italy and France, claims have been made about the 'immaterial' character of labour processes based on information technology, and of the cultural and intellectual content of commodities. This conference will bring these two discourses together, to stage a debate about contemporary art, 'immaterial' labour and new modes of production of subjectivity.

Speakers include

Franco Berardi

Antonio Negri

Maurizio Lazzarato

Judith Revel

Critique of love

Wendy Brown, *Edgework: Critical Essays on Knowledge and Politics*, Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford, 2005. x + 159 pp., £35.95 hb., £14.95 pb., 0 691 12360 8 hb., 0 691 12361 6 pb.

At the beginning of a new millennium this is a book full of melancholy. Written between 1998 and 2005, it includes pieces on the end of liberal democracy, the darkness of current times, the mourning of the revolution within feminism and the impossibility of women's studies as an intellectually rigorous programme. The book is not organized around a single theme or thesis. Several of the essays draw conclusions and make recommendations that are mutually incompatible, perhaps a natural consequence of the fact that the pieces have been written for different audiences over several years. Nevertheless, there are reiterated topics. One is the possibility of critique and the future of political and critical theory; another is the revolutionary impulse in feminism; a third is a concern with some very specific issues such as patriotism or the importance of silence as a weapon of resistance.

On the first of these, Brown claims that 'critical theory in dark times is a singular practice of *amor fati*'. Invoking the work of Walter Benjamin and Friedrich Nietzsche, Brown is keen to emphasize critique as a break from the age's self-conception. Yet critique's untimeliness is understood as the fruit of historical thinking. Thus, critical theory is not utopian, quite the contrary. Although critique breaks with the times by taking as its object the limited range of possibilities and choices which are visible from the age's perspective on itself, nevertheless it is bound to affirm this time as *its* time. Thus, critique is *amor fati* because it is 'a practice of affirming the text it contexts'. Brown characterizes our dark times as the times of two powers whose currency is fear: empire and terrorism. Although she does not elaborate, these remarks indicate Brown's approval for Hardt and Negri's account of our current situation as one best understood in terms of the notion of a global empire. They also clearly date this claim as belonging to the post-9/11 era.

This dual role of critique as both affirming and contesting the current age seems to be lacking in the other essays in this collection. Instead, some use critique to affirm and others to contest. Hence the article on neoliberalism and the end of liberal democracy is focused exclusively on contestation. In this piece, Brown

rehearses what I take to be well-known arguments about neoliberalism as a form of governmentality: neoliberal structures and powers re-shape all spheres of social life so as to be governed exclusively by instrumental considerations of costs and benefits. Brown also argues that liberal democracy cannot survive in the context of neoliberal political governmentality. The realization that liberal democracy is coming to an end has, for Brown, put the Left in an uncomfortable position. On the one hand, the Left never loved liberal democracy, preferring different democratic models. On the other, the Left is compelled to defend liberalism against its neoliberal antagonist.

In this essay Brown enjoins the Left not to give in to a melancholic attachment to liberal democracy. In her view, if the Left defends liberal democracy and civil liberties in liberal terms, it loses its own vision. The Left might wish to mourn the demise of liberal democracy, but it should not try to keep this form of democracy alive. Instead, Brown suggests that 'what remains for the Left ... is to challenge emerging neoliberal governmentality in Euro-Atlantic states with an alternative vision of the good.'

Brown's suggestion is unsatisfactory for two reasons. First, given Brown's analysis of the current situation in several essays in this collection, it is extremely unclear how or even whether such an alternative can be developed and take hold. After all, in another essay Brown boldly claims that the project of 'revolution is unquestionably finished'. Second, Brown's description of this vision is extremely sketchy. She writes that 'a left vision of justice would focus on practices and institutions of popular power'; that it would treat rights merely as safeguards for the individual 'against radical democratic enthusiasms'; that it would take a 'long view' of 'the importance of both meaningful activity and hospitable dwellings to human flourishing'. This description is too brief to permit a serious assessment of the vision it hints at. It is nevertheless surprising to hear Brown use the vocabulary of human flourishing and of conceptions of the good. This is not the kind of vocabulary that is much in evidence elsewhere in this book with a single, but telling, exception. When

discussing the idea that revolution is now both dangerous and anachronistic, Brown remarks that 'all visions of the Good now appear to consort with fundamentalism'. Unless the capitalization is intended to bear an enormous weight, this remark stands in considerable tension with Brown's positive proposal for an alternative vision of the Left.

Both the remark about the death of revolution and that about the connection between fundamentalism and visions of the good appear in an illuminating essay on the relation of feminism to revolutionary impulses. I return to the main themes in this piece below, but here I want to note another tension with the opening manifesto about the role of critique in our times. There Brown warns us against utopian impulses; she urges us to realize that 'untimely critique that seeks to speak to our time is launched not from outside time, or indifferently to the times'. And yet elsewhere she enjoins us to recuperate a utopian imaginary. This imaginary would not be a mechanism of escape from the felt impossibility of social transformation. Instead, despite being stripped of the illusions of redeeming the past and being realized in the future, it would contribute to the making of social transformation. Perhaps Brown is deploying two different notions of utopia in these contexts. It is hard to say. But, like the previous invocation of an alternative vision of the good, this call for utopian thinking sits rather uneasily with Brown's views about the nature and role of critique.

Utopia or contestation does not figure prominently in an essay on political love of one's country and political loyalty for one's community. This piece, clearly written in the shadow of 9/11, attempts to dispel the equation of dissent with disloyalty which has become problematically prevalent in the North American context. Brown sets up her argument by means of two telling caveats. First, she claims not to be providing a universal account of the relationship between citizenship, loyalty and critique. Instead, she 'explores these relations as they are configured by a time of crisis and by a liberal democratic state response to that crisis'. Second, she 'considers the relation of love, loyalty, and critique within a political order, the existence and basic legitimacy of which is not called into question'. She does not mean to suggest that within these constraints it is impossible to argue for a radical transformation of one's own collectivity, but acknowledges that hers is 'a distinctly nonrevolutionary formulation of the problematic of dissent'.

'Fair enough', one may be tempted to say, 'even radical democrats are allowed to be strategic in their thinking'. And yet this is an odd approach for someone

with Brown's convictions. Odd, first, because the whole point of critique is to put into question the assumptions behind the polity's understanding of itself. Odd, also, because she has stated elsewhere that the Left's defence of liberal democracy by liberal means is tantamount to political suicide. It is unclear, then, why she engages in the kind of strategic action which she appears to believe is utterly misguided.

Brown's discussion of political love and dissent begins with an exploration of Socrates' loyalty to Athens, and of Freud's account of group psychology. She uses these figures to argue that loyalty and love are necessary to bind a collectivity together. But this love is always directed toward an idealization. The conservative patriot idealizes the current state of things or the polity's past. The radical critic, whose dissent is a form of love for her community, identifies with 'a utopian version of one's polity'. Brown develops these considerations into a proposal about how internal critics of US foreign policy might wish to frame their interventions. She suggests that they might be 'tendered as an act of love'. Critique, she continues, 'might then inhabit the dignified and authoritative voice of belonging, rather than the moral screech of exclusion. It might also be proffered in the voice of love and desire (for a better nation) rather than the voice of rage, shame, or denunciation.' I find these suggestions deeply problematic. The critic, by declaring her love for her people, and identifying only with an ideal version of her community, frees herself of any responsibility for its actual shortcomings. She takes her community to be answerable to her dissent, but she does not take herself as answerable for her community's behaviour. And yet, it would seem that this is precisely what is required by Western critics. What is required is an acknowledgement of our own responsibility for the shameful behaviour of our own countries.

In lieu of a conclusion, I wish to discuss briefly the last two pieces that make up this collection. They are courageous and thought-provoking reflections on what has gone wrong with feminism. In 'Feminism Unbound' Brown reflects on the fact that historically there has been a deep connection between anti-capitalist revolutionary impulses and feminism. What was immensely liberating in feminism was the promise 'that we could become new women and men, that we could literally take in hand the conditions that produce gender and then produce it differently'. This promise has waned with the realization that capitalism per se does not require gender or gender subordination. It has tendencies to increase such subordination as well as to

attenuate it. The promise has disappeared with post-structuralist acknowledgements of 'the impossibility of seizing the conditions of making gender as well as the impossibility of escaping gender'. Thus, the question for Brown is what is left of feminism now that its revolutionary impulse is dead. This is a question she does not answer in this collection but it is certainly worthy of consideration.

Impossibility looms large in the last essay of this collection also, where Brown suggests that degree programmes in Women's Studies lack intellectual coherence, and have become a negative conservative force in academia. Most of Brown's penetrating observations about what has gone wrong with Women's Studies apply to issues that are specific to the North American academic context she discusses. But her conclusion deserves careful consideration. In her view, the political mission of Women's Studies is incompatible with its institutionalization as a degree programme in universities. Perhaps she is right. But the observation should not simply lead us to reflect on the shortcomings of such programmes, as Brown does, but also to entertain the possibility that something might be wrong with academia as such.

Alessandra Tanesini

Retreatment

Ian James, *The Fragmentary Demand: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Jean-Luc Nancy*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2006. 296 pp., £34.95 hb., £19.95 pb., 0 8047 5269 9 hb., 0 8047 5270 2 pb.

By the end of the 1970s, Jean-Luc Nancy had already acquired a reputation as a brilliant deconstructive critic of classical philosophical texts. His books included an anti-foundationalist reading of Kant and a critique of Descartes, which argued that the criteria of clarity and distinction could apply only to thinking what was thought rather than to the process of thinking *thinking per se*. Following closely in Derrida's footsteps and working with his Strasbourg colleague Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Nancy included among his other early targets the German Romantics and Lacan. In the 1980s Nancy began to exceed the genres of criticism or commentary, as he started to develop a systematic account of existence after the end of essence, and of meaning after the end of any original or ultimate 'Meaning'. Over the past fifteen years or so Nancy has refined and extended this account to cover a vast range

of topics, including politics, community, freedom, literature, art, technology, ethics and Christianity.

The fundamental move that informs Nancy's approach to all these topics is a straightforwardly Heideggerian distinction between beings and being, or between *what* any presentable entity happens to be and its active *being* or 'presenting' as such. On the one hand there is the presented and thus describable entity or thing; on the other hand there is the process of its coming into presence, its being 'born to presence', which cannot itself be presented or described but only 'sensed' in its very withdrawal from all possible presentation. That is to say, there is whatever is disclosed, and there is the pure event or *Ereignis* of its disclosing as such. Nancy develops an elaborate series of variations on this theme, distinguishing between what is given and its giving, between what happens and its happening, between what is created and its creating, between what is meant and its meaning, between what is embodied and its embodying, between what is touched and its touching, and so on. In line with Heidegger's critique of presence-at-hand (and, more to the point, in line with Derrida's famous critique of Heidegger as himself compromised by the thematics of presence and proximity) he relentlessly tracks down any attempt to confuse one set of terms with the other. A presenting or 'presencing' makes present but is not itself presentable. A presenting comes to presence but *has* no presence; it is radically 'finite' in the sense that it can never (unlike Hegel's metaphysical infinite) complete, ground or encompass itself.

Nothing can be presented of a presenting as such, and, in particular, no presenting can present itself. This is the basic argument that emerges from most of Nancy's work, and that continues to inform both its critical and affirmative priorities. Negatively, it lies behind his critique of myth, conventional theology, communitarianism, philosophies of the subject, and so on, as so many deluded efforts to enable a presenting to present (and thus define, authorize, ground, establish) itself. Affirmatively, it has allowed him to develop perhaps the most sophisticated and congenial post-Heideggerian ontology of his generation. Since a presenting cannot present itself but only its lack of coincidence with itself, so then this account of finite or incomplete being is also an ontology of being conceived as being-*with* that which is other than itself; *Mitsein* can thus be acknowledged as the most basic existential dimension of being as such. Since presentings only present together, since they *are* only in common, Heidegger's fateful distinction between the exceptional and the everyday, between the proper

and the improper, between enowning and disowning, between *eigentlich* and *uneigentlich*, drops out of the picture, along with its disastrous political implications. Since the common world or shared space of presentings presents all that can be presented, without nostalgia for any original or self-sufficient presence, Heidegger's reactionary critique of technology and modernity can likewise be abandoned as apparently extrinsic to his own essential ontological concerns.

In his *Fragmentary Demand*, Ian James provides a thorough and illuminating overview of Nancy's general project. As his title implies, James adopts the motif of fragmentation and plurality as the organizing principle for his book: because it acknowledges no presentable unity or foundation, James presents Nancy's work as a series of shifting meditations on an incongruent plurality of topics. A first chapter considers Nancy's long-standing critique of the subject (the modern paradigm of a presenting that seeks to present itself). Further chapters then work through his conceptions of space, body, community and art as dimensions of being without essence, dimensions of an existential sharing or being-together in a disparately and elusively everyday world. In line with Nancy's own methodological orientation, James presents these topics 'less as thematic unities and more as a series of singular openings. Each motif is construed as an instance of opening onto, or of exposure to, the sense of Nancy's philosophy, in which philosophy itself is articulated as a series of exposures to the limit of sense.'

As an introductory overview to a major contemporary thinker, James's book is exemplary: the exposition is economical and clear, and combines useful contextual background with sustained sequences of detailed exegesis. James has a real knack for the concise presentation of complex ideas, and draws to good effect on Nancy's own tendency to work closely with and through other thinkers' work. The chapter on subjectivity includes fairly involved discussions of Kant's first critique and Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche, prefaced by an admirably compressed summary of Derrida's 'Structure, Sign and Play'. Later chapters include equally detailed readings of Husserl and the phenomenological conception of space, Merleau-Ponty on embodiment, and Hegel on aesthetics, supplemented by pertinent comparisons with several of Nancy's contemporaries (Henry, Lacoue-Labarthe, Derrida again; Stiegler is a rare omission). James pays particular attention to Nancy's post-phenomenological account of the body and the interface between meaning, touching and writing, arguing that the particular 'strength of Nancy's thought lies in its emphasis on the materiality

of sense and of embodied being-in-the-world as finite spatial existence'.

To my mind James makes about as good a case for Nancy's position as can be made, and it's hardly an exaggeration to say that this book may tell you just about everything you might want to know about Nancy's work. Nevertheless, unless you're already inclined to accept its broadly Heideggerian orientation, it may not make you want to know a great deal more about it. James repeatedly addresses the question as to how far Nancy, in the end, is 'merely' a Heideggerian philosopher, arguing that his insistence on the primacy of *Mitsein* and of sharing or being in *common*, his affirmation of the banal and of the 'inauthentic', his acknowledgement of technology and the originary 'impropriety' of body, and so on, all suffice to distance him from the neo-romantic pathos of *aletheia* and *Ereignis*. It might be more accurate to say that Nancy has extended the same basic logic of *Ereignis*, the same essential difference between a disclosing and the disclosed, to many of those dimensions of experience that Heidegger himself was inclined to abandon as unworthy of thought (many of these dimensions, I should say, though certainly not all: it remains hard to see how this ontology might ground viable accounts of science and mathematics, for instance). Nancy is the thinker who, working on the unquestioned assumption that Heidegger's questions should continue to set the contemporary philosophical agenda, has gone to the greatest lengths to distance this agenda from Heidegger's own most grievous mistakes.

The two most obvious problems that beset this agenda, however, persist more or less unchanged. In the first place, for all James's emphasis on the open, fragmentary and non-totalizable plurality of Nancy's concerns, it's hard to avoid a powerful sense of monotony, closure and *ennui*. The same basic problematic returns again and again in Nancy's rapidly expanding oeuvre, and James's own account does not preserve enough critical distance from his subject to escape a version of this same monotony himself. When he turns to art in his final chapter, for instance, he observes that 'art, in Nancy's thought, exists in, or as, a relation to the world, a relation to shared finite existence, and more specifically to that movement of sense which is, or opens up, world-hood itself in all its singular plurality.' Anyone who has read the previous four chapters will be thoroughly familiar with every word in such a sentence – but isn't this just another way of saying that according to this approach art simply *is* the world? Art is the world in so far as the world is nothing other than its coming into presence – that is, in so far as the

world is itself a synonym for the movement of 'sense', or finitude, or freedom, or community, or being-with, and so on. All these terms operate as little more than variations on the same essential exploration of existence without essence, contributions to one and the same thinking of being which only *is* in its withdrawing from whatever has or will have been. It is far from clear, moreover, how on this basis we might think of art as any sort of 'relation' to the world at all.

In the second place, then, for all Nancy's emphasis on the relational orientation of his ontology, since there can be no relation between a presenting and the presented, between *that* something is and *what* it is, his whole account of relationality remains radically abstract, a simple consequence of this ontology's 'finite' (or non-self-coincident) orientation. His account of the world as an open spacing or sharing precludes any consequential consideration of the relation between how the world is and what the world has been. Nancy encourages us to engage in the world without reference to any 'pre-given realities' and without aligning ourselves with any discernible project, struggle or community. Countering the objections raised by Nancy Fraser and others, James claims that Nancy's call for a 'withdrawal from politics and the concomitant

"retreating of the political" is a deeply engaged gesture that does not intervene or make prescriptive/normative judgements about the present, but that demands that the present be *thought*.'

Let the present be thought, by all means. Rather than help us to think the historical urgency of the present, however, Nancy's great achievement may instead have been to develop new ways of rereading one of the most profoundly compromised thinkers of our recent past. A reformed Heideggerianism promises little critical purchase on the contemporary moment. Suspension of intervention or of prescriptive demands, the dismissal of pre-given realities, an indifference to inherited or cumulative forms of injustice and exploitation, together with an emphasis on fragmentation and deferral, on the undecidable and the indeterminate, and so on – this is precisely the way our present has long preferred to think of itself. It may well be that the suspension of prescriptive judgement has for some time now served above all to allow (what Nancy continues to call) 'the West' to come up with ways of avoiding thinking many of the things that the world itself might otherwise encourage us to think.

Peter Hallward

Face-off

Lars Tønder and Lasse Thomassen eds, *Radical Democracy: Politics between Abundance and Lack*, University of Manchester Press, Manchester, 2005. 288 pp., £55.00 hb., 0 7190 7044 9.

Darrow Schecter, *Beyond Hegemony: Towards a New Philosophy of Political Legitimacy*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2005. 240 pp., £55.00 hb., 0 7190 6088 5.

In a quirk of sloppy copy-editing, one of the contributions to Lars Tønder and Lasse Thomassen's *Radical Democracy* bears the running header 'For an Agnostic Public Sphere' instead of the essay's actual title, which is 'For an Agonistic Public Sphere.' But this confusion between agnosticism and agonism is perhaps symptomatic of the problems afflicting the very concept of radical democracy. For though its proponents repeatedly invoke notions of political combat and engagement, they all too easily slip into quiescent indecision. Put it this way: it is far from clear what is 'radical' about radical democracy behind the rhetorical display of terms such as agonism, antagonism, pluralism, heterogeneity, and the like.

Is radical democracy a specific form of democracy, comparable to but different from (say) its Athenian, liberal, or neoliberal variants? And if so, is it a democracy still to come, to be fought for as a perhaps

utopian horizon of democratic thought and struggle? Or is it, by contrast, a form of democracy in which some groups (new social movements, say) currently engage, in other words a counter-democratic actuality that has emerged since the end of the Cold War and the bad old days of class politics? On the other hand, could radical democracy be found less either in the future or the present, but in a return to the founding moment of the so-called 'democratic revolutions'? Is radical democracy then the rediscovery of a radicalism once inherent to democracy but now lost? In slightly different words, is radical democracy simply another name for what Simon Critchley here terms 'true' democracy? Or finally, is democracy always radical? Is radical democracy really a tautology, in that democracy properly understood and described, even as it is played out currently in the real world, is necessarily in some way radical?

All these possibilities crop up at one point or another in this collection, and often enough several contradictory positions are argued or assumed in more or less the same breath by the same author. To his credit, Ernesto Laclau at least confronts the fact that there are, as he puts it, a 'plurality of ways of radicalisation'. In his version of this plurality, these are: first, the universalization of democratic ideals leading to 'the internal democratisation of liberal institutions'; second, 'the constitution of the "people"' as a 'democratic subjectivity'; and third, a 'radical pluralism' as

by a constitutive lack. Once again, 'radical democracy' comes to be a tautology.

Tønner and Thomassen frame their collection as a kind of face-off between (as their subtitle suggests) theories of lack and theories of abundance – or more strictly, 'the ontological imaginary of abundance and the ontological imaginary of lack'. Essentially this means that the Lacanians confront the Deleuzeans in this version of a political philosophy World Cup. But the Lacanian team are almost without exception made up of players affiliated in some way with

Laclau; there are no Žižekians, for instance, and Žižek himself gets rather a bad rap, not least from Critchley, who somewhat cattily suggests 'One might say, like Slavoj Žižek, pretty much anything you like, as there are so many contradictions in what he has said about politics over the years'. And on the other hand, the Deleuzeans are stymied by the fact that the chosen field of play is radical democracy, a concept so close to the heart of Laclau (and, perhaps even more so, his collaborator Chantal Mouffe) yet so alien to Deleuze. Paul Patton, for instance, pur-



a range of demands from diverse constituencies insist on being heard within the political arena. So radical democracy can be liberal; it can be populist; and it can also be what for want of a better word we could call postmodern. But in themselves neither liberalism nor populism nor indeed postmodernism are necessarily radical – often quite the reverse in terms of, say, their relations to capitalism, minorities, or the prospect of revolutionary change. So, albeit without wanting to lose the notion that these three possibilities are in fact radical in some way, Laclau concludes by arguing that what is truly radical is precisely their mutual incompatibility: '*The undecidable character of this interaction [between liberalism, populism, and postmodernism], the impossibility of conceptually mastering the contingent forms in which it crystallizes, is exactly what we call radical democracy.*' Yet surely this is simply making a virtue out of incoherence. What is more, the normative problem remains: for Laclau these incompatible democratic impulses necessarily intertwine in any politics; politics is therefore always incoherent; while the social is always political because it is always incomplete, in that it is defined

by means of a series of *non sequiturs* that rely mostly on what Deleuze did *not* say about radical (or indeed any other form of) democracy. Hence Patton's contribution is studded with rhetorical questions such as 'does this neglect of political reason in Deleuze's thought justify the charge that he provides an aesthetics or ethics but not properly a theory of politics?' Or, in discussing Deleuze and Guattari's critique of Rorty in *What is Philosophy?*, Patton's argument is based, it seems, on the assumption that Deleuze may have chatted to his friends from time to time:

He is clearly opposed to the idea that the exchange of opinions is a means to create concepts, but not necessarily opposed to the pleasures of conversation as such. Moreover, nothing follows ... about the exchange of opinions or the need for consensus in the political sphere.

Nothing follows; how true.

So we have a rather forced opposition between lack and abundance framed as a debate on the common terrain of radical democracy. Many contributors are keen to problematize the distinction between the two

philosophies allegedly in contention: Tønder and Thomassen themselves admit that 'the distinction between abundance and lack may itself be contestable'; while Nathan Widder convincingly argues that the point is more that a Deleuzian politics has little interest in the failures or otherwise 'of any identity or identification' and so in the pseudo-politics of hegemony. But on the whole the issue of radical democracy, and the desirability of either radicalism or democracy, remains unaddressed. If, after all, 'antagonism is and remains constitutive' in liberal democracy, as Yannis Stavrakakis argues, then surely celebrating this fact would be better described as conservatism? Moreover, though there are many nods towards internationalism, few contributors think beyond the notion of a territorially defined *demos* upon which democracy traditionally rests, and almost without exception all see the state as an immutable feature of political and social organization. For all the excitable proclamations of hope in a radical future, the prevailing sentiment is that summarized by Critchley: 'for good or for ill, let us say for ill, we are stuck with the state, just as we are stuck with capitalism'. In this context radicalism seems to be mostly a matter of trying to get people to be a little nicer to each other, and democracy to depend (in line with some of New Labour's flirtations) on faith groups and the like: 'local meetings, internet campaigns, church organization, film portrayals, celebrity testimonials' and so on in William Connolly's words; the revivalist atmosphere of a 'Rev. Battle' whipping his flock into 'a guttural "love jam" incantation with Corinthians: "LOVE ... LOVE ... LOVE"' in Romand Coles's account. Perhaps even worse, Jon Simons turns to what is surely now the thoroughly discredited cultural populism of cultural studies and its praise for 'consumer agency'.

Still, there are some bright spots here and there. Despite the many kneejerk dismissals of Negri's concept of the multitude (and disparaging Negri and Hardt is clearly as fashionable now as adulating them was some five years or so ago), in fact Critchley's version of the political subject as a 'formless mass' is more multitudinous than he would like to admit, however much he wants to relegate such subjectivity to an 'empty space'; for to say that 'the people are missing' (as Deleuze has it) is not to say that they are some kind of non-entity. And fashioning a more expansive conceptualization of subjectivity and agency is also Jane Bennett's project: drawing on Bruno Latour she offers an 'enchanted materialism' that posits 'multiple sites of agency' in the human and non-human alike; it would certainly be good to cultivate the 'slight surprise

of action' that she takes from Latour rather than the reiterated certainties of hegemony theory otherwise offered by *Radical Democracy*.

Darrow Schecter, by contrast, has so little time for either hegemony or hegemony theory that he hardly stops to define what he means by the term that appears in his title, *Beyond Hegemony*. He suggests, however, that hegemony is a 'fabricated consensus'. It is society's purported reconciliation either (in its liberal variant) by 'transforming the horizontal contract between private trading partners in economic exchange into a vertical contract between citizens and the state' or (in its post-liberal, socialist or social democratic variants) on the basis of legitimacy's trumping legality by positing particular subjects as the bearers of the general will. But in the end, he argues, these two variants are much the same: the problem with those who criticize liberalism, be they partisans of state socialism or civil society democratization, is that they neither go far enough beyond liberalism, nor do they really understand it in the first place. They merely substitute an overt legitimating subject (the proletariat or new social movements, say) for the covert (white, male, property-owning) subject that anchors the traditional liberal ideal. So *encore un effort*, Schecter tells us, if we are really to leave behind liberalism or its hegemonic compromises. Yet abandoning liberalism means also returning to its first impulses, before it became corrupted by its hegemonic pretensions.

For Schecter wants to rescue liberalism from its own disrepute. Rather than remaining content with the familiar observation that liberal universalism is built on particular premises, he argues for a return to the Kantian priority of legality over legitimacy. And so rather than tempering abstract legality with popular demands for legitimacy (this being, as he sees it, the long history of Western democracies passing through universal suffrage and the welfare state), he seeks instead to establish a legitimate legality, which would retain the virtues of universality and objectivity, without being in hock to the subjective needs of an ever wider cast of particularities. The position he stakes out is, then, what he terms a 'critical', 'radical', or even 'materialist' idealism that also, *inter alia*, promises to reconcile humanity with both outer nature, or the system of needs, and inner nature, or the system of the passions. This reconciliation will be instantiated by means of consumer councils and workers' cooperatives, which will further ensure that 'knowing becomes aesthetic and pleasurable rather than instrumental and strategic', leaving instrumental reason behind as an odd relic of a by-then-vanquished age of hegemony.

Schechter's critique of purported post-liberalism, as simply a warmed-over liberalism that conserves the worst rather than the best of what it claims to supersede, is a useful antidote to theories of radical democracy. His analysis of liberalism's paradoxes, while not always novel, is also sharp and to the point. However, he might have considered more the possibility that we are already living in a post-hegemonic age. Bush, Blair, and Co. hardly stir themselves much to fabricate consensus these days – indeed, Blair's main argument for the war in Iraq is now that precisely the unpopularity of his policies is a guarantee that he is not merely bowing to the court of legitimate public opinion. Moreover, is not Schechter's dream of a 'constant exchange of information between producers ... and consumers' not already with us albeit in the form of questionnaires, focus groups, and the information derived from loyalty cards on the one hand, and advertising and the ideologies of business transparency on the other? We are already beyond hegemony, and whatever else radicalism might be, surely it does not involve rescuing liberalism, whether in its purer, idealist, form or in its corrupt, democratizing, incarnations.

Jon Beasley-Murray

Oi – come back!

Werner Bonefeld and Kosmas Psychopedis, eds, *Human Dignity: Social Autonomy and the Critique of Capitalism*, Ashgate, Aldershot and Burlington VT, 2005. 197 pp., £50.00 hb., 0 7546 4468 5.

This book brings together a group of like-minded thinkers to explore the theme of human dignity in opposition to capitalism. In many respects this represents a continuation of the *Open Marxism* series edited by Bonefeld and Psychopedis with Richard Gunn, but with a stronger theme running throughout. These essays are not works of Marxist political economy. They are less concerned with the inner workings of capitalism than its moral costs. Indeed, one could describe it as a kind of Manichaean Marxism, which counterposes the 'humanitarian' values of equality, dignity and autonomy to the alienation, inversion and perversion of these values by an autonomous economic system.

The primary moral assumption underlying this critical enterprise is that human beings comprise self-constituting agents in their own right. In this respect they adopt a Kantian account of 'Man' (as the editors

unfortunately translate the term *Mensch*), grounded in the categorical distinction between: (1) *objects*, which possess no dignity and should be treated as a mere means to an end, and (2) *humans*, which possess intrinsic worth and comprise ends in themselves. In support of this normative stance Bonefeld and Psychopedis declare in the title essay, 'Human Dignity: Social Autonomy and the Critique of Capitalism', that 'Dignity cannot be sold, quantified or conferred. Dignity is a general human value that belongs to each concrete individual. It is an indivisible human value.' This contrasts with a Hegelian–Habermasian approach, which regards autonomy as a historically 'modern' phenomenon that agents intersubjectively confer upon one another. In contrast the authors operate with a *naturalistic* conception of autonomy, which comprises the moral basis of human dignity. This, however, raises two important questions: (1) to what extent does this comprise a valid interpretation of Marx's critique of capitalism, and (2) to what extent does it comprise a valid critique of capitalism. I want to examine each in turn.

The strongest aspect of this collection is its interpretation of Marx. This maintains that the basic structure of Marx's critical enterprise remained unchanged from the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* onwards. This rests upon a 'humanistic' core, which capitalism is condemned for inverting and perverting. In his essay 'Aspects of Marx's Concept of Critique', Hans-George Baukhaus argues that Marx's 'anthropological' critique combines the materialism of Ludwig Feuerbach with the activism of German idealism. In this respect, the notion of fetishism Marx develops in *Capital* represents a continuation of Feuerbach's critique of religion, with the difference that the inversion of subject and object that defines religion is grounded in the inverted (perverted) world of capitalism. According to Baukhaus,

Marx defines all economic 'forms' or 'categories' as 'perverted' forms (*verrückte Formen*). Marx deploys the phrase '*verrückte*' (perverted) forms in its double senses, on the one hand, puzzling, mystical essence, and, on the other hand, as a sphere 'outside Man', displaced and transposed.

Similarly, Helmut Reichelt concludes his essay 'Social Reality as Appearance' by stating that 'Human sensuous practice subsists through its supersensible existence in the autonomization of society as both the object and subject of its perverted (*verrückte*) social practice.

Psychopedis argues in 'Social Critique and the Logic of Revolution' that, for Marx, revolution comprises 'a kind of re-establishment of the sensual essence of the

species through the overcoming of its alienated capitalist form of existence'. Michael A. Lebowitz continues this theme in his short contribution 'Beyond the Muck of Ages', arguing that the task of Marxism is to make workers aware that they create the system which rules over them. In contrast, in 'The Untimely Timeliness of Rosa Luxemburg' Joseph Fracchia departs from this theme in his account of the contemporary significance of Luxemburg's analysis of class struggle. He criticizes Lukács (a little unfairly in my opinion) for treating workers as hopelessly mired in reification, arguing that Luxemburg was right to begin from the everyday experience of the working class. To this end, Fracchia emphasizes the role of struggle 'from below' in constructing a 'workers' public sphere'. That said, his account of the latter does not address the theme of human dignity or alternative conceptions of the 'public sphere' such as Habermas's.

Sergio Tischer's 'Time of Reification and Time of Insubordination' returns to the book's main theme and applies it to the question of time. This takes the form of arguing that 'the revolutionary struggle for human emancipation, for human dignity, has to produce a real alternative to capitalist time'. To this end, he champions a version of Benjamin's 'messianic temporality', which aims to restore the 'social autonomy of Man over his conditions'. This means rejecting the notion of progress, because it thinks the future as a prolongation of the present, in favour of redeeming the past in the present. Tischer calls for a restorative revolution grounded in the 'lost unity' of society. In 'Nationalism and Anti-Semitism in Anti-Globalization Perspective', Bonefeld argues that anti-Semitism comprises 'a senseless barbaric rejection of capitalism that makes anti-capitalism useful for capitalism'. By effectively identifying Jews with the highest level of capital fetishism – the valorization of value without passing through production – Hitler skilfully translated anti-capitalism into anti-Semitism. Bonefeld then warns against mounting a similar critique against the abstract monetary forms of capitalism as somehow independent from and parasitical upon productive capitalism. The danger here is that the anti-globalization movement will support national (industrial) capital over global (financial) capital. To guard against this he argues that the fetish form is intrinsic to capital, just as exploitation is intrinsic to productive accumulation. It follows that the only solution to the rule of capital is democratic self-determination by associated producers, on the understanding that the self-constituting status of capitalism is merely an 'objective delusion', which masks the role of human subjects in its production. Bonefeld

concludes by citing Marx: 'Every emancipation is a *restoration* of the human world and of human relationships to *man (Menschen) himself*'. The final essay in the collection is a short summary of Holloway's much discussed plea to 'Stop Making Capitalism'. It also promotes a 'recuperative' conception of revolution, which returns humanity to its essence, understood as a modality of creative self-determination upon which capitalism is parasitical.

While there is much to recommend this interpretation of Marx, there is unfortunately little attempt to engage with alternative interpretations of Marx's critical enterprise. This is a major omission. In the absence of debate with rival interpretations, the authors fail to establish the validity of their approach. This is particularly true of their account of fetishism. Rethinking fetishism in moral terms has much to recommend it. But this also goes against Marx's self-understanding of his critical enterprise, which eschewed moral in favour of scientific categories. This is symptomatic of a tension in Marx's writings between a scientific and a moral critique of capitalism. Unfortunately, there is insufficient discussion of this tension, or how it might be resolved. Emphasizing the dependence of Marx's critique of capitalism on moral categories is a good start. But merely exchanging a moral for an epistemological objectivism is insufficient to overcome this tension. A moral critique of capitalism grounded in an essentialist conception of humanity raises a number of problems that the authors fail to address. I want to consider three.

First, there is the question of where the 'true' subject of self-constitution resides. Given that capitalism dominates the social landscape, the capacity of human beings to constitute themselves through labour only appears in an alienated guise. As Lebowitz notes: 'Having sold their power to the capitalist, the social productivity of workers necessarily takes the form of the social productivity of capital.' This then renders the true source, substance and subject of capital *invisible* – hence the Rubin School's claim that value-producing labour takes an 'abstract' form under capitalism. But as there is no phenomenological basis for this claim why should we believe it? At best 'abstract labour' comprises a hidden placeholder for a normative critique of capitalism.

Second, there is the related question of how capitalism can be both self-constituting and constituted by human labour. The authors stress – and this is the strongest aspect of their analysis – that capitalism comprises a self-constituting, self-valorizing, self-positing system in its own right. And it is this that

renders capitalism unjust, invalid and immoral. But they also argue that the autonomy of capitalism is merely an 'objective delusion', a mere 'mystification' of the true state of affairs, whereby human beings constitute themselves in an alien guise. In which case, capitalism is not a self-constituting system after all. It only *appears* to be. In reality capitalism comprises an alienated act of self-creation on humanity's part, even though the subject of this act is 'buried' under the system. And yet the appearance of self-constitution on the system's part is also real – hence the 'objectivity' of the putative illusion in question. Herein resides the paradox. This suggests we have reached the limits of an epistemological critique of capitalism – namely, that which counterposes the true, real and factual to the false, illusory and fictional – while failing to advance a fully normative critique that would counterpose the just, valid and ethical to the unjust, invalid and unethical). If we are to overcome this paradox, we need to rethink the normative ground of the critique of capitalism in social and historical terms, rather than the naturalistic and transhistorical terms preferred by the authors. Only Fracchia addresses the role played by working-class struggle in creating an alternative to capitalism. But, as noted above, he does not engage with the naturalistic conception of human dignity that his colleagues find so compelling.

Third, there is the related question of the normative status of self-constitution. Rather than viewing self-constitution as a social practice whereby agents arrive at valid moral rules, the authors view self-constitution as a natural capacity we exercise whether we realize it or not. Given that capitalism usurps this capacity by assuming a self-constituting guise, it follows that it is not only immoral but also illusory. This relieves the authors of the need to establish the validity of their normative standpoint. Having discovered – through a process they do not explain – the essence of humanity, they then claim the authority to speak on its behalf. Anyone that disagrees with them is, by definition, not only guilty of 'anti-humanism' but also the victim of 'false consciousness'. In this way the modern right of agents to constitute intersubjectively their own norms is transformed into an essential capacity from which an objective account of morality is deduced. Needless to say, this represents a perversion of the modern norm of autonomy. Rather than allowing agents to determine their own moral identities, in line with the modern norm of self-constitution, the authors treat the latter as a natural state of affairs from which they deduce an objective morality. This authorizes them to impose their morality upon everyone else, in the name

of what's good for humanity. Indeed, it transforms this 'good' into a universal moral obligation that we all have an objective duty to redeem. To ignore this categorical imperative is to collude in the dehumanization of humanity. Needless to say, from a modern perspective, such an account of morality appears authoritarian. As Charles Taylor has noted, 'any theory based on an antecedent notion of the good as prescribed by nature – is profoundly repugnant. It does not exalt the freedom of the subject as one ought, but rather preempts it.' Having placed Marx's critique of capitalism on a moral foundation, the authors follow Marx in placing morality on a naturalistic one. Like Marx, they can afford to denounce modern norms as 'bourgeois' because they have privileged access to an objective set of moral principles, which are neither conferred upon nor alienable from humanity. But this not only gives



their critical strategy an authoritarian character, it also gives it a conservative one. Rather than aiming to free human beings from the impediments of capitalism, to create their own moral identities, the authors call for the 'restoration' of 'Man to himself', on the grounds that the moral essence of humanity not only pre-dates capitalism but is also usurped by it. The drive to overcome capitalism is then grounded in the moral imperative to bring our alienated social existence *back* into correspondence with our pre-constituted essence. From this perspective, revolution reverses the 'inversion' of capitalism and restores the natural order of things upon which capitalism is secretly parasitic. In short, rather than grounding the critique of capitalism in the struggle of social agents to constitute their own moral identities democratically, the authors ground it in a pre-constituted moral identity to which they have privileged access, having parted the veil of fetishism to discover the true subject of self-constitution at work. Human dignity is 'restored', but only at the cost of reducing human beings to mere means for the realization of objective moral ends of which they are the unconscious bearers.

Bob Cannon

The new holy family

Slavoj Žižek, Eric L. Santner and Kenneth Reinhard, *The Neighbor: Three Inquiries in Political Theology*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 2005. 240 pp., £30.50 hb., £12.00 pb., 0 226 70738 5 hb., 0 226 70739 3 pb.

Carl Schmitt's notion of 'political theology', the idea that central concepts of political thought are secular versions of theological concepts, has been the object of much recent critical work. If the positive critique inspired by such work seeks to eliminate the theological in some properly secular re-foundation of the political, a more malign deconstructive 'tarrying with the theological' – as in the essays here – travels in the opposite direction, attempting to refashion the political around a revived theology, seeing a Derridian unavoidability as the occasion for positive affirmation.

All three essays depart from the notion of the neighbour in Freud's work. For the Freud of the *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, the neighbour is the first 'other' the subject encounters, the locus of satisfaction and resistance to satisfaction. This split is famously emphasized in Lacan's *Ethics* seminar, where the neighbour is the place of the obdurate and obscene Thing, that which lurks in the other and threatens the subject. For the later Freud of *Civilization and Its Discontents*, the neighbour is the object of the impossible injunction 'love thy neighbour as thyself' – the ethical imperative *tout court* – and also the other which is both object of domination and menace of subjugation. The neighbour is thus an essentially transitional site, where the political and ethical emerge and overlap.

Ken Reinhard pursues the notion of the neighbour onto other terrain. He sees a secularized avatar of the theological notion of the neighbour in Adorno's reflections on Kierkegaard's idea of the 'dead neighbour' which maps the impossibility of neighbour–neighbour relations under capital, and Arendt's account of the vanished neighbour of totalitarian society, the mark of the impossibility of the political under the fusion of the social in dictatorship – although it is difficult to see what is theological about this latter, and what constitutes the passage to secularity. More problematically, he sees 'a political theology of the neighbour' as a positive programme, something that would be a supplement to the 'political theology of the sovereign'. This is opaque. What it seems to mean is that where Schmittian sovereignty lies in the power to decide what constitutes the exception, and thus what lies within and outside the law, Reinhard is looking for a space

of contiguity not organized by the logic of inside and outside, nor by the structure of totality and exception that generates it. Rather than abandon the contaminated notion of sovereignty, he identifies it with Freud's primal father and then develop Lacan's readings of the neighbour as object of traumatic encounter, together with his later account of sexualisation, to set this identity against another logic. This is the logic of the neighbour, which as well as being the source of anxiety and threat occupies the space of the feminine within Lacan's account of sexualisation. The neighbour is the site of the non-totalized set of instances, which can only be counted one by one *ad infinitum*: the set that has no signifier and no common denominator. Ontologically, then, the neighbour eludes the logic of totality and confirming exception – the set of masculine subjects according to Lacan – and obeys the logic of Badiou's generic set; that is, it allows for the possibility of the union of entirely disparate sets joining together in unnatural union. The neighbour is the name of the place where love passes into politics, where the rule of 'equality and sameness gives way to the singularity and difference of love'. Reinhard's move is thus to generate from Lacan and Badiou an account of the site of the neighbour as the place of a non-sovereign politics. Now, the use of psychoanalysis to limn the space of an alternative political subjectivity is hardly new. What is difficult to understand here is the status of sovereignty after such a discovery, and more crucially the name of God, which suddenly emerges within the final Borromean knot at the end of Reinhard's article. Here an unanalysed God is a necessary moment, triangulating neighbour and self, jouissance and love, politics and psychoanalysis. Theology with a vengeance.

Santner's essay is explicitly devoted to a 'post-secular thinking' and, as in his recent book *The Psychotheology of Everyday Life*, recasts the work of Benjamin and Freud within the language of Rosenzweig and, now, via Badiou, St Paul. The central concern here is ethical self-relation and the emergence of a 'proper' subject out of the repetitions of creaturely existence. This is accomplished through the miracle – a notion that derives in part from Benjamin's idea of the recognizability of possibility within history, but mostly from Rosenzweig, where it signifies a traumatic event that has a paradoxical structural effect: the miracle shifts the personality to the self. Santner identifies the personality with Freud's drive-destined individual (the individual of repetition) and the self with Badiou's post-evental subject. The individual prior to the event is already engaged in interpretation of an essential lack (Santner borrows from Laplanche here) but the effort

of remaining faithful to the event involves an ethical consistency: drive-destiny becomes metaethical self, personality becomes subject. Crucially, the miracle becomes the site of the break with superegoic attachment, with the social and the sovereign: the miracle breaks with 'mere life' and Schmitt's political theology of sovereignty – 'but using the resources of theology'.

Rozenzweig thus becomes a reinscription of St Paul as understood in Badiou. Badiou's idea of death as an eventual site where new possibilities can emerge is the point at which resurrection can occur, or, in Rozenzweig's terms, where the metaethical self can emerge. The possibility of the new is not guaranteed: something must happen. This transformation of drive-destiny is achieved by way of grace or love, and such love must be understood not as obligatory or sacrificial, but as the infinite dissemination of the capacity for loving the neighbour. Paul of course reduces all commandments to 'Love thy neighbour as thyself' and Badiou glosses this as directed towards the most thing-like element of the other – his drive-destiny. Santner follows Agamben in criticizing Badiou for his universalism, and uses Agamben's account of Paul to argue for a subterranean influence of Paul on Benjamin, but also to argue that it is only now that Paul is legible.

And what positively does Santner take from Agamben's Paul? That Paul's notion of the law allows for a cut into the latter's fantasmatic underside which can, if only momentarily, free us from drive-destiny and repetition, and thus shift us from a fantasy of exception to a proper and exposed relation to the neighbour, who only becomes visible in such a shift. The opening to the neighbour as a consequence of the miracle of grace is inscribed in a law that is not the law of prohibition and enjoyment but of love.

Exposure to the neighbour is the starting point of Žižek's contribution, which I shall deal with in less detail, in part because as ever the components of the text crop up elsewhere – most notably in the new 'book' *The Parallax View* – and between the digressions of the essay, it is not clear how really different his account of the neighbour is from the views outlined above and elsewhere.

Criticizing Butler by way of an attack on 'post-modern' concerns with not being vulnerable, with not being exposed to ethical violence, Žižek outlines the Lacanian typology of the other: the imaginary other of competition and recognition; the symbolic big Other of language and institutions and the real other, the impossible thing at the heart of human existence – ours and the neighbour's. This typology is deployed

in a critique of Levinas, which essentially separates the 'gentrified' other of the face from the abyssal horror of the real other: the encounter with the face, the seeming opening to infinite responsibility, is in fact the avoidance of the encounter with the real other of the neighbour. Again engaging with Agamben, Žižek uses the figure of the *Muselmann* (from the Nazi extermination camps) to draw the limit of Levinas's other, who here is faceless, who cannot say 'Here I am' and thus is the zero-level of the neighbour. This faceless other is just the monstrous 'Thing', and Levinas's face then itself becomes monstrous, inhuman, excessive. The 'Law' is there to keep this monstrosity at a distance, not to gentrify it. Against Levinas, then, love is a moment of cutting into an indifferent multitude, privileging the other against all others. (Oddly, this is Freud's exact legitimation of the impossibility of 'loving my neighbour as myself', though Žižek doesn't mention it). Justice is the memory of all those others, the Third in Žižek's terms. We suspend the hold of the face of the other, and choose the Third, which is always already there behind our responsibility to the other, in fact its condition of possibility. 'The face is the ultimate ethical lure.' Here Žižek defends the Jewish law as that which eliminates the lure of the neighbour to produce him as pure subject. Thus love of the neighbour is the obverse of the law, just as love and law coincide – only differing in the point from which they are viewed. Žižek's Hegelian parallax (how does he do so much with so little?) blithely identifies Christian and Jewish deities and magically eludes once besetting contradictions: *his* tarrying with God looks facile and deeply disingenuous.

Such wholesale restitution of theological motifs is daunting and depressing. The notions of miracle and grace, groundless moments of conversion, turn back to the Augustinian notion of predestination, only now devoid of determination. Some are elected to subjecthood, but the elect are consequences of contingency. The deity is pure indeterminacy, yet determinate. Love and law are mobilized just at the moment where the theory of the subject voids the ground of a coherent politics or ethics, reduced as in Reinhard's case to a decisionism without decision. The form of the neighbour shifts from that of the imaginary other, the *semblable* of liberalism, to be replaced by a notion of the real other revealed by love and law, and held in check by God. *Pace* Žižek, politics is made into ethics again by a curious, revived vanguardism of the spirit, bizarrely in tutelage to a resurrected deity. This does not seem to be a useful direction to follow.

Philip Derbyshire

War Machine

'Undercover Surrealism: Picasso, Miró, Masson and the Vision of Georges Bataille', Hayward Gallery, London, 11 May–30 July 2006

Undercover Surrealism is misleadingly titled. It is actually dedicated to the journal *Documents*, which published fifteen issues between 1929 and 1931 under the de facto editorship of Georges Bataille. For Bataille's friend Michel Leiris *Documents* was a 'war machine against received ideas', and this hostility extended to the 'received' avant-garde of surrealism. Against what Bataille saw as the surrealists' surreptitious and servile idealism, he used the journal to articulate his own anti-theory of base materialism: a materialism of all that was disgusting, repulsive and allergic to reason. To describe this as surrealism ('undercover' or otherwise) seems to be stretching matters, as does the placing of Picasso, Miró and Masson in the exhibition's title. There is no doubt that Bataille's thinking developed in close proximity to surrealism and that, post-1945, he came express more sympathy with it. However, in this journal, his aim was to pull surrealism down into the dirt.

Bataille still lacks the popularity – the 'brand recognition' – of mainstream surrealism, and remains a minor figure. But the minor writer, lacking the means of the major discourse, takes up what they have as a weapon. In Bataille's case, *Documents* became that weapon. The journal itself involved a highly unstable combination of traditional scholars, dissident surrealists, and ethnographers. Its subtitle – 'Doctrines (changed from issue 4 to 'Variety'), Archaeology, Fine Arts, Ethnography' – indicates, and tries to bridge, the evident tensions. Bataille's role, unsurprisingly, was a provocative one, shifting the journal towards his own concerns – or, as some would regard them, obsessions. The journal used a practice of radical juxtaposition, between image and text, and between different texts and different images within each issue.

The intention of this exhibition is to re-create something of that experience and the questioning it provokes – particularly as articulated around the nature of resemblance. It provides a kind of simulation of *Documents*, realizing what existed in the pages of a magazine in the physical space of the gallery. To do so it uses what is now high modernist art, ethnographic objects, popular culture, music, cinema and photographs, as featured in the journal and arranged in terms of key ideas and strategies (such as 'Crime', 'Sacrifice', 'Cinema').

Why Bataille now? One obvious reason, identified in the catalogue, is the influence of the recent work of Rosalind Krauss and Yve-Alain Bois on Bataille's concept of *l'informe* (formless), and of the exhibition *l'Informe: Mode d'emploi* held at the Centre Pompidou in 1997. This concept, or, better, anti-concept, was developed by Bataille in *Documents* as part of the 'Critical Dictionary' project. In its adoption by Krauss and Bois, 'formless' operates as a means of locating Bataille's solvent effect on the category of form, and of opening a new understanding of contemporary artistic practices that work at its limits. Simon Baker takes up this proposal in the catalogue as the means to articulate the disruptive arrangement of objects, texts and images that make up this exhibition, which, he argues, undo resemblance.

Does the exhibition reproduce these 'glitches' (Baker's word) in representation? At times yes, but more often no. So, in placing in sequence Boiffard's photograph of a big toe, Dalí's 'Female Bathers' (1928), and then an anonymous anamorphic painting of 'Saint Antony of Padua and the Infant Jesus', we are brought up short by the 'play' of resemblances. Appropriately, considering Bataille's own antagonistic relationship to Catholicism, this arrangement has a blasphemous effect, although rather attenuated for a non-believer. This effect of the glitch or disruption of representation is not sustained throughout, and it is difficult to feel the force

of the subversive nature of Bataille's vision in relation to surrealism. One reason for this is doubtless our familiarity with the kind of avant-garde 'moves' being made here. However, as Adrian Searle noted in his review in the *Guardian* (11 May 2006), Elie Lotar's photographs of the abattoir at La Villette are the exception. Of these black-and-white photographs I would single out the image of the spilled guts of an animal, which form an eerily abstract 'sculpture' on the slaughterhouse floor.

Another reason for the lack of affect might be a conceptual problem with the organization of the objects and images displayed. The wall text that opens the exhibition suggests that '*Documents* placed everything on a level playing-field'. This suggests a rather conventional postmodern strategy, and risks obscuring the original intent of the journal. Bataille's strategy was not one of equalization; what mattered for him was the effect of shock or rupture brought about by bringing the high and low into contact. This is a delicate, even dialectical, strategy that involves retaining the categories of high and low in order to reverse and destabilize them. It also bears close comparison with what Derrida called the general strategy of deconstruction: the reversal of a hierarchical binary and its reinscription through an unstable term. For Bataille this term was 'base materialism', which overturned idealism at the same time as refusing the supposed inertness of 'matter'. In fact Bataille saw this base or raw materialism as being in close dialogue with Freud's psychoanalysis, freed of its attachments to structure, order and normalization. The difficulty for this strategy, and for the exhibition, is retaining this sense of rupture and shock in relation to what seems to be a levelling of value. Perhaps the curatorial sobriety of this exhibition (under the direction of Dawn Ades, Fiona Bradley and Simon Baker) is actually closer in spirit to Bataille's careful, although also anguished, probing of this evasive and ambivalent 'base matter'.

The exhibition's refusal to draw direct links between Bataille, *Documents* and contemporary art shows understandable, and admirable, reticence. This leaves the question, raised by Dawn Ades and Fiona Bradley: what is the 'active force' of *Documents*? It would not be difficult to detect the influence, even the dominance, of the strategies of *Documents* in recent art: the artist as cultural anthropologist, the conceptual tension between text and image, the abject, the transgressive, and so on. But this dominance leads to a sense of enervation rather than force. The effect may partly be the result of the exhibition space itself, with little energy being generated by the contrast between the modernist brutalism of the South Bank and the 'dirty' modernism of *Documents*. Instead I would suggest that the 'war machine' of *Documents* finds its active force in work like that of the Manchester-based publishers Savoy. Influenced by Bataille, and defiantly at the margins of cultural production, the writers and artists of Savoy work over the effect of base materialism through their own bringing of high and low culture into a space where they clash. Much of their work is in the comic book form, which remains, especially in the UK, the 'low Other' of cultural production.

Documents operated with all the elements that were heterogeneous to accepted culture, but brought them firmly within the institution of the art journal. Similarly, practitioners like Savoy use the elements that remain heterogeneous in British culture: anti-Semitism, high modernist experimentation, fantasy literature, the occluded subversive effect of early rock'n'roll, and so on. In both cases an effect of anxiety is produced, which might well be the mark of an 'active force', through the interaction of text and image. One of the many questions raised by this exhibition is what type of 'objects' cause this effect of anxiety? This raises the problem of what Bataille would have called the 'use-value' of the strategies of *Documents*, and their repetition in this exhibition context. We should remember that for Bataille the proletariat was also constituted as base matter, appearing to the bourgeois gaze as 'hairy sexual organs'. Considering the affect of anxiety that continues to surround the proletariat, especially in their 'lumpen' forms, the cultural politics of *Documents* might still offer a site where the valence of such images and anxieties can be opened to new reversals and displacements – rather than serving the phobic discourses of cultural power.

Benjamin Noys