

**Editorial collective**

David Cunningham, Howard Feather,  
Peter Hallward, Esther Leslie, Kevin  
Magill, Stewart Martin, Mark Neocleous,  
Peter Osborne, Stella Sandford

**Contributors**

**Étienne Balibar** is Professeur émérite at the Université de Paris X–Nanterre and Distinguished Professor of Humanities, University of California–Irvine. His most recent book in English is *We, The People of Europe? Reflections on Transnational Citizenship* (Princeton University Press, 2004)

**Jean-Marc Lévy-Leblond** is Professeur émérite at the Université de Nice–Sophia Antipolis and editor of the journal *Alliage*.

**James C. Ross** teaches in the Department of Political Science, Colorado State University.

**Andrew McGettigan** works at the University of Westminster and Central Saint Martin's College of Art and Design. In *One Reason to Live* (Errant Bodies, Los Angeles and Copenhagen, 2006) he discusses the schneider TM/kpt.michigan cover of the Smiths' *There Is a Light...*

**Kathleen Lennon** teaches philosophy at the University of Hull. She is co-author of *Theorizing Gender* (Polity Press, 2002) and *The World, The Flesh and The Subject* (Edinburgh University Press, 2005). She is currently writing a book on Imagination and the Imaginary.

**Daniel W. Smith** teaches philosophy at Purdue University, Indiana. He is currently a Leverhulme Visiting Fellow in the Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy, Middlesex University.

Copied and typeset by illuminati  
www.illuminatibooks.co.uk

Production and layout by Peter Osborne and  
Stewart Martin

Printed by Russell Press, Russell House,  
Bulwell Lane, Basford, Nottingham NG6 0BT

**Bookshop distribution**

UK: Central Books,  
115 Wallis Road, London E9 5LN  
Tel: 020 8986 4854

USA: Ubiquity Distributors Inc., 607 Degraw  
Street, Brooklyn, New York 11217  
Tel: 718 875 5491

**Cover:** Andrew Fisher, *Dual Timer Scan*, 2006

Published by Radical Philosophy Ltd.  
www.radicalphilosophy.com

© Radical Philosophy Ltd

**COMMENTARY**

A Mediterranean Way for Peace in Israel–Palestine?

**Étienne Balibar and Jean-Marc Lévy-Leblond**..... 2

Datamigrants: Biometrics and the Global Security Complex

**James C. Ross** ..... 9

**ARTICLES**

The Philosopher's Fear of Alterity: Levinas, Europe and  
Humanities 'without Sacred History'

**Andrew McGettigan**..... 15

Making Life Livable: Transsexuality and Bodily Transformation

**Kathleen Lennon** ..... 26

Inside Out: Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus Papers*

**Daniel W. Smith** ..... 35

**REVIEWS**

David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*

**Iain Boal and Michael Watts**..... 40

Katerina Deligiorgi, *Kant and the Culture of Enlightenment*

Elisabeth Ellis, *Kant's Politics: Provisional Theory in an Uncertain World*

Paul Saurette, *The Kantian Imperative: Humiliation, Common Sense, Politics*

**Kimberly Hutchings**..... 45

Esther Leslie, *Synthetic Worlds: Nature, Art and the Chemical Industry*

**Crystal Bartolovich**..... 48

Michel Kail, *Simone de Beauvoir: philosophe*

**Stella Sandford**..... 51

Stephen Zepke, *Art as Abstract Machine: Aesthetics and Ontology in  
Deleuze and Guattari*

**Garin Dowd**..... 53

**OBITUARY**

Iris Marion Young, 1949–2006

**Meena Dhanda**..... 55

# A Mediterranean way for peace in Israel–Palestine?

Étienne Balibar and Jean-Marc Lévy-Leblond

A state's origins do not determine its destiny, which always opens on to various possible histories even though some of them – depending on the circumstances – seem after the event to have been more likely than others. And yet the way events pile up, the dominant interpretation of them, the decisions that are taken (or not taken) year after year, the interplay of interests and the ideologies they crystallize, do sometimes trace what looks like a tragic fatality. It then requires a huge imaginative effort, and the support of the energy of despair, to see the outcome as anything but a catastrophe.

The State of Israel is the product of a combination of two movements characteristic of the nineteenth century and taken to extremes by the twentieth, with specific features of its own. Zionism was originally a combination of a typically nationalist phenomenon (a cultural and political project elaborated by sections of the oppressed Jewish communities of Central and Eastern Europe) and European colonialism. It allowed pioneer communities to settle in Palestine and to combine the egalitarian socialist utopia with the messianic dream of a 'return' to the Land of the Bible. These communities of Zionist Jews (collectively known as the *Yishuv*) and the political leadership they evolved then became a pawn in the 'Great Game' the British Empire was playing in the Arab world as it encouraged in turn different ethnic groups, dynasties and religions in order to dominate this strategic region and its immense oil wealth. The Balfour Declaration of 1917, which promised that a 'national home for the Jewish people' would be established in Palestine, was just one moment in this policy, which used the Zionists in the same way as it used other groups. The Zionists also succeeded, however, in using it for their own ends.

This does not, however, explain the problems that are now raised by the existence and policies of Israel or, more importantly, the problems facing its citizens. Everything changed after the Second World War, which left the British Empire weakened and forced hundreds of thousands of those who had survived the Nazi persecution to settle in Palestine. This gave a new moral legitimacy to the State of Israel, brought into being by the 'partition' of 1947 that was sanctioned by the almost universal international recognition given to Israel and its admission to the United Nations. The fact remains that the state which proclaimed itself to be a 'Jewish State' (despite the presence within it of a sizeable Muslim and Christian minority) and which assigned itself the mission of bringing together on its soil as many Jews – religious and secular – from all over the world (including recent immigrants and Jews who had long been assimilated into their respective countries and who are therefore very diverse in cultural terms, and who

had suffered, in some cases, from very different degrees of anti-Semitism) was born of war and even terrorism. This was due to both the irreducible hostility of the surrounding Arab states (at least until President Sadat's initiative), which were encouraged by their own nationalism and by the rise of pan-Arabism to reject the creation of Israel in Palestine or to demand its destruction, and to Israel's symmetrical intention, which was more or less openly stated, to expel the native Arab population. The words that were later attributed to Golda Meir ('a land without people for a people without land'), which were quite out of step with reality, led to an eliminationist logic. Certain intellectuals, such as Einstein, Buber, Arendt and Judah Magnes (who founded the Hebrew University of Jerusalem) warned against this from the outset, and it contained the seeds of elements of the present catastrophe.

The wars that lasted from the 1950s to the 1990s (some defensive and others offensive, including the first invasion of Lebanon in 1982) cannot be summarized here. But they led to a profound militarization of both social life and Israel's politicians and exacerbated its tendency to see political questions solely in terms of relations of force. Although it has one of the most powerful armies in the world and is equipped with the whole panoply of modern weapons – from helicopter-borne 'smart' missiles to nuclear bombs – and is as capable of targeting Palestinian militants as they lie in bed as it is of intervening thousands of kilometres away (as we have seen in Africa in particular), the State of Israel describes every conflict with its neighbours as a matter of life and death. This has played an important role in the gradual instrumentalization of the memory of the Shoah, which Israel has used to cement national unity, to silence criticisms from Jewish communities all over the world, and to claim to have special 'rights' in international relations, even if it does mean undermining one of the bases of its legitimacy.

More importantly, the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and the annexation of East Jerusalem after the (preventive) Six Day War, together with the two 'Intifadas' that followed, represented a second turning point. Far from representing an inversion of the logic of confrontation, the Oslo Agreements of 1993, which established the Palestinian Authority and looked forward to the establishment of two states on the former Mandate territory (78 per cent of which is currently officially in Israel's possession), were exploited in order to accelerate colonization and to reinforce the status quo. With hindsight, they look like a tactical moment within the conquest of a 'Greater Israel' and subsequent expropriations (including the building of the West Bank wall) are eloquent testimony to Israel's intentions. Under Yasser Arafat's leadership, the PLO was certainly not innocent of duplicity, not least because of the material advantages it derived from its delegated 'management' of the occupied territories. And it was only in 1988 that the articles of its founding Charter calling for the destruction of Israel were officially abrogated. For their part, certain Israeli leaders (like Yitzhak Rabin, who paid for it with his life) did appear to want to remove the great obstacle to any settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute: namely, the stubborn refusal to talk to their enemies on an equal footing and to acknowledge their equal right to land, water, frontiers, security and internal recognition. But actions speak louder than words, and most of what has been said – regardless of the complexion of the government of the day – has served to emphasize further the colonial character of the State of Israel. The expression and pretext of 'unilateral withdrawal' now make this unambiguously clear. The Zionist state has developed an enviable form of political democracy (a parliamentary system, constitutional guarantees, freedom of opinion) and has, despite great social inequalities, achieved a high level of economic and cultural success (thanks in part to massive and permanent US aid on a scale that no other country has ever enjoyed). But in the various territories it controls it has established a form of apartheid (or what the geographer Oren Yiftachel calls 'ethnocracy') whose condition of existence is the confinement of the populations under its domination, control over their material resources and the

gradual destruction of their health and educational institutions, murderous violence against even non-violent resistance activity and their autonomous political leadership.

What, then, are we to make of the forms taken by the demand for the independence of the Palestinian nation? Idealizing them is out of the question, but we cannot overlook the conditions created by the crushingly disproportionate relations of force. This is especially true when it comes to the use of terrorism (defined in the strict sense of indiscriminate violence against civilian populations) and the tactic of using suicide bombers in particular, which has been adopted by groups of both secular and religious partisans and which was dramatically expanded during the 'Second Intifada'. We are among those who, like much of Palestinian civil society, and intellectuals and leaders such as Edward Said and Mustapha Barghouti, consider such actions morally unjustifiable, destructive and counterproductive, but we are hardly in the best position to denounce them. Those who practise mass terrorism with superior means constantly fuel them. They cannot, in any case, provide the only grid for a reading of Palestinian realities.

### **Imagining past the point of no return**

There is no such thing as a Palestinian state today (and the prospect of there being one looks further and further away), but there is certainly a Palestinian nation and it is an irreducible fact. The contemporary tragedy still revolves around the recognition and denial of that fact, even though this tends gradually to escape the notice of its protagonists. The Palestinian nation's roots go back to before 1948, and even 1920. And yet it has become aware of its own singularity and has outlined a political project only as a result of the process of dismemberment it suffered at the time of the *naqbah*. The Palestinian national consciousness is therefore indissociable from the fact that the Palestinian nation has been shattered and dispersed into at least three components. Israeli Palestinians ('Arabs') make up about 20 per cent of the state's population and have been granted the right to vote and partial civil rights but suffer social, cultural and symbolic discrimination (if only because Israel is defined as a 'Jewish State'). The inhabitants of Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem are subject to various forms of banishment, occupation and control. Then there are the refugees in the camps of the Middle East and, further afield, in the diaspora. The categories themselves are not watertight, since Gaza might be likened to a vast camp – perhaps the biggest in history – and the inhabitants of East Jerusalem became 'Israeli Arabs' when the whole of the city was annexed, even though they were not actually accorded that status.

The only way this shattered nation can survive is to go on hoping that it can be reunified and that its rights will be recognized, and through organized resistance. But it is divided, along lines that change over time, between the juridical status and material interests of its various component elements, and between collective identifications derived from secular nationalism in some cases and religious populism in others, not forgetting the cosmopolitical dimension that developed during the years of exile and against the common backdrop of the multiculturalism of the eastern Mediterranean. It is therefore all the more remarkable that the Palestinians have more or less succeeded in limiting their internal conflicts and in pulling back from the brink of the civil wars into which various parties wanted to drag them. Witness the recent agreement reached between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority on the basis of the 'prisoners document'. Constantly oscillating between the temptation to fall back on its own forces and the hope that public opinion and international institutions will turn in its favour, the Palestinian nation has to face up to two problems, each almost as insoluble as the other: one concerning its relations with the Arab and Muslim world, and the other concerning the future of its relations with Israel.

Palestinians are, of course, part of the 'Arab world'. They expect it to be their primary source of material solidarity and political support, but it is also the Arab

world that has dealt them some of their heaviest blows, especially when they appeared to be in a position to influence the evolution of certain of its states from within. The 'Palestinian cause' has crystallized emotions and hopes for revenge on successive imperialisms. It has served as a revolutionary example and has inspired long-term internationalism even outside the region. It has also encouraged the development of a previously limited mass anti-Judaism in the land of Islam, and has fuelled many 'proxy struggles' which compensate in the imaginery for collective impotence. And it has been used from the outset by Arab states, both at home, where it provides an outlet for anger fuelled by corruption, the absence of public freedoms and social injustice, and abroad, where it is a card that can be played in rivalries between the states of the Middle East or as an argument to be used in their negotiations and confrontations with the great powers that are fighting for hegemony in the region. This is why the independence of Palestinian organizations has always come under threat. From that point of view, it seems that the contemporary period is characterized by an increase rather than a decrease of their independence, as the elections in the Occupied Territories demonstrated (even though part of the Hamas leadership is in Damascus). Things may change if Israeli repression makes the situation in Palestine untenable and if the Middle Eastern struggle against Western imperialism (essentially American imperialism, of which the Israeli occupation is seen as an integral part) intensifies and is united by a single trans-national religious ideology. That, however, seems unlikely.

There is a symmetrical problem concerning relations with Israel, in the long term if not in the short run. It is, however, of a very different kind. Would the destruction of the State of Israel be in the Palestinian interest? The answer is probably 'yes' as the destruction of its masters is in the interest of any oppressed people, and all the more so in that the forces in favour of an equal settlement are now in a smaller minority than ever, and in that the international community has obviously given up trying to impose any such solution – even in the forms envisaged at Camp David and Taba (which were still unsatisfactory given that they had nothing to say about the condition of the 'Israeli Arabs' and did not restore the balance between the Israeli 'law of return' and the Palestinian refugees' 'right to return'). But would the destruction of Israel, which would inevitably take the form of reciprocal massacres and the displacement of populations, resolve the problems of the future of the Palestinian nation, even assuming that the balance of power makes it possible one day? Nothing could be less certain, primarily because half a century of the existence and development of Israel has, in practice, succeeded in erasing what was once the old Palestine (and even its landscape) and has revolutionized the region's economy by contributing to a capitalist development from which Palestinians are excluded but on which they are also dependent. The odds are that this dependency would simply be replaced by dependency on the development of oil-rich and/or militarized Arab states. What Palestinians need is not the destruction of Israel, but its transformation. It is true that this would have to mean a radical, and therefore perhaps even more unlikely, transformation, as it would involve a radical decolonization, a renunciation of the unilateralist tradition and the abuse of force. The Israeli nation and its historical consciousness would have to undergo a profound transformation if the two peoples that now live in Palestine are to discover new constitutional forms of economic and cultural harmony that will – at last – allow them political equality under the auspices of an effective international authority that can guarantee their security.

We are now further away than ever from realizing the preconditions for such a solution, or from any intermediate perspective that might facilitate a new 'peace process' based upon negotiations between the parties involved. It may even seem that they have gone for ever and that the situation is slipping towards the point of no return. This is because the specificity of the Israeli-Palestinian problem is being dissolved into a much broader conflict. Its contours are still unclear, but it is becoming increasingly violent and increas-

ingly beyond the control of its actors: the United States and its various allies (which display varying degrees of reliability), on the one hand, and the anti-American states and 'fundamentalist' Islamic movements, on the other. Many people therefore take the view that the Israeli–Palestinian problem must be resolved as a matter of urgency by finally bringing the required pressure and means to bear in order to defuse this coming 'Clash of Civilizations'. But is there enough time? And who is going to resolve the problem?

### **A council of the sea**

Exporting a 'democracy' modelled on and designed for the West, and using force to mould a 'New Middle East', are no more than neoconservative fantasies, but they are murderous fantasies. Using the greatest ever terrorist attack on the United States as a pretext, and to cover up what is in fact an attempt to establish a more or less guaranteed imperial hegemony, the Bush administration's interventions have already succeeded in transforming Afghanistan and Iraq into theatres of war and terrorism, with no foreseeable end in sight. One day, we will learn how the decision to launch the Israeli intervention that has been destroying Lebanon was taken, but it is unlikely to have been taken without the green light from the United States. In any case, it enjoys American support and is part of the global strategy of a 'war on terror'. The enemies of the United States, for their part, are not willing to be left behind. Playing with fire and well aware of the growing difficulties the former 'hyperpower' is facing, they believe that it is very much in their interest to create more flashpoints. Some wish to re-establish the caliphate; others want to be the dominant power in the Middle East. But it is not bin Laden who is inspiring or manipulating Hamas. Syria and Iran are rearming Hezbollah in order to re-establish their regional influence in the same way that Israel armed and used the Phalange, but they are not al-Qaeda. Only when the national and theological conflicts that are tearing the Arab and Muslim world apart are a thing of the past will it be possible to say that politics has finally acquired a new legitimacy in the region. But both the crusade against the 'axis of evil' and the renewed calls for the elimination of the 'Zionist entity' and for jihad are still tearing the Arab world apart. It is obvious for all to see that Bush and Ahmadinejad need each other and that the rhetoric of one is modelled on the rhetoric of the other.

It is obvious that by opening up a third front in Lebanon after making a new and violent intervention in Gaza, by launching 'total war' operations that affect mainly the civilian population and at the same time demonstrating that its army is ineffective against a guerrilla movement, Israel has embarked on an era that does not bode well, either for Israel or for its neighbours. The United States is beginning to learn the same lesson. Israel's policies are making a peaceful settlement with the Palestinians and with the countries of the Middle East as a whole an ever more distant possibility. It is putting its own existence into jeopardy in a way that it has never done before.

We have, then, reached a strategic turning point in this violent history. There is no avoiding the consequences. In the long term, the United States' neo-imperial enterprise will end in failure, if it has not already done so, but when the USA does withdraw it will leave behind a field of ruins, heavily armed and fanaticized enemies, and populations that defy or hate anything to do with the 'West'. In an environment that will be more hostile than ever, Israel will survive only by keeping its own citizens in a permanent state of mobilization, by building more and more internal fortifications, by creating 'buffer zones' that have been razed to the ground to prevent guerrilla forces from using them as bases, and by launching massive 'deterrence' operations – perhaps nuclear – against the states of the region. It may take ten, twenty or even fifty years for the collapse to come, but it is likely that the Palestinian and Lebanese nations will suffer irretrievable damage in the meantime. It is impossible to calculate the precise timetable, but the spiral is inexorable and the outcome is being decided now.

What can be done against an inevitability that is being promoted by human beings, ideologies, the interests of power and political systems, now that, having let slip the opportunity to intervene on the side of the poorest, we have gone beyond a state of emergency and everything seems to have been decided in advance? The question is all the more acute for Europe in that it does not concern events that are taking place far away and that have hypothetical implications. They are part of Europe's history. Neighbourhood relations, exchanges of population, economic and cultural interests, and both past and present responsibilities (starting with colonial expansion and then the extermination of the Jews of Europe, which made it possible to implement the Zionist project) all mean that Europe is deeply involved. It is at the time when the difficulties and the common danger are greatest that we have to make a huge imaginative effort and find the will to reverse the course of events, and therefore to see them for what they really are.

Given Israel's increased militarism and its 'response' to resistance activity that does sometimes take the form of terrorism – and its response is not merely 'disproportionate', as the saying goes; it takes the suicidal form of actual war crimes – Europe cannot afford to be complacent or to go on ruminating about its bad conscience. On the contrary, it must bring to bear all the pressures and convictions at its disposal. Those measures may have to include a suspension of privileged cooperation agreements that bind it to Israel – their moral clauses have obviously been breached – as well as a demand for a withdrawal from all the territories that were occupied in 1967. If need be, Europe must act unilaterally and defy the will and the stalling tactical manoeuvres of those governments that are most directly in thrall to the United States. It must at all events clearly distance itself from the United States for so long as American policy remains dominated by the same theologico-imperial forces. Above all, it must, to the extent that it can do so, reformulate international policies on the basis of right as well as actual



historical situations. Which means, in very concrete terms, recognizing the democratically elected representatives of the Palestinian people and demanding once more – by going to the General Assembly, if need be – the implementation of all UN resolutions concerning Palestine and the Middle East. It means a commitment to giving the UN real authority; at the moment the secretary general of the Human Rights Commission is preaching in the desert. Even if there is reason to think that there is a need for a reform of the international organization, we must first reverse the downward spiral in the realm of law and collective security that began with the invasion of Iraq and that is dragging the UN towards the same bankruptcy that destroyed the League of Nations.

Europe must, finally, deliberately work towards the construction of a Mediterranean space for

cooperation and negotiation in the form of a permanent regional ‘council’ or ‘conference’ of all the peoples of the Mediterranean. The United States and Russia could enjoy observer status, as could Iran or Iraq, but its ‘natural’ members are those countries bordering the sea they share and whose history they have made: from Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Israel-Palestine and Egypt in the East, to Tunisia, Morocco and Spain in the West. Such a space is by definition heterogeneous: it is multicultural, multiconfessional, politically diverse and torn between conflicting economic and demographic interests. It does not provide a guarantee of peace. But it does provide the only antidote imaginable to the logic of the current situation, and the only thing that can force fundamentalism, post-colonial racism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia into retreat. The establishment of a Mediterranean political space would finally allow Israel to abandon its exclusive dependency on the United States and bring it close to the countries of the North and the South, which are after all where most of its population comes from. At the same time, it would allow the Palestinians and Lebanese to escape an over-restrictive and exclusive relationship with the Arab world. In the long term, such a space could guarantee Israel’s collective security in exchange for a historic mutation on its part. It would restore Palestinian (and Lebanese) faith that law and negotiations can satisfy their demands for equality, independence and justice.

‘Must’ is of course to be read as meaning ‘should’, if we wish to avoid the worst of all outcomes. But do we really want that? This is a question not just for governments, but for all of us.

**Translated by David Macey**

A shorter version of this article appeared in *Le Monde* on 19 August 2006. The Appeal of the EuroMed Non-Governmental Platform to the European Union and its Euro-Mediterranean Partners was published on 9 August 2006 ([www.euromedforum.org/](http://www.euromedforum.org/)).

## radical philosophy conference

# materials + materialisms

London, 12 May 2007

### plenary speakers

**Iain Boal** (Retort, California)

**The Matter of Knowledge**

**Isabelle Stengers** (Free University of Brussels)

**Divorcing Materiality from Physicality**

### panels on

After Cultural Materialism

Art and Immaterial Labour

Badiou’s Materialism

Building Materials

Materialities of Sex

Nanotechnology

For further details, email: [D.Cunningham02@westminster.ac.uk](mailto:D.Cunningham02@westminster.ac.uk)



# Datamigrants

## Biometrics and the global security complex

**James C. Ross**

Immigration politics has historically involved talk about whom to include in the body politic, and how to keep the rest out. Modern states, whose sovereign rights assume a monopoly over the legitimate movement of people across borders, have long sought ways to ‘normalize’ the quality, number and integration of immigrants. This primary, state-centred understanding of immigration has changed little over the years, apart from the standards and means that have regulated immigrant selection and exclusion in Western countries. However, state responses to the security gaps exposed on 11 September 2001 capitalized on and reinforced the post-Cold War trend to securitize immigration. Immigration policy, particularly in the USA and EU, has come to reflect the revival of reductionist and exclusionary attitudes that have appropriated the immigrant body into an expanding global security complex.

The reassertion of territorial and symbolic authority over migration flows seemed counter-intuitive in the 1990s, in that liberal states were generally tightening their restrictions against human movement, while simultaneously relaxing barriers to the flows of goods, information, capital and labour. Today, the security context looks markedly different, and there is a remarkable technology that is changing how states control the movement of people. Some advocates have even called it a ‘silver bullet solution’ in the fight against global terrorism. I am referring to biometric surveillance technologies, known generally as biometrics: the public use of which Giorgio Agamben has called ‘biopolitical tattooing’.<sup>1</sup>

State responses to ‘new’ security concerns are generating new political spaces through the confluence of the state with bodily space, where political borders intersect with human bodies. The core Westphalian belief in spatial separation that has traditionally situated subjects *inside* states is being conceptually challenged as states expand their use of information technology and biometric systems. State sovereignty, thought to be withering under the dual forces of fragmentation and globalization, has found a visceral vessel: the human body.

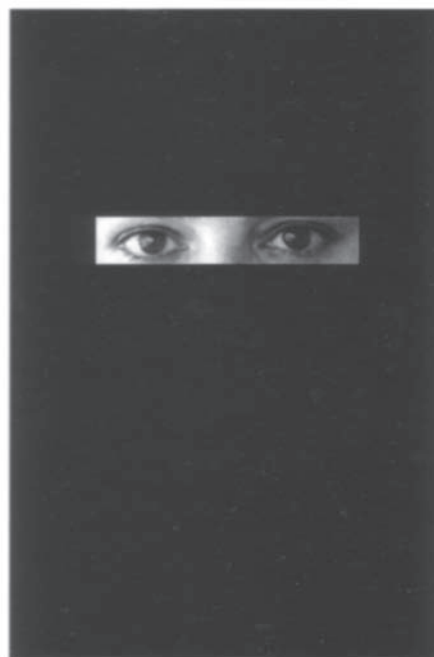
During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, rapid urbanization, high levels of immigration, and growing ghettos of foreign-born populations ripened the conditions for a eugenic platform in the USA that appealed to state action towards the dual ends of racial preservation and population improvement. Just as the American Frontier had represented the line between the settled and the shifty, the pure and the profane, and the civilized and the savage of a maturing political body, immigrant bodies were likewise divided into fit and unfit, superior and inferior, desirable and undesirable. The immigrant body emerged on the scene as a new metaphorical territory to be controlled, conquered and incorporated, or excised and eliminated. Immigrants came to symbolize

the line between the national self and the foreign other, a physical marker, a fleshy reference that delineated domestic from alien bodies.

The old racial eugenics, based on organic and mechanistic body models, fostered a standard of assimilability that used mythical national origins to justify immigrant exclusion. Old ideas of immigrant control pursued the substantive transformation or total exclusion of immigrants based upon measures of their relative desirability and organic assimilability. The so-called ‘melting pot’ was a form of preprocessing – a homogenization of heterogeneous materials – towards the disciplinary ends of conformity and identity. In the United States, the immigrant body was the basis for the adoption of eugenic standards to determine immigrant desirability and promote ‘racial fitness’, eventually leading to the final closure of its ‘Open Door’ immigration policy with the passage of the National Origins Quota Act of 1924. Today, information and biometric technologies seek to individuate immigrant surveillance and significantly widen its scope, opening the way for new forms discriminatory categorization. Through this individuation, the old, visceral imagery of the body politic lingers in the discourses and technologies that are today defining the new bionetwork state.

The most notable metaphorical form of the political body, the *mechanistic body*, was inspired by the technological advances wrought by the Industrial Revolution. The advancement of Newtonian mechanics and a more prominent role for fluid mechanics (steam engines) and assembly-line industrial production in daily life affected how people interpreted and talked about their world. The efficient conversion of raw materials into finished products, what came to be known as mechanical rationalization, arguably prestructured assimilationist thinking and the development of the melting pot idea. By the early twentieth century, an evolving body/machine complex signalled a marked shift in the human–technology interface towards the machine ideal. More recently, out of revolutions in communications and information technology, the *bionetwork body* has emerged. Later metaphorical models do not replace earlier ones. Mechanistic and bionetwork bodies now make the organic political body a more complex, more multidimensional and, above all, more powerful body trope.

Yet something appears altogether different than before. The return of the actual body – albeit in digital form – as a site of state control puts into reverse the abstraction of the state into a metaphorical body of words and images. What we are witnessing in the



Ghazal, *Wanted*, 2006 (details)

new security context is the transubstantiation of the word, the body metaphor, back into the flesh.

Recent trends point to the continued growth of international migration. These flows may be legal or illegal, voluntary or forced. Since the end of the Cold War, the movement of people across international borders has evolved into a high security issue, and states are trying to meet this 'new' security demand with high-tech responses. Mass refugee movements, human trafficking, commercial sex, sophisticated drug cartels, and mobile terrorist cells – to name just a few – have combined to raise the importance of the migration–security nexus, prompting huge public investments in new technologies that link the state to the flesh of its subjects.

Most striking is how quickly the power to observe, monitor and track is being extended, normalized and legitimated in free societies, as new high-tech disciplinary practices move from the margins to the mainstream. The emergence of a bionetwork state incorporating disembodied datamigrants inaugurates a new stage in the evolution and intensification of cybernetic state control. Biometric surveillance represents what James Tully describes as the 'technological absorption of relations of power directly into relations of communications'. This is, he argues, 'the most revolutionary feature of the network age'.<sup>2</sup>

### **A perilous promise**

What are biometrics, and what do they promise? The RAND division of Public Safety and Justice defines biometrics as 'any automatically measurable, robust and distinctive physical characteristic or personal trait that can be used to identify an individual or verify the claimed identity of an individual' ([www.rand.org/publications/DB/DB396/](http://www.rand.org/publications/DB/DB396/)). Biometric systems facilitate the digitization and electronic integration of people by reducing their biological and behavioural features to the lowest common denominator of the information age: bits of data. Rarely brought to public attention, however, are the new forms of classification, profiling and discriminatory categorization that biometric surveillance technologies make possible.

Biometric technologies enable the generation of new political spaces, new social classifications, and new forms of state control. One significant outcome of the marriage between biotechnology and information science is the extension of state control into virtual environments, electronic spaces where immigrants – and increasingly citizens – face new forms of disembodied integration and discriminatory categorization. Currently, biometric systems are chiefly used to identify, verify and classify the identity of a person on the basis of physiological or behavioural characteristics. Some examples of biometrics currently being tested and reviewed by public authorities and the private sector include: iris, retinal and fingerprint scanning devices, facial and voice recognition systems, dynamic signature verification, keystroke dynamics, among others. DNA identification, or the 'genetic fingerprint', is expected to become the quintessential personal identifier in the coming years, because of its easy measurability, robustness and high degree of distinctiveness. Advocates contend that DNA will provide an unambiguous way to link database records with individuals, making radically decentralized data integration possible and, as I argue below, new forms of human profiling and control inevitable.

Biometric systems do promise more reliable ways to identify and verify immigrant bodies to better track or restrict their access to entry, benefits and jobs. Industry advocates highlight lives being saved, lost children being found, and terrorists being stopped. One of the major claims in support of biometric surveillance is that these systems protect privacy by safeguarding one's identity. Identity theft, the argument goes, is a greater threat to individual privacy than the prospect of government or corporate mining of personal information.

The United States and the European Union have been testing, approving and implementing these new technologies for immigration control since the early 1990s. In the United States, the use of large-scale civilian biometric systems was being advocated well before the attacks of 11 September 2001. The Immigration Act of 1996 (PL 104–208) set up various pilot programmes authorizing the establishment and use of national databases and biometric systems to track criminal aliens, verify immigrant employment eligibility, and protect against document fraud. Emerging biometric surveillance systems raised widespread concern across the political spectrum. Orwellian fears about a national identification system and overzealous state intrusions into the lives of individuals were common rhetorical fodder. The attacks, however, would force even the most ardent critics of biometric surveillance to rethink their positions.

### **The USA–Patriot Act**

Today's US policy on biometrics stems from Sec. 403(c) of the USA–Patriot Act (PL 107–56), signed into law just six weeks after the attacks, on 21 October 2001. It specifically directs the federal government to 'develop and certify a technology standard that can be used to verify the identity of persons' applying for or seeking entry into the United States on a US visa 'for the purposes of conducting background checks, confirming identity, and ensuring that a person has not received a visa under a different name'. The US Citizenship and Immigration Services, now under the auspices of the Department of Homeland Security, saw its budget for biometrics soar with the implementation of the US-VISIT Entry–Exit System, mandated by the USA-Patriot Act. US-VISIT uses biometric technology for the officially stated purpose to ensure that borders remain open to legitimate travellers but closed to terrorists. It is currently in place at 115 airports, 14 seaports, and 50 land border crossings across the country. Since US-VISIT came online in January 2004, more than 39 million visitors have been checked through the system, which currently requires non-resident foreign nationals to have their fingers and faces digitally registered upon entry to and exit of the United States.

These developments highlight a new dimension of border control, where the invisibility of 'virtual borders' embedded within data networks combine with the new visibility of biological features of human bodies, thus enabling novel forms of data integration, public surveillance and immigration control. Biometric technologies offer states new options for preventative tracking and restriction to keep 'illegal, criminal, and terrorist aliens' from entering national territories while ensuring the efficient (and traceable) flow of people, goods and services across international borders.

Most disturbing about biometric technologies is their built in 'data surveillance' or 'dataveillance' capabilities. Dataveillance refers to the collection of information about an identifiable individual from multiple public and commercial sources that may be assembled into character or behavioural profiles. Data profiling raises critical issues about the broader classificatory and discriminatory dimensions of biometric surveillance, not unlike those dystopian visions in popular films like *Gattaca* and *Minority Report*.

Furthermore, the widespread deployment of biometric surveillance systems is expected to increase the visibility of individual behaviour. Fears include the use of new forms of circumstantial evidence for criminal prosecution, increasing the possibility of wrongful conviction. Biometrics also makes it possible to match people's behaviour against predetermined patterns to generate suspicion or profile individuals, leading to new types of discriminatory categorization, blackmail and extortion. While some transgressions will undoubtedly be curbed, some prospective terrorists deterred, and some criminals apprehended, it is the law-abiding immigrants and citizens alike who will ultimately pay with their civil liberties and personal autonomy.

This is not only occurring in the United States. As the EU looks for common approaches to transnational issues like migration, crime and terrorism, a range of biometric options have emerged as an integral part of recent policy proposals. Current EU policy builds on the quiet electronic integration that has been taking place among Member States since the adoption of the Schengen Information System (SIS). The SIS system is the 'backbone' of the general agreement to open the EU's internal borders, whose scope is being significantly widened with the implementation of the SIS II, which increases the storage capacity and introduces new technological functions, most notably the broad inclusion of biometrics for the mandatory storage of digitized facial images and fingerprints of third-country nationals and, in the near future, all EU citizens.

Most of these developments and associated concerns about biometric surveillance have all but escaped notice by the citizens of Member States. With Britain rapidly expanding its global DNA database operated by Interpol, which has the largest percentage of its population recorded in a national DNA database (and urging other countries to do the same), troubling body politics loom ahead. Enter the high-tech yet silent cyber-side of the global security complex: no campaigns, no movements, no fittest family contests. The global security complex is a quiet merging of markets, states and military technology facilitated by powerful collection, storage, retrieval and profiling capabilities. Unlike earlier Orwellian models of surveillance, monitoring today is not about watching per se; what matters is recording.

The point of the global security complex, with its inter-operable connections between government and corporate databases, is to create the conditions for continuous latent surveillance, whereby the digital trails of individuals become accessible for on-call 'security' purposes. The global security complex emerges from the intersection of a rising global hegemon and its new global 'war' on terrorism; the increasing volume and diversity of global migration flows; and the global spread and interconnection of information and biometric surveillance technologies.

The global security complex has been further augmented by the disorienting speed and intensification of global financial and capital flows; the global marketing and distribution of goods, services and new forms of entertainment; the global trafficking of sex, drugs and children; the spread of global crime syndicates and global social and civilizational movements; and, without a doubt, the global military technology trade. None of these flows is discrete; all are increasingly interlinked by a vast informational network that belies traditional borders yet begets new controls. Rather than interrupt the speed of contemporary flows, liberal bionetwork states are adopting biometric technologies in an effort to monitor, filter and channel the intense circulation of back-and-forth human flows across their borders.

One of the aims of the global security complex is the connection, surveillance and disembodied integration of immigrant bodies and behaviours into global networks. Unlike earlier surveillance studies that characterized the nature of state control as centralized and panoptic, the surveillance environment today is a polycentric, nonhierarchical complex, where decentred and disembodied personal data flow unwittingly around the globe through vast and expanding informational architecture.

To sum up, in the polycentric and multidimensional environment of the new global security complex, the goals of states and private industry both collide and collude in a mutual bid to capitalize on new information and biometric technologies. In the emerging digital world, liberal internationalists of all stripes celebrate the goals of flexibility, mobility, openness and speed as information, services, images and people transcend and transgress old borders as never before. But states are (re)appropriating the same productive forces that have opened new political spaces for a generation of cyborg citizens, positioning themselves to make control imperative and escape

impossible. The uninhibited flow of personal data permits the (pre)constitution and preventive surveillance of virtual bodies when information is retrieved, reassembled and profiled for a multitude of purposes usually unbeknownst to the individual the data represent.

### **Arrival precedes departure**

Security strategies currently being implemented include creating more layers of the border and facilitating the sharing of 'accurate' information within and among governments. These so-called 'high concept' approaches are included in the Smart Border approach currently being deployed in the USA and EU, an intelligence-based strategy that seeks to mainstream the virtualization of borders in ways that will have long-term implications for both immigrants and citizens alike. In this emerging field of state space, datamigrants merge with global data flows, forming part of a vast transnational network of surplus information. The migration of bodily and behavioural data both precedes and exceeds the real movement of real people. Moreover, new information technology makes it harder to perceive these practices of surveillance, especially when the presence may be predetermined. With disembodied integration, state control is no longer merely a means to an end, but the promised end in itself; 'control becomes the environment'.<sup>3</sup>

Datamigrants are only now beginning to flow across the Smart Borders of the emerging global architecture of communications networks. Classic migration involved departure, journey and arrival. The generalized exchange of instantaneous information and surveillance functions among bionetwork states has altered age-old assumptions about the journey. For datamigrants, this means arrival precedes departure.

Little by little, we are being disciplined to new forms of surveillance and – as immigrants, citizens and consumers – participating in the process through the 'voluntary' submission of bodily and behavioural information into innumerable private, public and law-enforcement databases, which are becoming increasingly interoperable. Overshadowed by the rhetorical vilification of immigrants and the symbolic reification of state borders has been the quiet appearance of biometric surveillance that will affect the life-chances of immigrants and citizens in liberal bionetwork states. The rhetorical conflation of immigrants with terrorists, smugglers and other criminals in the global security complex not only misrepresents immigrants who are more often the victims rather than the perpetrators of terrorism and crime, but it justifies measures of state control that are increasingly intrusive of privacy, invasive of bodies and discriminatory in practice. These developments have serious implications for how immigrants will be selected, integrated or excluded in the coming years.

In today's bionetwork world, we are all datamigrants, deceived cyborgs whose virtualized existence is tracked and profiled daily as our bodily and behavioural information flows back and forth across borders we never see. Compressed between the market and the state, we have been 'invited' to become participatory agents in a new global security complex whose totalizing promise belies the liberatory potential of the body-machine matrix envisioned by early cyborg enthusiasts. Lured by freedom and security, webs of state control are extending through our bodies and around the globe.

### **Notes**

1. Giorgio Agamben, 'Bodies without Words: Against the Biopolitical Tattoo', [www.germanlawjournal.com/article.php?id=371](http://www.germanlawjournal.com/article.php?id=371).
2. James Tully, 'Communication and Imperialism', [www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=508](http://www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=508).
3. Paul Virilio, *The Art of the Motor*, trans. Julie Rose, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1995, p. 131.

# The philosopher's fear of alterity

## Levinas, Europe and humanities 'without Sacred History'

**Andrew McGettigan**

Europe, that's the Bible and the Greeks. It has come closer to the Bible and to its true fate. Everything else in the world must be included in this. I don't have any nostalgia for the exotic. For me Europe is central.

Emmanuel Levinas, 1986<sup>1</sup>

Those who have sought resources in Levinas for a project of anti-racism have been confounded by some of his comments about non-Western cultures: 'the exotic'. In addition, many of his advocates have been confused by the metaphysical apparatus assembled in support of the valorization of the 'face' (*le visage*): these features tend to be understood biographically or as functionless remnants of religious beliefs and personal prejudices.

This article attempts to demonstrate that the two problems – metaphysical apparatus and unpalatable comments – are fundamentally connected through Levinas's conception of transcendence. The failure to foreground paleonymy in his writing means that the systematic reconfiguration of terms such as 'face', which transforms its everyday sense, goes unaddressed. The 'face' is not a physical countenance; it is an interpretation, beyond philosophy and phenomenology, tied to a particular historico-cultural formation: the 'culture issued from monotheism'. This has the consequence that the special *idea* of the face of the Other (*Autrui*), as encounter with the idea of the Infinite, in drawing from one particular culture, is not open to all other cultures; it is not a universal possibility. My strong claim will be that the problematic of the face is at root mobilized in a valorization of the Judaeo-Christian legacy against those who come from outside 'the West'.

There is a misapprehension when 'alterity' in Levinas's work is understood simply as difference.

For him, it marks a positive plenitude that breaks with Being. In this regard, intra-ontic difference would be encompassed by knowledge and hence merely part of 'the Same'. Infinite responsibility remains a metaphysical gesture. In the essays contemporaneous with *Totality and Infinity*, alterity references *height*, the *better*, 'trans-ascendence' and as such depends on determining the value of the individual in the possibility of effectuating the infinite beyond the finite.<sup>2</sup> It should be stressed at the outset that the present essay does not circumscribe *Otherwise than Being*, a work that operates with a different temporality and largely eschews the vocabulary of 'metaphysics' and 'exteriority' found in the first book.<sup>3</sup>

Here, I reconstruct the context for *Totality and Infinity* by bringing together Levinas's writings on anthropology and Judaism with the more familiar 'philosophical' text, so as to illuminate the axis of 'Sacred History' in its exemplariness.<sup>4</sup> Only by reading these texts together can the importance for Levinas of a philosophically reconfigured religious inheritance be located as it interrelates with and qualifies his phenomenology, such that the differentiation of 'philosophy' and 'eschatology' may be comprehended.

### Humanity with and without Sacred History

In 'Jewish Thought Today' (1961), Levinas lists three conditions marking the novelty of the contemporary world-historical situation. Alongside the defeat of anti-Semitism and the foundation of the State of Israel, he includes 'The arrival on the historical scene of those underdeveloped Afro-Asiatic masses who are strangers to the Sacred History that forms the heart of the Judaic-Christian world.'<sup>5</sup> Besides the belated entry into history of Africa and Asia, a tenet of Levinas's

philosophy of history that connects him through Franz Rosenzweig to Hegel,<sup>6</sup> we should attend to the claim that ‘Sacred History’ differentiates the West as a monotheistic formation.

The specificity of this formation means that even Marxism must be understood as a Judaeo-Christian legacy, which under Mao is ‘lost in the vastness of these foreign civilizations and impenetrable pasts’. The universality of its principles are blocked by a cultural and historical inheritance sufficiently foreign for Levinas elsewhere to describe it as ‘lunar or Martian’; notoriously, a ‘yellow peril’ which, as a ‘spiritual’ peril,<sup>7</sup> threatens the ‘new-found authenticity of Israel’ (*JTT* 165).

Given the centrality of the critique of Western philosophy in terms of its violent conceptuality and will to totality, Caygill writes on this ‘fear of Asia’: ‘Levinas might have been expected ... to confront Europe and its dangerous metaphysics with new sources of universality and freedom drawn from the East. That he does not even contemplate this step is one of the many mysteries of this tormented text’ (*L&P* 183). Such an expectation would ally Levinas with the thoughts offered by Merleau-Ponty in ‘Everywhere and Nowhere’, where the ‘Orient’ could serve as a ‘sounding-board’ through which ‘we learn to estimate what we have shut ourselves off from by becoming Western’.<sup>8</sup> But the darker problem is that Levinas has given us enough material in his writings on anthropology (and Merleau-Ponty) to come to see that these prejudices, repeated in a later article pointedly entitled ‘Beyond Dialogue’,<sup>9</sup> have supporting theories. We are obliged to ask what a cultural formation is for Levinas, such that the ‘gaze of Asia’, a ‘religious collectivity that is ... built around different structures’, can help Jews and Christians ‘rediscover their kinship’ (*JTT* 165).

First, some context: Levinas’s formative training in Neo-Kantianism and phenomenology occurs in a period where the philosophical concept of the nation is at the forefront of academic concerns.<sup>10</sup> Second, Levinas, again through Rosenzweig, has strong connections to Hermann Cohen, for whom the notion of ‘peoples’ (*Völker*) as spiritual entities is central, the Jewish people being exemplary for humanity as a whole. Derrida noted the importance of Fichte for Cohen, in that the former ‘discovered that the social Self is a national Self’ and hence allowed thought to go beyond Kant through the formation of a *Geisteswissenschaft* – a ‘human science’ that would study the particularities of different *Volkgeister*.<sup>11</sup> That is, the transcendental is no longer understood as universal

– there are different experiential structures for different societies, cultures and peoples.<sup>12</sup>

Third, Husserl, who appears to be Levinas’s dominant interlocutor in this context, had, in his late writings, differentiated ‘humanities’ in the plural – *Menschheiten* as distinct from *Menschentum* – according to their historicities or ‘historicalities’ (*Geschichtlichkeiten*).

Historical mankind does not always divide itself up in the same way in accordance with [the category of historicity]. We feel this precisely in our own Europe. There is something unique here [in Europe] that is recognized in us by all other human groups, too, something that, quite apart from all considerations of utility, becomes a motive for them to Europeanize themselves even in their unbroken will to spiritual self-preservation; whereas we, *if we understand ourselves properly*, would never Indianize ourselves, for example. I mean that we feel (and in spite of all obscurity this feeling is probably legitimate) that *an entelechy is inborn in our European civilization which holds sway throughout all changing shapes of Europe and accords to them the sense of a development toward an ideal shape of life and being as an eternal pole*. ... The spiritual *telos* of European humanity, in which the particular *telos* of particular nations and of individual men is contained, *lies in the infinite, is an infinite idea* toward which, in concealment, the whole spiritual becoming aims, so to speak.<sup>13</sup>

I flag here the two key aspects of this particular European historicity that will persist in Levinas: the idea of the infinite, in metaphysical Desire, and the idea projected into the infinite future, the prophetic time of sacred history produced through ‘fecundity’ (*TI* 301, 306). This doubling of the infinite is taken to distinguish the West from Asian cultural formations. That said, it is important to appreciate why Levinas repudiates the notion of entelechy. For Levinas, there is no ‘History’ governed by a *telos*. Humanity is not the site of such a production in spite of itself (*TI* 72–3) (‘an inward maturation of reason *common to all*’ [*TI* 219]). Consequently, there is no linear scale on which historical societies are located in a hierarchy and no value that attaches to humanity per se. Here, Levinas’s essay on Lucien Lévy-Bruhl illuminates the notions of participation and separation found in *Totality and Infinity*.<sup>14</sup>

With respect to cultural formations, for Levinas, Lévy-Bruhl’s achievement is to undermine the universal claims for transcendental subjectivity – that the investigation into ‘our’ conditions of possibility of experience are the conditions of possibility for any experience whatsoever. ‘Lévy-Bruhl questions precisely the supposed necessity of those categories



for the possibility of experience. He describes an experience which mocks causality, substance, the reciprocal determination – such as space and time – of these conditions for ‘all possible objects’.<sup>15</sup> The categories of Aristotle and Kant do not apply to those ‘participating’;<sup>16</sup> they belong to cultural formations that have accreted above that primitive form – the ‘given’ depends upon a prior ‘wresting’ that sensation performs on inchoate being. Such an engagement with concrete environments and landscapes is anterior to and *orients* representation, which appears *after* in the formation of egoism *qua* separation.<sup>17</sup>

In this way, Levinas takes Lévy-Bruhl to have ‘ruined representation’ as the central philosophical category and to have overturned the notion of exteriority as neutral being.<sup>18</sup> It follows, then, that there is no linear history to humanity, no historical totality, because there is a plurality of ‘modes of existing’, discrete ‘mentalities’, which differ radically in their fundamental encounter with the world and do not reduce to each other.

Cultural totalities are national, ethnic and religious and marked by fundamental ideational differences. Such an understanding can be found throughout Levinas’s writings. It underlies his ‘Reflections on Hitlerism’ where the German is distinguished from the Judaeo-Christian:

It is to a society in such a condition that the Germanic ideal of man seems to promise sincerity and authenticity. Man no longer finds himself confronted by a world of ideas in which he can choose his own truth on the basis of a sovereign decision made by his free reason. He is already linked to a certain number of these ideas, just as he is linked by his birth to all those who are of his blood. He can no longer play with the idea, for coming from his concrete being, anchored in his flesh and blood, the idea remains serious.<sup>19</sup>

These comments on the ‘German’ are transmuted later into the ‘pagan’ or ‘barbarian’. In ‘Place and Utopia’, Levinas details the three main spiritual formations.<sup>20</sup>

1. Pagan: seeks the satisfaction of the self before the other. Rooted in Being and Fate, it is egoist and unconcerned if it usurps another’s place in the sun.
2. Christian: marked by the utopian rejection of this world in favour of the life to come.
3. Jewish: concerns itself with ‘ethical action’ which ‘does not flee from the conditions from which one’s work draws its meaning’ – that is, this world.

Regarding the last, Levinas appears close to Rosenzweig’s contention that the Jewish people attests to a

collective meta-historical experience – a different way of experiencing time.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, Levinas’s own essay on Rosenzweig contains the startling claim that ‘Judaism is alive and true to the degree that it stays close to God, while Christianity is alive and true ... to the extent that it marches into the world and penetrates it.’<sup>22</sup> As outrider to ‘ethical action’, the ‘Christianization’ of the world repeats Husserl’s ‘Europeanization’ and prepares the opposition of freedom to fate, while the ‘pagan’ appears to gloss all cultures that fall outside this monotheistic front. Crucially, these differences do not simply relate to historical *content*: ‘Sacred History’ determines a different temporality and historicity.

### ‘Teaching’: the revaluation of religious sources

‘Jewish Thought Today’ indicates the basis for treating Judaism as exemplary. It underscores the ‘novelty’ of the Western reconsideration of the Talmud: it is ‘no longer treated archaeologically or historically but as a form of teaching’ (*JTT* 161). As a cultural repository, its value escapes from ‘outmoded theology or simple folklore’.<sup>23</sup> ‘Teaching’ here connects to the Neo-Kantian discussion of *Lehre* – variously translated as ‘doctrine’, ‘teaching’, ‘study’ and so on, but signifying a body of experience handed down. This unique source is reconfigured for its pertinence to current and future conditions. Cohen’s *Religion of Reason out of the Sources of Judaism* is exemplary here,<sup>24</sup> while the pervasive themes can also be seen in Walter Benjamin’s earliest writings.<sup>25</sup>

Much weight is accorded to Levinas’s claim to be teaching Hebrew to Greek philosophizing, but it is in this notion of ‘teaching’ that such translation can be seen as a two-way process. To use a different register: Levinas argues that certain concepts taken from Judaism now achieve a new legibility in the disenchanted, desacralized modern world: this secularization is a necessary condition for the ethical response to the other.<sup>26</sup> As Robert Gibbs puts it, ‘The desacralization of the world is what allows that full translation of the relations to God to become realized in our relations with other people.’<sup>27</sup> The reconfiguration of religious teaching only occurs after a necessary ‘atheism’ where all ‘myths’ are purged: ‘Everything that cannot be reduced to an interhuman relation represents not the superior form but the forever primitive form of religion’ (*TI* 77, 79). Levinas has no belief in a personal God, posits no afterlife, and constantly translates the content of

the biblical text and commentaries into philosophical language.

The ethical begins beyond atheism when religious teaching is distilled to philosophical, not to say Kantian, ideas. What remains of ‘monotheism’ is the idea of the infinite (double genitive). As he writes in ‘Meaning and Sense’, the 1964 essay that positions his world-view in contrast to Merleau-Ponty and structuralist anthropology: ‘The revealed God of our Judeo-Christian spirituality maintains all the infinity of his absence, which is in the personal “order” itself.’<sup>28</sup>

These ideas are not straightforwardly part of philosophy; in *Totality and Infinity* they form what Levinas terms ‘eschatology’. Philosophically reduced ‘teaching’ takes these religious contents as legitimate starting points for orientation.<sup>29</sup> Where philosophy *qua* phenomenology runs up against the limit of being, the break-up of totality, eschatology serves as a supplement.

Without substituting eschatology for philosophy, without philosophically ‘demonstrating’ eschatological ‘truths,’ we can proceed from the experience of totality back to a situation where totality breaks up, a situation that conditions the totality itself. Such a situation is the gleam of exteriority or of transcendence in the face of the other [*le visage d’autrui*]. (TI 24)

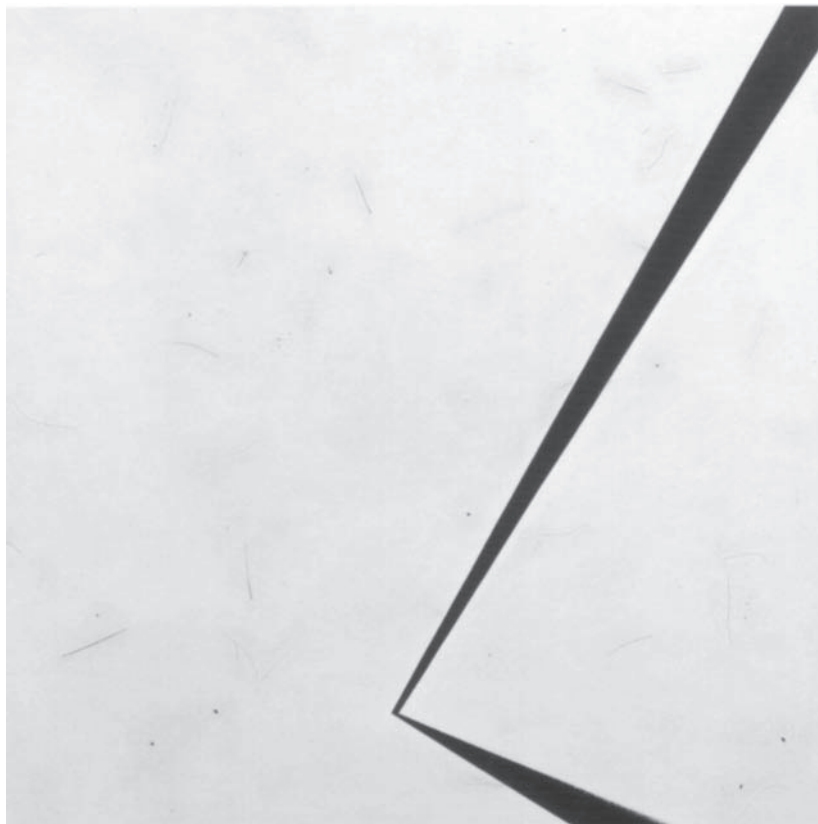
Both Stella Sandford and Caygill have noted that the encounter with the Other as an idea of the infinite is irreducible to a phenomenological analysis<sup>30</sup> – Levinas’s ‘exteriority’ cannot be posited from a phenomenological position. The ‘gleam’ of exteriority is already an eschatological *interpretation*, or in Levinas’s terms a ‘vision’ aiming beyond the break-up of totality.

The first ‘vision’ of eschatology (hereby distinguished from the revealed opinions of positive religions) reaches [*atteint*] the very possibility of eschatology, that is, the breach of the totality, the possibility of a *signification without context*. The experience of morality does not proceed from this vision – it *consummates* [*consomme*] this vision; ethics is an optics. (TI 23, translation modified)

For Levinas, eschatology is neither revealed nor deduced from within philosophy. Its validity as a set of orienting ideas comes from its inheritance, from its

centrality to the monotheistic cultural formation. To ‘envisage’ the face as the encounter with the idea of the Infinite, as the commencement of *Illeity*,<sup>31</sup> exceeds phenomenological or philosophical description: Illeity as idea redeems a distinct mode of phenomenality – the enigmatic, absent trace in the face. To understand why eschatology is an interpretation, one can compare the account of the encounter with the Other (*Autrui*) in *Totality and Infinity* with that of Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness*.<sup>32</sup>

In Part Three, “Being-for-Others”, Sartre radically separates the experience of the Other as subject (*autrui-sujet*) from the identification of a particular *object* as another subject (*autrui-objet*). While seeming



to deflate the traditional problem of other minds, he rescues the case for a direct experience of the other as subject (*autrui-sujet*): the experience of being-seen, in particular, the experience of shame (*BN* 256 ff.). As a result, the look, or gaze (*le regard*), is preserved phenomenologically as a particular, ambivalent experience of that which is in the midst of this world and beyond this world at the same time – this is transcendence (*BN* 270).<sup>33</sup>

Where Sartre is forced to present the other-as-subject as out of reach (‘what is certain is that I am looked-at: what is only probable is that the look is bound to this or that intra-mundane presence’ [*BN* 277]), Levinas, in eschatology, interprets this out-of-reach as an absence or withdrawal indicating the beyond.

The face is abstract. ... But the abstractness of the face is a visitation and a coming which *disturbs* immanence without settling into the horizons of the World. Its abstraction is not obtained by a logical process starting from the substance of beings and going from the individual to the general. On the contrary, it goes toward those beings but does not compromise itself with them, withdraws from them, ab-solves itself. Its wonder is due to the *elsewhere* from which it comes and into which it already withdraws... And Sartre will say that the Other (*Autrui*) is a pure hole in the world – a most noteworthy insight, but he stops his analysis too soon. The Other proceeds from the absolutely Absent, but his relationship with the absolutely Absent from which he comes *does not indicate, does not reveal, this Absent*; and yet the *Absent* has a meaning in the face. (*MS* 59–60)

Instead of existential nothingness, the ideas of eschatology overwrite this nothingness as the absence which spurs metaphysical ‘Desire’ for the infinite. That is, the face as *Autrui*, as better, ‘a relation to surplus’ (*TI* 22–3), is already an idea impinging on phenomenological results, but an idea to which monotheism entitles ‘us’.

Or, consider ‘Illeity’, which renders a God no longer onto-theological. Distinct from the third party (*le tiers*) who interrupts the intimacy of the face to face, Illeity designates the ‘third person, who in the face has already withdrawn from every revelation and every dissimulation ... it is the whole enormity, the whole inordinateness, the whole infinity of the absolutely Other, which eludes treatment by ontology’ (*MS* 61). Paradoxically, this absence prompts an envisioning of a positive transcendence, which, as idea, would be redeemed through ethical practice.

### The idea of the face

Levinas suggests that I often pass indifferently before another person and do *not* feel the gaze (*MS* 52). For the trace of the face to appear, the ordinary experience must be ‘jostled’ by a presence that is not integrated into the world: a presence that can be effaced by ‘humble chores’ and ‘commonplace talk’ (*MS* 47):<sup>34</sup> ‘It is not the interlocutor our master whom we most often approach in our conversations, but an object or an infant, or a man of the multitude, as Plato says’ (*TI* 70).

Not all others are encountered as Other. It is the great failure of the English-language reception of Levinas to posit without justification a token–token correspondence between the other as object (*Autre*) and the face of the Other (*Autrui*). It fails for the reasons given by Sartre. Levinas’s characteristic idea

of first philosophy lying in the ethical relation generated by the face-to-face encounter with the Other has generally been understood in a familiar humanist, anti-bureaucratic sense: it is in a fundamental personal contact that I am struck by my commonality with the other. But this reading completely neglects Levinas’s putative transcendence.

The ‘face’ is not an individual countenance. The face is not a physiological characteristic distilled from phenomenological description through which I recognize members of a genus. The face confounds ontology and interrupts phenomenology (*MS* 61) in a manner ‘no transcendental method could corrupt or absorb’ (*MS* 56). The particular, liminal experience of teaching through a master, who brings me more than I contain, prompts the positing of exteriority in remoteness and height – those qualities drawn from monotheism become ideas.

Is the ideality of the ideal reducible to a superlative extension of qualities, or does it lead us to a region where beings have a face, that is, are present in their own message? Hermann Cohen (in this a Platonist) maintained that one can love only ideas; but the notion of an Idea is in the last analysis tantamount to the transmutation of the other [*Autre*] into the Other [*Autrui*]. (*TI* 71)

It should be stressed that there is no pre-existing realm of transcendence to which the subject is granted access in the encounter. The ‘beyond’ (the ‘region’ of the face) does not designate any *Hinterwelt* (this would be to collapse back into onto-theology [*MS* 60]). Instead, the desire for the infinite instigates ethics as the production of the beyond. The encounter with the master, who does not belong to my ‘plane’ (*TI* 101), is the spur to the production of transcendence beyond being.<sup>35</sup> As Stéphane Mosès insists, the ‘*geste spéculatif*’ of Levinas lies precisely in this conception of the infinite being produced from out of this liminal experience,<sup>36</sup> for which *Autrui* should be reserved.

In turn, *Autre*, in its ethical determination, refers to the idea of fraternity: a pluralism of separated, external beings. In the section of *Totality and Infinity* entitled ‘The Other and the others’ (*Autrui et les autres*), Levinas argues that the epiphany of the face opens humanity: the experience of the third party in the eyes of the other, which becomes the Il of Il-leity, produces a whole new experience of humanity. This human fraternity is invoked over and above biological species-being, but as it does so it exceeds phenomenological evidence (*TI* 213–14). The face comes from beyond the world of meaning and commits me to fraternity in referring to the ‘third party’ of Illeity, ‘whom in

the midst of his destitution the Other (*Autrui*) already serves'. But it is important to note that the encounter with *Autrui* is the prior condition of possibility for the valorization of *les Autres*, such that the latter are understood as a pluralism, not as members of a genus. These ideas are transformative: the pluralism produced in ethics is hooked back onto phenomenological experience as interpretation, not description.

Here, we must strictly reject the current conflation of the idea of the Other as *Autrui* with the more familiar idea of respect for the way in which the other person (*Autre*) exceeds my cognitive appropriations. Levinas consistently rejects the possibility of merely reflecting upon, acknowledging or recording the otherness of the other in favour of the need to effectuate transcendence which would thereby justify the encounter with the face of the Other.

Acknowledgement of the inability of comprehension to exhaust the particular individual in front of me merely records the break-up experienced by philosophy *qua* phenomenology. This is precisely the trap Simon Critchley falls into when he describes the face (or, worse, the other's eyes) as a 'palpable infinity that can never exhaust one's curiosity'. Even if such respect is engendered in a conversing that is 'actively and existentially engaged in a non-subsumptive relationship',<sup>37</sup> it fails to grasp the production of transcendence intended by Levinas in ethics. The emphasis on the non-subsumptive is purely negative; it does not get out of Being. In this regard, it would read Levinas either as espousing the false infinite of the 'ought',<sup>38</sup> or the account of intersubjectivity given in Husserl's Fifth Cartesian Meditation: both explicitly rejected by Levinas himself. The indefinable order of transcendence, as positive plenitude, is, for Levinas, not the indefinite extension of being. Instead he insists:

The I is not a contingent formation by which the same and the other, as logical determinations of being, can in addition be reflected *within a thought*. It is in order that alterity be produced *in being* that a 'thought' is needed and that an I is needed. The irreversibility of the relation can be produced only if the relation is effected by one of the terms as the very movement of transcendence, as the *traversing* of this distance, and not as a recording of ... this movement. 'Thought' and 'interiority' are the very break-up of being and the production (not the reflection) of transcendence. We know this relation only in the measure that we effect it; this is what is distinctive about it. Alterity is only possible starting from *me*. (TI 39–40)

The alternative of acknowledgement runs the risk of neglecting the universal being the particular being

incarnates<sup>39</sup> – the 'beatific contemplation' of the other is 'idolatry' (TI 172). Such is the secular variety of the 'unctuous, consoling religion' at variance with the transformation wrought by the production of the infinite.<sup>40</sup>

### The supposed 'superiority' and 'generosity' of Western thought

Wherein lies the superiority of such ideas? In so far as it presents a morality, Levinas's 'religion' offers itself as a corrective to Western nihilism: 'Morality does not belong to culture: it enables one to judge it; it discovers the dimension of height. Height ordains being' (MS 57). The idea of fraternity is premised upon the monotheistic concept of alterity *as* height, the human as potential image of God, in opposition to a notion of alterity *as* difference that would be premised upon a 'saraband of innumerable and equivalent cultures' (MS 58). Western thought is privileged in so far as it contains the germ of this value given to the individual as the finite site of the incarnation of the Infinite.

In *Signs*, Merleau-Ponty had taken up the results of Claude Lévi-Strauss's work in anthropology to advance the thesis that different cultures are multiple expressions of being on the same plane, with no one culture having direct or privileged access to eternal ideas. Universality is then understood as a practice of translation that leads to the 'lateral interpenetration' of cultures. Explicitly challenging this conception, Levinas's 'Meaning and Sense' recognizes the value of such an 'ontology of decolonization' (MS 44) but grants more importance to the consequent *disorientation*. No constructive principle is left in place which can give an orientation to existence – nihilism or the 'pure indifference of multiplicity' is the result (MS 45).<sup>41</sup>

Apparently, Merleau-Ponty had taken the 'generosity' of Western thought too far and forgotten its task of overcoming 'the infantilism of purely historical cultures', which had never understood themselves until the advent of anthropological science made of them an object (MS 58). What is that generosity? The willingness to see the *abstract* in other cultures – to accord them the dignity of being equals.

Introducing a distinction between the plurality of cultural meanings (*significations*) and the need for a single, orientating *sense* (*sens*), Levinas concludes that desire for exteriority and the beyond, as found in monotheistic culture, provides such a sense in the midst of the variety of cultural totalities: 'the Other dispels the anarchic sorcery of the facts' (TI 99). The Other orients being because it creates a value that drives

and elevates practical reason, such that it is no longer satisfied with being and so aims at the beyond.

Again, an echo of Husserl is apparent. From as early as the 1911 essay 'Philosophy as Rigorous Science', Husserl was concerned to differentiate European, philosophical science from the plurality of historical *Weltanschauungen*.<sup>42</sup> As the only cultural form to be a 'culture of ideas', to set itself infinite tasks, 'capable of an absolute self-responsibility on the basis of absolute theoretical insights',<sup>43</sup> science, if taken up explicitly, assumes the form of an ethical ideal capable of unifying humanity and fending off the barbarism. While Levinas continues to support the 'excellence of Western science' (*MS* 58), and repeats Lévy-Bruhl's insistence on 'primitive', as opposed to 'savage', minds,<sup>44</sup> he does not subscribe to the notion that the idea of *science* can provide an adequate ethical ideal in the face of the events that scarred the twentieth century. Instead, *fraternity* is accorded that task.

In structuralist anthropology, the excessive generosity of the West puts its own privilege in question. But, for Levinas, it is precisely here that its special contribution to the world is revealed. The argument in 'Meaning and Sense' proceeds in transcendental fashion by asking: what is the condition of possibility for constructing a flat ontology of cultural meaning? It concludes that *orientation to the Other*, the excellence of the Judaeo-Christian legacy, underlies structuralist ontology.

For there does exist the possibility of a Frenchman learning Chinese and passing from one culture into another, without the intermediary of an esperanto that would falsify both tongues which it mediated. Yet what has not been taken into consideration in this case is that an *orientation* which leads the Frenchman to take up learning Chinese instead of declaring it to be barbarian (that is, bereft of the real virtues of language), to prefer speech to war, is needed. One reasons as though the equivalence of cultures, the discovery of their profusion and the recognition of their riches were not themselves the effects of an orientation and of an unequivocal sense in which humanity stands. One reasons as though the multiplicity of cultures from the beginning sunk its roots in the era of decolonization, as though incomprehension, war and conquest did not derive just as naturally from the contiguity of multiple expressions of being. (*MS* 46)

Let me spell out three points:

1. The recognition of the richness of cultures and the suggestion that they are equivalent, depends upon an orientation to the Other; a *sense* of the status of humanity.

2. The veiled suggestion to the anthropologist is the following: we have seen that your interest in these other civilizations and cultures depends on an orientation towards the other. However, does the culture you examine *itself* reveal or valorize this orientation? The example of Chinese is not innocent given the passages referenced earlier and the insinuation that Chinese might be a barbarian language is neither retracted nor qualified. Robert Bernasconi observes that Levinas seems unaware that the Chinese also learn to speak French.<sup>45</sup>
3. War does not only spring from a logic directed towards totality and domination. War also springs from the friction of contiguity with other civilizations. Difference cannot be valorized per se, if war is to be avoided. Peace does not just require the recognition of difference, but the orientation to the other: the *sens unique* which can ground peace. The Other as instantiating height, not the other as different.

### Peace and ethical illusion

Of peace there can only be an eschatology. (*TI* 24)

Even if the ideas associated with metaphysical desire for the Infinite are ethical and foreign to China, it may still not be clear why Levinas takes them to be superior. It must be stressed that there is no epistemological privilege accorded to these ideas. Levinas explicitly touches on the affinity between these ideas – variously glossed as 'metaphor', 'illusion', 'aspiration' – and delirium (*TI* 49). 'The power of illusion is not a simple aberration of thought, but a movement in being itself. It has an ontological import' (*TI* 240). In this case, its import lies in producing the beyond, an illusion that 'constitutes a positive event' (*TI* 55).

Some might balk at this emphasis, but the face as eschatological interpretation commences from 'metaphor' as the 'marvel of language'. Philosophy and certain human sciences might try to reduce its power by drawing up a list of its sources, but this practice cannot 'destroy its intention': 'lucidity does not abolish the beyond of these illusions' (*MS* 56). If the beyond established is not simply to repeat onto-theology, or be determined by being, it must be a human, subjective production. It is because of this projection that Levinas describes the metaphysical as an 'aspiration for radical exteriority' – ethics is defined by its 'transcendent intention' (*TI* 29): 'the beyond which the metaphor produces has a sense that transcends (its origin); the power to conjure up illusions which language has must be recognized' (*MS* 56). The face is not the discovery by the West of a pre-existent truth.

The courthouse for eschatology is not the limits of theoretical reason or phenomenological description. The key lies in the ability of the idea of fraternity to orient peace. As in Neo-Kantianism, the idea is originary (*ursprünglich*) in that it sets the test it itself must undergo: it orients the task (*Aufgabe*) of practical philosophy on which it depends for its justification or validity. The excellence of the West would be located in a potential that must be manifested such that the other cultures of the world follow that example and Europeanize. That is, the belief in the superiority of monotheism's ideas can only be verified in attempting to produce it. As such, orientation is speculative: a form of bootstrapping described in *Otherwise than Being* as 'levitation' that has no other guarantee than its own activity:<sup>46</sup> 'to be worthy of the messianic era one must admit that ethics has a meaning, even without the promises of the Messiah'.<sup>47</sup>

The bottom line is peace. *Pace* Caygill, but via a different route, *Totality and Infinity* is an 'immense treatise on hospitality and war' (*L&P* 209 n2). Orientation is directed to the production and generalization of the prophetic vision of peace, averting the possibility of war (*MS* 46) – that this is best produced by eschatology is the gauge at the heart of Levinas's Occidentalism.

To recap, in so far as they exceed philosophical support, the ideas of the face and fraternity draw their power from the monotheism that informs Western culture. Rendered into Infinite Ideas, they form an eschatology that orients ethics, whose value, above other cultures and their particular ideas, lies in the ability to produce a politics directed to peace. This hypothesis can only be tested historically through this very production – it is fundamentally speculative. Or, as Cohen puts it, 'There will be no peace among nations unless our example is followed'.<sup>48</sup>

### The Infinite and Asia: the influence of Rosenzweig

What sources support Levinas's prejudice against China and Asian thought? Given that he undertook no research himself, the obvious source is Rosenzweig's *The Star of Redemption* (on this score, itself a repository of third-hand banalities), where Eastern thought is compared to idolatry,<sup>49</sup> a charge repeated by Levinas.<sup>50</sup> The debt is recognized in the Preface to *Totality and Infinity*: 'We were impressed by the opposition to the idea of totality in Franz Rosenzweig's *Stern der Erlösung* (*Star of Redemption*), a work too often present in this book to be cited' (*TI* 28).

Reading the first part of *The Star of Redemption*, one is swiftly struck by the repeated oppositions

between concepts inherent to Judaism and Christianity and those of the Chinese and Indian religions. The Judeo-Christian legacy is valorized by virtue of a conceptual superiority: the ideas of God, world and human are defined by the specific interrelation of transcendence and immanence and the concept of historical time.<sup>51</sup> For Rosenzweig, the experience of the 'face' (*das Gesicht*) of the other in language is not open to those dwelling within Asian cultures, for they have an inadequate conception of the relation between immanence and transcendence: the voice of the other cannot be heard – they flee the 'face of the living God for abstraction'.<sup>52</sup> In the Hindu conception of a world of veils, which reduces human reality to appearance, he sees too much separation between transcendence and immanence – nothing of value can appear *in this world*. In the Buddhist and Confucian conception of a world of excessive variation, he finds only a throng of spirits multiplying – an excess of mixing between immanence and transcendence.<sup>53</sup> If the transcendent is too fully merged into the world then there is only a negotiation through its infinity – nothing of value can be extracted from this proliferation. In short, Buddhist and Hindu metaphysics are presented as polar opposites, but from which there is the same result – *the human individual is not the root of value*. The weakness of India and China for Rosenzweig is that they are unable to live beyond the immediate present, since history for those cultures is simply the passage of various contingent arrangements – the future cannot be the site of meaning by which to guide the transformation of the present. In contrast, the history of the Judaeo-Christian West has been formed by a more complicated interaction of immanence and transcendence – according to the Bible, humanity was made in the image of God – and it finds itself suspended between the animal and the divine. This, combined with the concept of prophetic time, produces a wholly different culture, a wholly different past. Prophetic time signals the specific biblical temporality whereby revelation is not given once and for all as edict to follow, but as prophecy, giving signs that must be discerned in the future to come.<sup>54</sup>

As in Levinas, a unique concept of humanity rests with messianic monotheism: it is not present in other traditions whose own ideas can be encompassed by the Greek dimension of Europe.<sup>55</sup> For Levinas, these cultures cannot teach us, they bring nothing that we do not already contain: 'You can express everything in Greek. For example, you can say Buddhism in Greek'.<sup>56</sup>

In his essay on racism in the history of philosophy, 'Will the Real Kant Please Stand Up', Bernasconi

identifies three tasks for any writing to be adequate as intellectual history.<sup>57</sup> These are:

1. 'identifying the problematic statements of these thinkers that are prima facie racist';
2. 'locating them in the context of their works and the broader historical context';
3. 'establishing their sources'.<sup>58</sup>

While that essay fails to think through its historicist apparatus, and its convenient valorization of the potential virtues of 'continental' practice, I have tried to situate Levinas's writings in the suggested manner. While Levinas's comments on Asia have been well known for some time, they have been separated from the 'serious' work. Bernasconi himself has attempted to effect this wall by differentiating occasional comments from philosophical texts: 'it would be a mistake to assume that the philosophical texts conceal behind their complexity the same appalling message that is said so directly in the interviews.'<sup>59</sup>

Here I have demonstrated that the views expressed in those pieces, whose sheer frequency should be underscored, do not 'run counter' to Levinas's ethics – if Levinas's radical, *metaphysical* transformation of that term is appreciated. Indeed, I have argued that the 'idea of the face', the spur to ethics, is fundamentally tied to a theory of separated cultural totalities which circumscribes the particularity of its obligating force. Levinas fears a valorization of alterity that would not orient around the transcendence resulting from 'Sacred History' distilled into ideas. To repeat, the alterity of height is distinguished from an alterity of difference. For Levinas, contiguity without orientation will lead to wars worse than those witnessed in recent history.

In light of this, I can share neither Bernasconi's suggestion that Levinas's work 'contains the most promising resources for addressing the enigma of persecution, hatred, and violence', nor Judith Butler's idea that Levinas can help to reanimate the 'human' in the 'humanities'.<sup>60</sup> the structure of 'what binds us morally' can find in Levinas only a representation of a specific religious tradition. Given the complacency with which Levinas rests on his shaky sources,<sup>61</sup> his philosophy evinces the easy, armchair belief in superiority which is constitutive of prejudice and discrimination: the claims for Judaism lack any form of independent testing beyond backing it – fidelity and ignorance trump science.

This leaves me to conclude with two questions. First, why have the philosophical readings of Levinas missed the, admittedly troubling, notion of transcendence and instead reduced his work to more familiar

ideas? To paraphrase Kierkegaard: what does this 'mollifying exegesis' signify? Second, is it possible to break with an idea of the West, given the particular investments that underlie 'continental' or 'modern European' philosophy? Breaking with Bernasconi's forensic model of prosecution and apology, which fails to reflect on the privilege of latecomers, might not the challenge be not only to portray these writings in their own context, but to represent ourselves in, and our ties to, that same context? Is Western philosophy simply one cultural formation among others limning its own borders? What would it entail to act otherwise? These fundamental questions challenge the particularity of all philosophizing and cannot be avoided given current institutional and world-historical conditions. That the formative figures of twentieth-century thought offered solutions that we would now disavow does not mean that the problem to which those solutions were addressed is illusory.

## Notes

Earlier versions of this article were presented to the Research Seminar of the Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy, Middlesex University; the Human Sciences Seminar, Manchester Metropolitan University; and the 'Levinas and the Political' conference, Purdue University, Indiana. My thanks to Stella Sandford, Peter Osborne, Tim Hall, Nick Lambrianou, Peter Hallward and David Cunningham for commenting on the various drafts.

1. 'Emmanuel Levinas' (1986), in Florian Rötzer, *Conversations with French Philosophers*, trans. Gary E. Aylesworth, Humanities Press, New Jersey, 1995, pp. 57–65, p. 63.
2. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (1961), trans. Alphonso Lingis, Duquesne University Press, Pittsburgh, 1969, p. 35; hereafter *TI*.
3. The specific relation to *Otherwise than Being* involves the reconstruction of a different systematic structure as Levinas introduces the concepts and ideas of diachrony, psyche, hostage and the nazirate. The key influence on this latter book is the notion of *Urimpression* found in Husserl's *Phenomenology of Internal Time Consciousness*. Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* (1978), trans. Alphonso Lingis, Kluwer Academic, Dordrecht, 1991. Edmund Husserl *Phenomenology of Internal Time Consciousness* (1905–1910), ed. Martin Heidegger, trans. James S. Churchill, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1964.
4. In this regard, I respect two of the protocols expounded by Howard Caygill's *Levinas and the Political* (Routledge, London, 2002); hereafter *L&P*. 'Instead of separating Levinas's "philosophical" and his "Jewish" writings ... the importance of the relationship between "Israel" and the State of Israel in Levinas's thought makes it essential to insist on them being read together. And finally, given the inseparability of reflection on the political from political events, it is vital to pursue as far as possible a disciplined chronological exposition of the development of Levinas's thought and to avoid the

- luxury of the anachronistic pursuit of thematic parallels that is enjoyed by many commentators' (*L&P* 2–3).
5. Emmanuel Levinas, 'Jewish Thought Today' (1961), in *Difficult Freedom – Essays on Judaism*, trans. Seán Hand, Athlone Press, London, 1990, pp. 159–66, p. 160; hereafter *JTT*.
  6. See Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption* (1919), trans. William W. Hallo, Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, 1985.
  7. 'The yellow peril! It is not racial, it is spiritual. It is not about inferior values; it is to do with a radical strangeness, which is alien to all the density of its past, from where no voice with familiar inflection filters: it comes from a lunar or Martian past.' Emmanuel Levinas, 'Le Débat Russo-Chinois et la dialectique' (1960), in *Les Imprevus de l'histoire*, Fata Morgana, Montpellier, 1994, pp. 170–73, pp. 171–2.
  8. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'Everywhere and Nowhere', trans. Richard C. McCleary, in *Signs* (1960), Northwestern University Press, Evanston IL, 1964, pp. 126–58, p. 139.
  9. Emmanuel Levinas, 'Beyond Dialogue' (1967), in *Alterity and Transcendence*, trans. Michael B. Smith, Athlone Press, London, 1999, pp. 79–89.
  10. For the German context, see Hans Sluga, *Heidegger's Crisis: Philosophy and Politics in Nazi Germany*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA and London, 1993. For the dominance of Neo-Kantianism in the France of the early twentieth century, see Vincent Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy* (1979), trans. L. Scott-Fox and J.M. Harding, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1980, and the discussion in Caygill's first chapter, especially *L&P* 9ff.
  11. Jacques Derrida, 'Interpretations at War: Kant, the Jew, the German' (1989), trans. Moshe Ron, in *Acts of Religion*, ed. Gil Anidjar, Routledge, New York and London, 2002, pp. 137–88, pp. 174–5.
  12. See Book One of Part III of *The Star of Redemption*.
  13. Edmund Husserl, 'The Vienna Lecture' (1935) in *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. David Carr, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 1970, pp. 269–99, p. 275; emphases added.
  14. Emmanuel Levinas, 'Lévy-Bruhl and Contemporary Philosophy' (1957), trans. Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshav, in *Entre nous: Thinking-of-the-other*, Continuum, London and New York, 2006, pp. 34–45. Lévy-Bruhl is referenced at *TI* 234 and *TI* 276.
  15. Lévy-Bruhl and Contemporary Philosophy', p. 35, translation modified.
  16. 'The pure form of time is unknown to primitives, the instants each have their own different potential, in contrast to the homogeneity of the form of time (in Kant).' *Ibid.*, p. 42, translation modified. Compare the foregoing to the critique of 'empty, homogeneous time' in Benjamin's 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' (trans. Harry Zohn, in *Illuminations*, Fontana Press, London, 1973, pp. 245–55). In this regard, see Nickolas Lambrianou, 'Neo-Kantianism and Messianism: Origin and Interruption in Hermann Cohen and Walter Benjamin', in Peter Osborne, ed., *Walter Benjamin: Critical Evaluations in Cultural Theory*, 3 vols, Routledge, London, 2004.
  17. Levinas, 'Lévy-Bruhl and Contemporary Philosophy', pp. 42–3.
  18. *Ibid.*, pp. 36, 41.
  19. Emmanuel Levinas, 'Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism' (1934), trans. Séan Hand, *Critical Inquiry* 17, Autumn 1990, pp. 62–71, p. 64.
  20. Emmanuel Levinas, 'Place and Utopia' (1950), in *Difficult Freedom – Essays on Judaism*, trans. Seán Hand, Athlone Press, London, 1990, pp. 99–102.
  21. Commenting on 'Reflections on Hitlerism', Caygill writes: 'Each [pagan and Christian civilization] has its own way of structuring time, in particular historical time; each has its own understanding of destiny and freedom and both have their opposed "predeterminations or prefigurations of their adventure in the world"' (*L&P* 32).
  22. Emmanuel Levinas, 'Franz Rosenzweig' (1965), trans. Michael B. Smith, in *Outside the Subject*, Athlone Press, London, 1993, pp. 49–66, p. 62.
  23. Emmanuel Levinas, 'Space is Not One-dimensional' (1968), in *Difficult Freedom*, pp. 259–64, p. 262.
  24. Hermann Cohen, *Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism* (1919), trans. Simon Kaplan, Frederick Ungar, New York, 1972. Here, religion is a 'new extension' of the concept of man, as individual, and humanity, which mark the limit of traditional ethical understanding (*ibid.*, pp. 19–32). It teaches ethics to say 'Thou' to 'he'.
  25. 'However, the original and primal concept of knowledge does not reach a concrete totality of experience in this context, any more than it reaches a concept of existence. But there is a unity of experience that can by no means be understood as a sum of experiences, to which the concept of knowledge as teaching [*Lehre*] is immediately related in its continuous development. The object and content of this teaching [*Lehre*], this concrete totality of experience, is religion, which, however, is presented to philosophy in the first instance only as teaching [*Lehre*].' Walter Benjamin, 'On the Program of the Coming Philosophy' (1918), trans. Mark Ritter, in *Selected Writings: Volume 1 – 1913–1926*, ed. M. Bullock and M. Jennings, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, London, 1996, pp. 100–110, p. 109.
  26. Crucially, reason is taken to have entered world history with the democratic revolutions of the eighteenth century. In essays such as 'Messianic Texts', he argues that Jews are no longer excluded from political or state history and as a result messianic thinking is *no longer* appropriate. Emmanuel Levinas, 'Messianic Texts' in *Difficult Freedom*, pp. 59–96. As noted by Caygill, part of Levinas's valorization of technology is that it shows us that the gods are of this world (*L&P* 154).
  27. Robert Gibbs, *Correlations in Rosenzweig and Levinas*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1992, p. 165.
  28. Emmanuel Levinas, 'Meaning and Sense' (1964), trans. Alphonso Lingis (revised by Simon Critchley and Adriaan T. Peperzak), in *Basic Philosophical Writings*, ed. Adriaan T. Peperzak, Simon Critchley and Robert Bernasconi, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1996, pp. 33–64, p. 64; hereafter *MS*.
  29. Kant's essay 'What is Orientation in Thinking?' (1786), trans. H.B. Nisbet, in *Kant: Political Writings*, ed. Hans Reiss, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991, pp. 237–49, proves the precursor for this question of religion and orientation in thought. See also Nickolas Lambrianou's doctoral thesis for a thorough discussion of orientation in Cohen, Rosenzweig and Benjamin. Nickolas Lambrianou, 'Origin and Becoming: Anticipation, Orientation and Creatureliness in the Work of



- Walter Benjamin, Hermann Cohen, Franz Rosenzweig and Hugo von Hofmannsthal', Ph.D., Birkbeck College, University of London, 2006.
30. Stella Sandford, *The Metaphysics of Love: Gender and Transcendence in Levinas*, Athlone Press, London and New Brunswick, 2000, p. 124. See L&P 99ff. for a discussion of the 'excessive' character of ethics which exceeds the noetic-noematic structure of intentional analysis.
  31. The term is introduced in 'Meaning and Sense'.
  32. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* (1943), trans. Hazel E. Barnes, Routledge, London, 1969; hereafter *BN*.
  33. It should be noted that the crucial experience differs for the two writers: Sartre emphasizes the shame of being caught in a compromising act; Levinas, the shame of encountering a master who 'brings me more than I contain'.
  34. In 'Space is not One-Dimensional' (p. 300 n1), he observes that people can close themselves off from such encounters by 'translating them into banal language'. This should be directly related to Heidegger's discussion of the chatter of they-talk.
  35. Here Derrida's concerns over the persistent spatiality of Levinas's metaphors are of central importance. Jacques Derrida, 'Violence and Metaphysics', in *Writing and Difference* (1967) trans. Alan Bass, Routledge, London, 2001, pp. 97–192, pp. 139–46.
  36. Stéphane Mosès, *Au-delà de la guerre: trios études sur Levinas*, Éditions de l'éclat, Paris and Tel Aviv, 2004, pp. 15, 102.
  37. Simon Critchley, 'Introduction' to *The Cambridge Companion to Levinas*, ed. Simon Critchley and Robert Bernasconi, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001, pp. 1–32, pp. 27, 12.
  38. 'Hegel thus formulates the bad infinite: "Something becomes an other: this other is itself somewhat; therefore it likewise becomes an other, and so on ad infinitum. This Infinity is the wrong or negative infinity; it is only a negation of a finite: but the finite rises again the same as ever, and is never got rid of and absorbed." ... In the situation we have described the other ([*Autre*] does not become likewise an other [*Autre*]; the end is not reborn, but moves off, at each new stage of the approach, with all the alterity of the Other [*Autrui*].' Note the difference between the alterity of the different *Autres* compared to the alterity of *Autrui*. Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, p. 193 n34.
  39. Emmanuel Levinas, 'Is Ontology Fundamental?' (1951), in *Basic Philosophical Writings*, pp. 1–10; p. 7.
  40. Levinas, 'Franz Rosenzweig', p. 55.
  41. As he confirms in the interview with Rötzer: 'Naturally there were first-rate thinkers like Claude Lévi-Strauss. People read him with great interest, but no norms for thinking came out of it.' Rötzer, 'Emmanuel Levinas', p. 57.
  42. Edmund Husserl, 'Philosophy as Rigorous Science' (1911), trans. Quentin Lauer, in *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, Harper & Row, New York, 1965, pp. 71–147.
  43. Husserl, 'The Vienna Lecture', p. 283.
  44. In his essay on Lévy-Bruhl, Levinas notes that the privilege of Occidental reason comes not from the cogito (a transcendental or universal argument) but from the *independence from history* that its thought has achieved. Levinas, 'Lévy-Bruhl and Contemporary Philosophy', p. 43.
  45. Robert Bernasconi, 'Who is My Neighbor? Who is the Other? Questioning "the Generosity of Western Thought"', in *Ethics and Responsibility in the Phenomenological Tradition* (Ninth Annual Symposium of the Simon Silverman Phenomenology Center), Duquesne University Press, Pittsburgh, 1992, pp. 1–31, p. 22.
  46. Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, p. 170.
  47. Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo* (1982), trans. Richard A. Cohen, Duquesne University Press, Pittsburgh, 1985, p. 114.
  48. §41 *Deutschtum und Jugendtum*, cited by Derrida, 'Interpretations at War', p. 183.
  49. 'The living "gods of Greece" were worthier opponents of the living God than the phantoms of the Asiatic Orient. The deities of China as of India are massive structures made from the monoliths of primeval time which still protrude into our own times in the cults of "primitives.'" Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, p. 35. And a later aside: 'at least the gods of myth lived' (*ibid.*, p. 38).
  50. 'It is probably because it evokes Greece that idolatry can still be preferred to something else! But idolatry also encompasses all the intellectual temptations of the relative, of exoticism and fads, all that comes to us from India and China, all that comes to us from the alleged "experiences" of humanity which we would not be permitted to reject.' Emmanuel Levinas 'And God Created Woman', in *Nine Talmudic Readings* (1970), trans. Annette Aronowicz, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1990, pp. 169–76, p. 176.
  51. This summary of Rosenzweig is synthesized from three brief sections: 'Asia: The Unmythical God' (pp. 35–8); 'Asia: The Non-Plastic World' (pp. 57–60); 'Asia: Non-Tragic Man' (pp. 73–6).
  52. *Ibid.*, p. 36. Incapable, therefore of pluralism, leading Levinas to repeatedly make reference to 'masses' and 'hordes' when referring to Asia and Africa.
  53. This notion of China overflowing with spirits (*ibid.*, p. 35) may underlie Levinas's references to the 'density of China's past'.
  54. Rosenzweig specifically categorizes Islam as *pagan* because of its once-and-for-all-time revelation in Mohammed; Judaism would also share this structure were it to rest with the Pentateuch. Indeed Islam is described as a *pagan plagiarization* of Judaism, with Mohammed 'taking over' revelation but neglecting the proper presuppositions of prophecy (*ibid.*, p. 116) so that the Koran is only a 'magical miracle' and Allah (who is not God) only an 'oriental despot' (*ibid.*, p. 118).
  55. Rosenzweig glosses Eastern thought in terms of 'Primitive Atheism', 'Primitive Phenomenalism', and 'Primitive Idealism'.
  56. Rötzer, 'Emmanuel Levinas', p. 63.
  57. Robert Bernasconi, 'Will the Real Kant Please Stand Up: The Challenge of Enlightenment Racism to the Study of the History of Philosophy', *Radical Philosophy* 117, January/February 2003, pp. 13–22.
  58. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
  59. Bernasconi, 'Who is my Neighbor? Who is the Other?', p. 14.
  60. *Ibid.*, p. 2; Judith Butler, 'Precarious Life', in *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, Verso, London and New York, 2004, pp. 128–51.
  61. See Gibbs, *Correlations in Rosenzweig and Levinas*, pp. 119, 145–6.

# Making life livable

## Transsexuality and bodily transformation

**Kathleen Lennon**

[We] do not recognize ourselves at the level of feeling, desire and the body, at the moments before the mirror, in the moments before the window, in the times that one turns to psychologists, to psychiatrists, to medical and legal professionals to negotiate what may well feel like the unrecognizability of one's gender and hence the unrecognizability of one's personhood.<sup>1</sup>

The aim of this article is to try and make sense of transsexual<sup>2</sup> desire for body modification, given the apparent inadequacy of a certain model of understanding this desire. This model, in a way that makes the issue complex, is the one informing psychiatric and surgical practice, and perceived conformity to it is often necessary for access to the hormones and surgery which bring about the desired bodily transformations. The problematic model is something like this. From an early age transsexual people take themselves to have a gender which is at variance with the biological sex of their body. They experience themselves as having 'the wrong body'. They experience their body as alien because it fails to capture their gender identity. Here, gender identity is conceived of as something fixed independently of the body, somehow lying behind it, which the body can fail to reflect. Body modification is desired to bring bodies into line with the 'real' gender identity which is taken to constitute subjectivity. Body modification brings experienced gender and bodily sex into line and enables people to live as 'real' women and men. As Jay Prosser remarks:

transsexuality in fact appears as a narrative; a plot typically beginning in childhood recognition of cross-gendered difference and ending, again typically, with the transsexual achieving some marker of becoming, ... some degree of closure.<sup>3</sup>

In these narratives there are certain recurrent features (the feeling of being trapped in the wrong body, childhood feelings of difference and a failure to conform to gendered stereotypes) and a telos: the reaching of a

home of gendered realness most commonly achieved by some degree of bodily modification which enables the possibility of social passing. Here the changing of the flesh, the modification of the body, is taken as the guarantee of a gendered realness. Such a narrative claims a communality of 'real gender' between transsexual men and women and biological men and women who comfortably inhabit their categories as male and female.

There are a number of problems with this picture. In what could such gendered realness consist? It does not appear to have its origin in the biological body for we have to employ technological means to bring the body into line with it. Moreover the picture assumes a single kind of narrative when there are in fact many:

not everyone who experiences gender dysphoria experiences it in the same way, and not everyone deals with it in the same way. Not all transgendered individuals take hormones and not everyone who takes hormones is transgendered. I have a (genetically female) friend who identifies as male and passes perfectly. He's never had a shot. I certainly know dykes who are butcher than I could ever be, but who wouldn't consider identifying as anything other than women.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore the assumption of a 'real gender', originating in childhood, rules out other possibilities:

it can't be ... that you went to ... clubs ... saw that certain ways of living were possible and desirable, and that something about your own possibilities became clear to you.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, even when surgery takes place there is no comfortable home. The body retains traces, often severe scarring; and in female-to-male transitions, for example, there is no way to reproduce a functioning penis. Surgery and hormones seem to be no guarantee of gaining a body with a 'real gender', whatever that might be.<sup>6</sup>

In this article I want to try and make sense of the demand for bodily modification without an assumption that in some ontological or originary way, anyone, including those seeking surgery or hormones, are really men and women. I shall suggest that gender identities, along with others, are something which we may lay claim to, on our own behalf and on behalf of others. The article is not an attempt to provide conditions which fix gender identity. It is rather, in the absence of a 'truth about gender', an attempt to make intelligible people laying claim to being male or female and in some instances expressing that claim by a request for body modification.

### Beyond queer?

In contrast to a model of transsexuality which requires a conception of real gender identity, the advent of queer theory offered a quite different kind of analysis. Trans people of all kind, whether seeking bodily modification or not, were now seen as 'gender outlaws', making evident the social constructedness of the gender identities of us all. For Judith Butler, in *Gender Trouble*,<sup>7</sup> concerned to denaturalize all gender categories, transgendered people challenge the normative categorization into male and female and open up the possibility of numerous sex/gender/sexual identifications, highlighting the radical indeterminateness of positioning in the sex/gender system. Sandy Stone agrees:

I am suggesting that in the transsexual's erased history we can find a story disruptive to the accepted discourses of gender.... For a transsexual, as a transsexual, to generate a ... counter discourse is to speak from outside the boundaries of gender, beyond the constructed oppositional nodes which have been predefined as the only positions from which discourse is possible.... In the transsexual as text we may find the potential to map the refigured body onto conventional gender discourse and thereby disrupt it, to take advantage of the dissonances created by such a juxtaposition to fragment and reconstitute the elements of gender in new and unexpected geometries.<sup>8</sup>

In queer theory, therefore, transsexuality becomes the marker of the fictionality of all gendered categories and their potential for performative re-articulation.

Within this early queer theory, transgenering of all kinds finds a theoretical home only by being positioned as a vanguard of political activism, challenging public gender norms. And although many transgendered people may accept a position as gender outlaw, for others it seems inappropriate. They are often seeking a form of life as male and female in which gender norms are adopted rather than undermined.

Moreover, the positioning of all trans people as such a political vanguard cannot make sense of the transsexual demand for sexed *embodiment*, other than as a misguided naturalism about sexual identity, consequent on immersion in hegemonic discourses. There are certainly many trans people who do not request bodily modification, and many who are happy for their trans identities to be easily visible. But there are many others for whom the goals of 'passing' and, interconnectedly, of bodily change, seem necessary for a functional life. The performative account of gender, found in Butler's early work, does not make sufficient sense for this latter group.

Butler has returned to the discussion of the trans community and issues of bodily transformation in her more recent work. Here she retains transsexuality as a marker within a discourse of liberation and emancipation:

drag, butch, femme, transgender, transsexual persons ... show us ... the body is not ... a static and accomplished fact but ... a mode of becoming that, in becoming otherwise, exceeds the norm, reworks the norm, and makes us see how realities to which we thought we were confined are not written in stone.<sup>9</sup>

This, in itself, is problematic, given how many transsexual narratives read more like stories of survival than stories of liberation. However, this later discussion is also marked by a more sober reflection on the conditions which make living within a social community possible. Butler introduces a consideration of the conditions which make a life *livable*, and it is in relation to this, that we are to understand and justify the demands that 'gender ... be established ... non-coercively'.<sup>10</sup> In raising the question of what makes a life livable or unlivable Butler has in mind both the external violence which is often directed against the trans community,<sup>11</sup> and the rates of suicide and self-harm found within it. (And both factors sit in uneasy tension with the concurrent emancipatory discourse that produces these levels of violence.) For Butler it is a lack of *recognition* of bodily difference. She adopts the Hegelian position 'that desire is always a desire for recognition, and that it is only through the experience of recognition that any of us become constituted as socially viable beings'.<sup>12</sup> This recognition is offered according to prevailing social norms. But

if my options are loathsome, if I have no desire to be recognized within a certain set of norms, then it follows that my sense of survival depends on escaping the clutch of those norms by which recognition is conferred ... I may feel that without some recognizability I cannot live. But I may also feel

that the terms by which I am recognized make life unlivable.<sup>13</sup>

For Butler this renders urgent the task of transforming the prevailing social norms to allow recognition of forms of bodily difference that are, according to her, currently rendered unintelligible. It is this public unintelligibility which leads to the status of *unlivability*. Echoing her earlier work, enabling such recognition requires the reconfiguration of these norms. Again the trans person seems to have no option but to be in the vanguard of a public political activism. When our systems of classification and public norms have been transformed so that certain bodily shapes no longer signal patterns of gendered behaviour, or of desire – indeed, when such patterns of behaviour no longer line up together in ways that yield dichotomies of gender – there will not be issues of public unintelligibility, and consequently no need for surgery to try and bring it about. For Butler, then, what is needed for those who find themselves unintelligible in terms of public norms is to challenge and re-articulate them. These are important strategies. But such political activism should not be the especial or required preserve of those who lay claim to trans identities. For many people, if they are to make sense of themselves and other people are to make sense of them, the only route which appears to be open to make their life livable is some kind of accommodation with public forms of intelligibility.

I want therefore to develop Butler's thoughts about what makes a life livable in a somewhat different direction, one which stresses not recognition under some general norm, but mutual intelligibility within everyday practices.<sup>14</sup> For Butler intelligibility requires conformity to some public norm. I would like to suggest, in contrast, that intelligibility consists of people being able to 'find their feet' with each other in everyday interactions. It is this kind of making sense to ourselves and others, which I would suggest is necessary if life is to be livable. Making sense is a public project. As Butler says, I am 'struggling for ... a conception of myself as invariably in a community, impressed on by others impressing them as well'.<sup>15</sup> It is into this ongoing interaction that our gendered categories fit, bestowing meaning interdependently on our bodies and our modes of engaging with others, making shared engagement with the world possible. Finding life *unlivable* here is not being able to find one's feet in the everyday practices of the variable, and local, communities, in which we are placed. To lay claim to an identity as male or female, or as a trans man or woman, is to struggle to find one's place in such practices.

In a recent book Norah Vincent describes a period of her life in which she lived as a man. The extract below illustrates well what is involved in finding one's feet in everyday practices in a way that requires a gendered position. Vincent describes the sets of relations into which she enters when she takes part, as a man, in a bowling team.

The league manager led me toward the table where my new team-mates were sitting. Jim, my team captain, introduced himself first. Next I met Allen. His greeting echoed Jim's – a presumption of goodwill that seemed to mark me as a buddy from the start. Bob I met last. We didn't shake hands, just nodded from across the table. ... We all usually ate junk food on those Monday nights, all of us except Bob, who stuck to beer, but let us send his 12-year-old son Alex, who always tagged along on league night, next door to the 7-Eleven to buy hot dogs, candy, soda, whatever.... Everything was out and above board with these guys. If they were pissed at you, you'd know it. They were glad enough to see me, but not glad enough to miss me if I didn't show. They were coming from long, wearying workdays and they didn't have the energy for pretence ... Jim was the most forthcoming about his stupid flights of machismo and the dumpsters they'd usually landed him in. 'I remember when I was in the army,' he'd say, 'and I was drunk off my ass as usual. And there was this huge guy playin' pool in the bar I was in. And I don't know why, but I just flicked a beer coaster at him, and it hit him right in the back of the head. And he turned around really slowly and he looked down at me and he said in this really tired way, "Do we really need to do this tonight?" And I said, "Nah, you're right. We don't. Sorry." So he turned around, and fuck me if I didn't just throw another one and hit him again, right in the back of the head. I don't know why I did it. No fuckin' idea. And I knew when I did it that he was gonna kick my ass, so I turned around and tried to run, and I slipped in a puddle of beer and fell on my face, and he just picked me right up and bashed the shit out of me. And the funniest thing about it was that the whole time he was punching me, he kept apologizing to me for having to do it.' This was a source of hilarity to everyone, the stupid crap you felt compelled to do as a guy finding your spot in the scheme of things. I could never have predicted it, but part of me came really to enjoy those nights with the guys. Their company was like an anchor at the beginning of the week, something I could look forward to, an oasis.<sup>16</sup>

The interactions, the modes of response, which Vincent describes were made possible by the participants taking themselves to be engaging in shared practices of masculinity; practices, incidentally, which could accommodate her lack of skill and strength as one of the possibilities which could be negotiated:

after a couple of months when they got to know me a little better that they felt free enough to kid me now and then about how much I sucked, letting me in. 'Hey, we all got strikes this round,' Bob would say, 'except one. Who was that, I wonder?' Then he'd smile at me while leaning back in his chair, dragging deeply on his cigarette. I'd make a big show of giving him the finger, and we'd all laugh.<sup>17</sup>

The use of gendered categories in ongoing and necessarily public narratives of the self and the interconnected forms of life that they make possible, does not require any set of characteristics shared by all people who use the categories in the stories they tell about themselves. Gender is often a question of 'local reading', and even in local contexts can be very variable. Contrast the kind of femininity claimed in the following two extracts:

Becky Birtha ... is eight when she 'spied this lady.' 'She ain't nobodies mama - I'm sure. And she ain't wearing Sunday clothes. She got on blue jeans and a man's shirt, with the tail hanging out. She got patches on her blue jeans and she still got her chin stuck out like she some kinda african royalty.'<sup>18</sup>

I feel small and neat ... My blouse and skirt are light... My shoes make my feet look more delicate than they are, .... besides giving me ... a suggestion of vulnerability that I rather like ... when I walk out into the street I feel ready for the world's appraisal, in a way I never felt as a man.<sup>19</sup>

Consequently in different situations people might use a different terminology to give an account of themselves. Patricia Zavelleas tells the story of Maria Perez. Maria, growing up in Mexico, and coming to desire women, articulates her subjectivity as 'male' and adopts the machismo which went with it. Later, moving to the USA and finding lesbian communities with a different range of gendered possibilities, she sees herself as a woman, and allows her body shape to change, to become rounder.<sup>20</sup>

An account of gendered and other identity categories as being anchored simply in an ability to find one's feet in everyday practices with others, in a way that allows mutual intelligibility, may seem overly conservative. It can suggest that we are stuck with the frameworks in which we find ourselves, and have to locate ourselves within them. But such a conclusion underestimates the openness of our linguistic categories and their inter-related forms of life. In laying claim to an identity as 'woman', and to the intelligible place in communal practices which that suggests, the transsexual woman is also reconfiguring that category. But if her life is to be livable in the sense I have described, then that reconfiguration needs to be one which others around her can find intelligible too. Of course it is often the case that such intelligibility can be found within certain communities and not others. Where it is absent, the only way to make life livable is to seek to 'pass'. The closest way of making sense of one's life



and being able to participate in shared practices may simply be to position oneself as 'male' or 'female'. What we find in transsexual autobiography are subjects painfully negotiating gendered positions which best make sense of their life and desires and enable them to take part in shared communal practices where they can interact and be made sense of by others. The possibility of negotiating an intelligible subjectivity, which requires finding possible modes of sociability, are increased when our categories are reconfigured to allow transgending, and when the content of the categories man and woman visibly display a large range of non-dichotomous social interactions. Here the possibilities for finding one's feet expand.

### Expressive content

To stress the importance of communal practices in our lives is not to claim that our identity is fixed by the recognition of others. It is problematic to think of identities as being 'fixed', as constituting some truth about ourselves, whether that fixing is linked to 'inner' phenomenology or 'outer' processes of recognition. The concern is rather to signal the role communal practices play in making life livable, and the positioning within them of identity claims made on our own behalf or on behalf of others. What is central is the possibility of mutual intelligibility in our everyday life. We can explore this, I suggest, without commitment to some kind of originary identity, or to a view that sees social practices as themselves determining.

What might seem to mark the transsexual use of gendered terms is the sense of operating with a language which does not feel like their own. What marks transsexual identity, Prosser claims, is 'the failure to be real' ... but 'a longing or yearning to be so'.<sup>21</sup> In his autobiographical *Monolingualism of the Other*, Derrida uses his own position as an Algerian Jew, speaking French, the language of the colonizers, to reflect on the position of the monolingual individual who 'has only one language, but one which is not his'.<sup>22</sup> In this text Derrida recognizes a desire to assign an origin to the complexity of such felt displacement, by imagining an originary language in which the truth of identity could be spoken. But, of course, there is no such source and no such origin, and the desire has to be viewed as a desire to invent, as a first language, that which never existed, 'as though the point were to produce by avowal, the truth of what had never taken place "to create" a past that has never been present, with a thought of the future or the "to come"'.<sup>23</sup>

Maybe it is in this light that we should view the transsexual narratives with the trajectory we began

by describing. Derrida's account may be thought to apply particularly to the post-colonial context, or, as adapted here, to the position of trans identities, in which childhood is revisited in the light of present desires and the narrative of one's life is presented as a search for an originating identity. But Derrida also suggests that the search for such an originary language is a desire we all share, as we fail to recognize our singularity in what is on offer to us. What we must recognize, he suggests, is that any identity is only a 'relatively gathered dispersion or scatter of singularities ... which must not be mortgaged to the phantom of ... ontological fulfilment'.<sup>24</sup> Here the phantom of ontological fulfilment is the phantom of an originary identity which guarantees or legitimates the place we wish to claim in our local interactions. In its place is simply a picture of people laying claim to a position in which they find it possible to live.

Trans men and women lay claim to gendered terms, as relatively gathered singularities, to be enabled to take part in local, communal social practices in a way that is intelligible to themselves and others. The terms are employed to make life livable. In doing this the content of these terms are also reconfigured in ways that reverberate through the narratives of a range of so-called biological men and women, many of whom are variously embodied, who also claim them. How, specifically, does this impact on the body itself? How does it help us make sense of the desire for bodily modification? Why is bodily change necessary to make life livable? Is to desire bodily modification to be taken in by 'the phantom of ontological fulfilment', which Derrida warns us against? I want to suggest that we can understand such a desire without such metaphysical commitments.

There are different models of the relationship between the body and the self which can be employed here. One account sees the relation between the self and the body as one of ownership. If my body is owned by me then I can exercise my autonomy by styling that body in the way I please, in a way which I find reflects my inner self, or perhaps to approximate to the ideals of gendered embodiment which surround me. A parallel account could here be offered of the practice of cosmetic surgery, and there are writers who want to offer this shared justification for both practices:

The reason I say it's cosmetic surgery is because people are always changing their bodies ... maybe we would take the stigma away. We wouldn't see it as ... pathological [but] a way of organizing your body to suit your image of yourself ... 'why do you want to become a man?' ... 'because I prefer the

way a penis looks on my body to the way a vagina looks on my body.’<sup>25</sup>

However, this account suggests a problematic view of the relation between the body and the self. In Weiss’s words ‘we must resist a notion of gender as a way of wearing one’s flesh as corporeal sign’.<sup>26</sup> This is problematic to the extent that the self is seen as constituted independently of the body, and the body as some object which that self possesses and can construct in a way that expresses their style preference. This can neither capture the horror which many transsexual people feel towards aspects of their embodiment, nor recognize the way in which embodiment is *constitutive* of selfhood. It is this which we need to understand if we are both to make sense of requests for bodily modification, and to justify public facilitation of it.

Another account sees the body as simply a marker of gender identity, which enables it to be read in a communal context. Bodily changes are then sought to allow others to gauge, in an immediate way, the category in which we wished to be placed.

I want the phalloplasty because I want to be able to go swimming [which includes of course being able to use the male changing rooms]. I don’t have a problem once I’m wearing my swimming costume, or when I am dressed. It’s the transition period when you wonder if anyone is going to wonder.<sup>27</sup>

There is something right about this move, but it cannot be the whole story, as it sees the body only as a sign for others. It fails to address the first-person phenomenology, the unintelligibility which aspects of embodiment can present to oneself.

The relation between the body and self is seen on these accounts as an expressive one. This seems right. The problems arise because of the account of expression which is then employed. For the content of what is expressed is conceived of independently of its vehicle of expression. The vehicle (the body) is then evaluated in terms of how adequately it captures what lies behind. On many accounts of expression, however, this picture is replaced by one in which the content of what is expressed can only be captured by its expressive vehicle. The content of the thought, or sensation or emotional state is yielded by the expression itself. Wittgenstein insists that joy or sadness are present in the face itself, open to public view, and not hidden in some realm behind it. What is involved in detecting such emotions seems to be a recognition of certain contours, as those of fear, or joy or grief. What is recognized is ‘a unity, a certain physiognomy’,<sup>28</sup> though it seems perfectly possible that the recognition

of such physiognomy as joy is something into which we may need, at least in part, to be initiated. But nonetheless it is the physiognomy itself which yields the joyful content. If we have to define joy, that is what we would show. As Merleau-Ponty points out, ‘the smile, the relaxed face, gaiety of gesture really have in them the rhythm of action, the mode of being in the world, which are joy itself’.<sup>29</sup>

The body which carries expressive content is not simply the anatomical body. It is a body with a shape or form, which we read directly in terms of the way it carries the way the world is for the subject. The body shape or form carries affective salience or significance for us but it is a significance which is directly perceived, although we may require cultural initiation into such perception. We do not notice the anatomical configuration and derive the joy or sadness for it. We respond to the face directly as joyful or sad. On detecting such physiognomy we are provided with reasons for responding in certain ways – for example, comforting if the expression is pain or sadness, smiling in response to expressions of joy. In suggesting that a grasp of expressive content yields reasons for responding in certain ways, no process of inference need be involved. As Merleau-Ponty points out:

I do not understand the gestures of others by some kind of intellectual interpretation; ... the communication or comprehension of gestures comes about through the reciprocity of my intentions and the gestures of others, of my gestures and intentions discernible in the conduct of other people. ...

It is through my body that I understand people.<sup>30</sup>

It is important to stress that the significance of such bodily shapes requires anchorage in a context and background. Behaviour is expressive only as contextualized, only against particular backgrounds. It is this context which will distinguish expressions of fear, for example, from mere pretence, engaged in, maybe, for the purposes of explaining what fear is:

what determines our judgment, our concepts and reactions, is not what one man is doing now, an individual action, but the whole hurly-burly of human actions, the background against which we see any action.... Seeing life as a weave, this pattern (pretence say) is not always complete and is varied in a multiplicity of ways.... And one pattern in the weave is interwoven with many others.<sup>31</sup>

Expressive content then is constituted out of a certain physiognomy, providing non-inferential reasons for a range of intersubjective responses, woven into shared ways of living. Expressive content has a kind of immediacy, reflecting the extent to which we feel

‘at home’ with the expressions, the extent to which we know how to find our way around with them. This means that there are also occasions when we cannot read the physiognomy, cannot find our feet with people, and do not know how to respond to them.<sup>32</sup>

Above I suggested that claiming a gender was positioning oneself in the context of everyday social practices. I am now suggesting that such positioning is expressed through the body. ‘At homeness’ in everyday social practices is made possible by an ‘at homeness’ with bodies whose position in those practices is immediate and readable. In the case of the transsexual body, however, the positionality it expresses is not one with which those whose bodies they are can find themselves ‘at home’.

### homeless bodies

The physiognomy of the body carries our subjectivity not as a sign of something which lies behind, but as its constituting form. Within phenomenological accounts our sense of self is a sense of a body, and involves an awareness of that body as having a certain shape or form.

My whole body for me is not an assemblage of organs juxtaposed in space. I am in undivided possession of it and know where each of my limbs is through a body image in which each are included. [The body image is] a ‘form’ in the sense used by Gestalt psychology ... an attitude directed towards a certain existing or possible task.<sup>33</sup>

Such a body image is necessary for our intentional engagements with the world, in which the body is experienced as a potentiality for action in the world, and the world as a world of possibility for the body. Our body images are already *morphologies* – that is, mediated forms of organization – not simply brute causal responses to anatomical shape. Within psychoanalytic thought our body image is formed by being invested with affect. Particular bits of the body become significant because of their potential for pleasure and pain, or because they are invested with significance by others.<sup>34</sup> Such body images therefore are images of the body as expressive. Our own thoughts, hopes and desires are grasped as bodily possibilities.

One way of trying to make sense of the relation to aspects of their body articulated by some transsexual people would be to suggest a disjuncture between first-person body image and the expressive content that the body has for others. In the account offered by Sartre, for example, the body-for itself, the body engaged in projects in the world, is the body from the first-person point of view. It is this sense of our

bodies and thereby of ourselves, which we struggle to maintain when faced with the look of others. That look fixes the body into a determinate type, with fixed characteristics, which constrain the possibilities for action. That is the look which we must resist if we are to maintain our own autonomy.<sup>35</sup> This seems to be the basis of Fanon’s account of arriving in France and discovering the expressive significance his body has for others.

Assailed at various points [my pre-existing] corporeal schema crumbles. I [subject] my self to an objective examination. I [discover] my blackness, my ethnic characteristics; and I am battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects, slave ships and above all sho’ good eating.<sup>36</sup>

However, such a model does not seem to capture transsexual experience. It does not seem that the first person bodily schema of a trans woman prior to treatment is that of a woman. The problem rather is that the body she has is one to which she gives the *same* significance as it is given by others. That is why she wants to change it. Sartre’s account fails to accommodate the role of others in the formation of our first-person corporeal schema. Merleau-Ponty<sup>37</sup> emphasizes the importance to the early formation of the subject of the phenomena of imitation, copying the bodily gestures of others, returning a smile with a smile. Here I respond to the actions of another by experiencing them as possibilities for my own body. This process involves a pairing of my body with the body of others. The corporeal schema, or sense of bodily form, which enables my own responsiveness to the world is a schema that is derived from such pairings. The relation with others is therefore formative of the first-person sense of our bodies which informs our possible engagements with the world. Given the role of others in the formation of our first-person corporeal schema, there is not then the radical disjuncture between that schema and the image reflected back from outside, as Sartre and some psychoanalytic theorists suggest. The significance of certain bodily shapes, the expressive force that they carry, to those outside us, becomes integrated into our own sense of our body. (This process is illustrated graphically by Beauvoir in her discussion of the way in which women come to experience themselves as Other to the norm which is masculinity. For example, writing of the young girl’s sense of her body as she reaches puberty, Beauvoir says ‘when the breasts and the body hair is developing, a sentiment is born which sometimes becomes pride but which is originally shame’.<sup>38</sup> For Merleau-Ponty our body image was enabling of





our intentional engagement with the world. What is highlighted by Beauvoir and others is that our body feels to us in such a way that it *makes possible* certain kinds of agency and *inhibits* others.

Given this picture, the sense of ourselves as sexed is a sense of ourselves with a bodily form which is expressive of certain possibilities within the world. (It is important to remind ourselves of the multiplicity of those possibilities and of the way that expressive content is dependent on background and context. They are nonetheless possibilities which are carried by a certain physiognomy.) How, then, are we to make sense of people laying claim to a sex/gender which is not that which their bodies express, even to themselves? It is clear that for some people the possibilities for agency and the positions in local practices which are expressed by their bodily morphology are not ones with which they can find their feet. The practices are not ones in which they feel at home, in which they can intelligibly take part. To return to Derrida, it is as if they are floundering in a language which does not feel like their own. This is the point at which, in order to enter into a form of life, they lay claim to an identity other than that assigned. It is crucial here that the claimed identity is captured by, expressed in terms of, a certain bodily morphology. Their desire for a certain position is expressed with reference to a certain bodily shape. This desire may not be one

which the shape of their actual anatomical body can carry, within a given social context. Consequently their current body image, instead of facilitating unthinking intentional engagement with the world, inhibits such a possibility. Their body thereby becomes unintelligible to themselves and rules out engaging in the world alongside others with the kind of shared intelligibility which makes life livable. What aspects of the body need to be changed so that it *can* be expressive of such possible agency, and enable such shared intelligibility, is a very local matter.

To sum up, the content of our subjectivity is captured by expressive bodily morphologies. There is a certain congruence in the salience which our body carries for ourselves and for others. Certain bodily shapes from the first-person and third-person perspective make appropriate certain kinds of activities and certain kinds of responses. With regard to their own body, these are just the kind of activities/responses with which the transsexual person cannot find their feet. The kind of practices with which they could find their feet (more) are expressed by a different bodily shape, (both first and third person). For the transsexual subject, therefore, the content of their own desire is captured with reference to a bodily form. To find themselves intelligible, and for others to find them so, requires a different bodily shape. The desire for body modification expressed by transsexual people can, then, be differentiated from other desires to modify our bodies, such as that found in many forms of cosmetic surgery. The desire for differently shaped breasts or noses is one which can only too intelligibly be expressed by those with female bodily forms in a variety of cultural settings. The wrongness of the transsexual body is not simply the failure to approximate to some valorized ideal. It is a wrongness which make someone's life unlivable by inhibiting intentional agency and shared forms of life.<sup>39</sup>

In articulating the livability of bodily morphologies in relation to intelligible and local forms of life we must be careful to bear in mind that the expressiveness of our bodies remains both open and indeterminate. The expressive possibilities which can be carried by differently shaped bodies is subject to modification and change. Changes can only be successful, however, if the expressive content can be recognized, and appropriate responses are forthcoming. The disjuncture between the position claimed in local practices and the expressive possibilities of one's own body will not always make bodily modification the only option. As Merleau-Ponty remarks, 'the psycho-physiological equipment leaves a great variety

of possibilities open.<sup>40</sup> Explicit transgendered activism of the kind that Butler endorses, as well as lots of less obvious everyday activities, expand the expressive possibilities of differently shaped bodies. But for this to work such activism and activities have to take place in contexts in which they can be found intelligible. In other contexts body modification may be the only route to such intelligibility.

In this article I have offered an alternative to Butler's picture of the trans person as a gender outlaw challenging our public gender norms. It is replaced by a picture of people negotiating, often painfully, their place in everyday social interactions. The account has been informed by a view of gender not as an originary truth about us, but rather as a relatively gathered and local singularity to which we lay claim in an attempt to find our feet with each other.

## Notes

I am grateful to my colleagues in the Hull Centre for Gender Studies and to transsexual students and visitors from Press for Change who have discussed their lives with us over many years. I am also grateful for responses made to an earlier version of the paper at the Society for Women in Philosophy Conference, April 2006; and to the readers for *Radical Philosophy*.

1. J. Butler, *Undoing Gender*, Routledge, London and New York, 2004, p. 58.
2. In this article I will be primarily using the term 'transsexual' for those people who seek bodily transformation via hormones or surgery.
3. J. Prosser, 'Exceptional Locations: Transsexual Travelogues', in K. More and S. Whittle, eds, *Reclaiming Gender: Transsexual Grammars at the fin de siècle*, Cassell, New York, 1999, pp. 83–117, p. 90; see also J. Prosser, *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1998.
4. J. Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, Duke University Press, Durham NC, 1998, pp. 148–9.
5. Butler, *Undoing Gender*, p. 81.
6. For further discussion of the problems with this picture see R. Alsop, A. Fitzsimons and K. Lennon, *Theorizing Gender*, Polity, Oxford, 2002, ch. 9: 'Borderlands and Gendered Homes'.
7. J. Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Routledge, New York and London, 1990.
8. S. Stone, 'The Empire Strikes Back: A Post-Transsexual Manifesto', in K. Conboy, N. Medina and S. Stanbury, eds, *Writings on the Body*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1997, pp. 351–2.
9. Butler, *Undoing Gender*, p. 29.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
11. Butler discusses the lives and deaths of Brandon Teena, Gloria Araujo and Venus Xtravaganza: see *Undoing Gender*, p. 251. See also *Paris is Burning*, dir. Jenny Livingston, Miramax, 1990.
12. Butler, *Undoing Gender*, p. 2.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 3–4.
14. I am grateful to Lawrence Nixon for stressing this distinction between Butler and Wittgenstein. For extended discussion of this point see his Ph.D. thesis, 'Difference and Understanding: Wittgenstein and Judith Butler', University of Hull, 2006.
15. Butler, *Undoing Gender*, p. 21.
16. *Guardian*, 18 March 2006. This is an edited extract from Norah Vincent, *Self-Made Man: My Year Disguised as a Man*, Atlantic Books, London, 2006. This is a useful description of the kind of practices I have in mind, though overall I think the project of the book was problematic.
17. *Ibid.*
18. E. Probyn, *Outside Belongings*, Routledge, London and New York, 1996, p. 109.
19. J. Morris, *Conundrum*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, 1974, p. 174.
20. R.N. Lancaster and M. di Leonardo, *The Gender Sexuality Reader*, Routledge, London and New York, 1997.
21. J. Prosser, 'A Palinode on Photography and the Transsexual Real', *Autobiographical Studies*, vol. 14, no. 1, 1999, p. 85.
22. J. Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other, or the Prosthesis of Origin*, trans. P. Mensah, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1998.
23. G. Bennington, 'Double TONGUING: Derrida's Monolingualism', [www.usc.edu/dept/comp-lit/tympanum/4/bennington.html](http://www.usc.edu/dept/comp-lit/tympanum/4/bennington.html), pp. 1–2.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
25. Halberstam, in Z.I. Nataf, *Lesbians Talk Transgender* Scarlett Press, London, 1996, p. 56.
26. G. Weiss, *Body Images: Embodiment as Intercorporeality*, Routledge, London and New York, 1999, p. 5.
27. Nataf, *Lesbians Talk Transgender*, p. 24.
28. L. Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1967, p. 376.
29. M. Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. C. Smith, Routledge, London and New York, 1999, p. 186.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 185, 186.
31. Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, pp. 567–9.
32. Further discussion of the nature of expression is found in K. Lennon, 'Natural Expressions', forthcoming.
33. Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 98.
34. See Alsop, Fitzsimons and Lennon, 'Borderlands and Gendered Homes'.
35. J.P. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel Barnes, Methuen, London, 1969, p. 260.
36. F. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, Grove Press, New York, 1967, p. 60.
37. M. Merleau-Ponty, 'The Child's Relation to Others', in *The Primacy of Perception*, trans. Charles Iain Markmann, Northwestern University Press, Evanston IL, 1964, p. 118.
38. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H.M. Parshley, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1972, p. 332.
39. In cases of demands for cosmetic surgery I would suggest a further sense of body image is involved, in which the body is seen as an object, rather than as expressive, compared to an ideal object and found wanting. This kind of objectification and its distinction from body image, as I have described it, needs careful discussion but is outside the scope of this article. It is also the case that the boundaries here will not be clear-cut and there may be some cases of cosmetic surgery which fit the expressive model.
40. *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 189.

# Inside out

## Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus Papers*

**Daniel W. Smith**

Félix Guattari met Gilles Deleuze in Paris shortly after the events of May 1968, through a mutual friend. Over the next twenty-five years, he would co-author five books with Deleuze, including, most famously, the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia – Anti-Oedipus* (1972) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1981). Their collaboration, a kind of French version of Marx and Engels, sparked enormous interest and curiosity: what had led them to undertake their joint labour? How exactly did they work and write together? In 1972, Guattari had not yet written a book of his own; his first book, *Psychoanalysis and Transversality*, would be published shortly after *Anti-Oedipus*, with an introductory essay by Deleuze. Deleuze, by contrast, was already a well-known figure in French philosophy and the author of ten influential works, including the landmark *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1962) and his magnum opus *Difference and Repetition* (1968). The nature of Guattari's influence on Deleuze, in particular, is still the object of debate. Was Guattari a bad influence, transforming the good Deleuze-as-philosopher (the solo Deleuze – dry and even dull, but rigorous and scholarly) into the bad and crazy Deleuze-as-desiring machine (the Deleuze of the D&G writing machine – irreverent and flamboyant, but philosophically suspect)? Or was it Guattari who compelled an aloof or even 'elitist' Deleuze to go beyond his natural metaphysical tendencies and confront social and political issues directly? There remain, to this day, partisans on both sides of the issue.

The publication of Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus Papers*<sup>1</sup> has opened up a new window on the Deleuze–Guattari collaboration. Editor Stéphane Nadaud – who provides a helpful introductory essay – has here gathered together the Guattari manuscripts that are archived at the Institut Mémoires de l'Édition Contemporaine (IMEC) at the Abbaye d'Ardenne. The papers were

written between 1969 and 1972, addressed to Deleuze, and they constitute the basis for much of the material in *Anti-Oedipus* (a few of the papers were written after the publication of *Anti-Oedipus* in March of 1972, and anticipate *A Thousand Plateaus*). The manuscripts were never meant to be published in their own right, and no doubt some will question their significance, much as the value of Nietzsche's vast *Nachlass* has been disputed. Authors are indeed assessed by their fruits, not their roots. Yet there is new and informative material here, at least for readers with the patience to toil through Guattari's jottings. The papers, as one might expect, vary widely in style, content and tone, ranging from fairly developed theoretical proposals to scattered notes on diverse topics to early chapter outlines for *A Thousand Plateaus*. Several texts are little more than notes on books Guattari was reading, including Leroi-Gourhan's *Milieu et techniques*, Jean-Toussaint Desanti's *Les Idéalités mathématiques*, as well as Deleuze's own book on Spinoza, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, which Guattari had evidently not read prior to their collaboration. The final section of the book includes entries from a 1971–72 journal that Guattari was apparently encouraged to write at the suggestion of Deleuze and his wife Fanny. Not surprisingly, it includes the most personal and gossipy passages of the volume, recording the ups and downs of Guattari's relations with his girlfriends, patients and colleagues.

Kéline Gotman is to be commended for having produced a fluid and readable translation, making these texts easily accessible to English-speaking readers. The volume, however, is not without its editorial quirks. Strangely, Nadaud decided not to publish the papers in their chronological order (though some texts are dated by Guattari himself), but instead has organized the texts around six thematic sections of his own choosing.

\* Félix Guattari, *The Anti-Oedipus Papers*, ed. Stéphane Nadaud, trans. Kéline Gotman, Semiotext(e), New York, 2006. 384 pp., £11.95 pb., 1 584 35031 8.

Moreover, although Nadaud notes that almost all of Guattari's texts 'were annotated by Deleuze', the footnotes only cite slightly more than twenty such annotations, many of which say little more than 'underlined by Deleuze'. Obviously, Deleuze's annotations were more extensive than that: at one point, for example, Nadaud indicates that Guattari's text 'is followed by two pages written by Deleuze on the infinitive'. Yet none of these more substantial responses by Deleuze is included in the volume. Both decisions are regrettable – Nadaud says he wanted to publish the texts in their 'pure' form – since they make it difficult to follow the development of Guattari's own thinking or to get a sense of the creative give-and-take that took place between him and Deleuze. A well-constructed index would have made it easier for the reader to trace out various themes in these inevitably ad hoc texts. Nonetheless, we should be grateful to Nadaud for having undertaken the editorial work required to make these papers available in published form. Readers, depending on their interests, will find many paths to follow (and construct) through these texts; I will highlight a few of them.

### Amis, pas copains

'It is easier to follow the thread of a good author', wrote Leibniz in the preface to his great book on Locke, the *New Essays*, 'than to do everything by one's own efforts.' Such might have been Deleuze's motto as well. He famously found it difficult to write 'in his own name', and his usual modus operandi was to enter into a 'becoming' with the authors on whom he was writing (Spinoza, Leibniz, Kant, Nietzsche, Bergson), creating a kind of zone of indetermination between himself and them. His collaboration with Guattari seems to have functioned in exactly the same manner, albeit, of course, with a living author. 'At the beginning of our relation, it was Félix who sought me out', Deleuze recalled in a 1991 interview. 'I didn't know him... My encounter with Félix took place around questions concerning psychoanalysis and the unconscious. Félix brought me a kind of new field, he made me discover a new domain, even if I had spoken of psychoanalysis beforehand.' 'It was me who sought him out', confirmed Guattari, 'but in a second period, it was he who suggested we work together... I had been very impressed by the reading of *Difference and Repetition* and *Logic of Sense*.... He was struck by my marked dissidence in relation to Lacanianism, which was already dominant, and by my way of approaching political and social problems' (Robert Maggiori, 'Secret de fabrication: Deleuze–Guattari,

Nous Deux', *Libération*, 12 September 1991). Deleuze would later confirm that he 'made a sort of move into politics around May '68, as I came into contact with specific problems, through Guattari, though Foucault, through Elie Sambar' (Deleuze, *Negotiations* [1995], p. 170. Elie Sambar was the editor of the *Revue des études palestiniennes*). Prior to his meeting Deleuze, Guattari's work had been dispersed primarily in four different areas: his involvement in leftist activism, his co-directorship of the La Borde Clinic (with Jean Oury), his attendance at Jacques Lacan's seminars, and his psychotherapeutic work with schizophrenics. For his part, he later explained, 'I felt a need, not to integrate, but to make some connections between these four ways I was living, I had some reference points ... but I didn't have the logic I needed to make the connections' (*Negotiations*, p. 15).

Deleuze and Guattari spoke freely about the working method that they worked out between themselves, or what they called their 'writing machine'. Initially they wrote letters, then had face-to-face meetings, and finally sent manuscripts back and forth, with constant corrections and revisions. Their collaboration was a working relationship, not a social one: they were friends (*amis*), but not buddies (*copains*), and continued to refer to each other with the formal *vous* rather than the familiar *tu*. One of the revelations of *The Anti-Oedipus Papers* is the important role that Deleuze's wife Fanny played in the writing process, serving as both a go-between and an amanuensis, typing up Guattari's notes and funnelling the manuscripts between the two authors. Guattari speaks often of his affection for her – 'I'm supported by someone who types, corrects, reads' – but also of 'her demanding nature'. Despite the definition of philosophy given in *What is Philosophy?*, Guattari did not always seem to conceive of his work as the production of concepts. 'His ideas are like drawings, or even diagrams' rather than concepts, Deleuze noted elsewhere. 'From my perspective, Félix had these brainstorm, and I was like a lightning rod. Whatever I grounded would leap up again, changed, and then Félix would start again' (Deleuze, *Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews 1975–1995* [2006], p. 238). Brainstorms harnessed by a lightning rod: such seemed to be the nature of the collaboration, with Deleuze functioning as a conceptual apparatus of capture in relation to Guattari's diagrammatic war-machine. In the end, it was Deleuze who 'finalized' the text of *Anti-Oedipus*, although they both conceived of the ultimate result of their work as a truly 'collective assemblage of enunciation'.

What *The Anti-Oedipus Papers* confirm is the degree to which their 'writing machine' functioned, as they themselves liked to say, only on the condition of constantly breaking down. 'Félix sees writing as a schizoid-flow drawing in all sort of things' (*Negotiations*, p. 6), Deleuze said, and these texts now allow us to see Guattari's schizoid writing-flow in its raw state, as it were, in comparison to which the text of *Anti-Oedipus* seems to be a paragon of organization and systematicity. For his part, Guattari frequently bemoans the fact that his writing is a 'mess': 'I want to make an outline this time, but I can tell that it's going to be a mess again!' 'Everything I do is a mess.' 'Same mess all over again. I'm so jealous of your ability to organize and classify things.' Yet, in one of the more revealing passages of the volume, Guattari reacts against this predilection on Deleuze's part to organize and classify, to conceptualize: 'He works a lot.... He always has the *œuvre* in mind. And for him this is all just notes, raw material that disappears into the final assemblage. That's how I feel a bit overcoded by *Anti-Oedipus*.' Indeed, it would seem that for Guattari – and for many of his fans in the blogosphere – what counted the most was the mess itself, the schizo-flow:

Writing to Gilles is good when it enters into the finality of the common project. But for me, what matters, really, is not that. *The energy source is in the mess*. The ideas come after.... What I feel like is just fucking around.... Barf out the fucking-around-o-maniacal schizo flow. (emphasis added)

Nowhere do the divergent styles of these two unlikely co-authors appear more clearly: for Deleuze, the importance of the work lay in the ideas, the concepts; whereas 'the continuous–discontinuous text flow that guarantees my continuance', Guattari complains, 'obviously he doesn't see it like that. Or he does, but he's not interested'. After *Anti-Oedipus* is published, Guattari makes a note to himself on how to keep the writing machine going:

I don't really recognize myself in A.O. I need to stop running behind the image of Gilles and the polishedness, the perfection that he brought to the most unlikely book.... Digest A.O. Liberate myself from it. It's the necessary precondition for writing the rest.

Indeed, throughout the papers, Guattari expresses his ambivalence and even insecurity about the entire collaboration. On the one hand, the work helped him disengage himself 'from twenty years of Lacano-Labordian comfort.... At La Borde, I have status, I have my role to play.' On the other hand, he regrets

being thrust into a new and unwelcome public role, and the breaks his writing may introduce into his life. 'Both books are finished', he writes in November 1971.

Which fascinates and irritates me. I will have to account for them. I will have to say things, answer questions. Things will be thought about them, and positions taken. What a pain! There will be consequences. I feel like scrunching myself up into a little ball, becoming tiny, putting an end to this whole politics of presence and prestige. Stay in a corner with little things that don't interest anyone. To such an extent that I almost blame Gilles for having dragged me into this mess.... Now everything is inscribed: something irreversible with Lacan, and maybe with Oury and even La Borde.

Yet what *The Anti-Oedipus Papers* also makes clear is how productive these tensions became at the conceptual level. Although Deleuze declared that 'neither of us assigns a paternity to concepts', both he and Guattari frequently talked about the complex genesis of their concepts. 'I myself have a strong memory of the introduction of this or that notion', Deleuze said, 'For example, the "ritournello" ... was due initially to Guattari. I introduced the "body without organs," taking it from Artaud' (*Nous Deux*, p. 17). It would not be difficult to continue the list: desiring machines, schizoanalysis, deterritorialization, black holes, faciality initially came from Guattari; the notion of the syntheses of the unconscious, as well as the analyses of capitalism and nomadism, were initially due to Deleuze. But the manner in which these concepts were finally articulated seems to have been equally 'messy'. Sometimes a division of labour seem to have been maintained. Deleuze, for example, seems to have been responsible for their revisionary concept of capitalism: 'I have the feeling of always wandering around, kind of alone, irresponsibly', Guattari writes to him early on, 'while you're sweating over capitalism. How could I possibly help you?' (137).

At other times, the introduction of one concept would generate another: 'Deterritorialization, a barbarous formula that I had articulated', Guattari recalled, 'was then articulated by Gilles in connection with the concept of the Earth [*Terre*], which was not, at the start, in my sights' (*Nous Deux*, p. 17). In another passage, Guattari proposes an intriguing transformation of one of Deleuze's basic concepts, but which seems not to have been pursued: 'Maybe we shouldn't make multiplicity [*multiplicité*] a substantive but a verb: multiplicitate [*multipliciter*].' Revealingly, Guattari indicates that, in September 1972, a mere six months after the publication of *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze

was already hard at work on the ‘Nomadology’ chapter of *A Thousand Plateaus* (‘Gilles is working like a madman on his nomads’), almost as if Deleuze had realized, even before finishing *Anti-Oedipus*, that its tripartite typology of social formations (primitives, states, capitalism) was inadequate, and would have to be complemented with a fourth type – the nomadic war-machine. In the *Papers*, Guattari was himself developing an interesting notion of what he calls ‘audio-visual’ societies, which, for some reason, did not make it into the final draft of the book. Years later, in 1984, Deleuze revealed that ‘we never did understand the “body without organs” in the same way’ (*Two Regimes*, p. 239), which is faint consolation, perhaps, to contemporary readers trying to comprehend the concept on their own. But this was precisely the ‘concept of the concept’ that Deleuze and Guattari wound up formulating in *What in Philosophy?*, and that no doubt was itself the result of their collaborative efforts: ‘It’s not a question of grouping things under a single concept, but of relating each concept to the variables that determine its mutations’ (*Negotiations*, p. 31).

### Dinner with Lacan

In the end, however, perhaps the most important contribution of Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus* papers will be the insights they provide into Deleuze and Guattari’s complex relation to Jacques Lacan. *Anti-Oedipus* is sometimes characterized as an anti-Lacanian book, but it is clear from Guattari’s notes that this is not the case. ‘At first there was no hostility toward Lacanism’, Guattari writes: ‘It was the logic of our development that led us to emphasize the dangers of an a-historical interpretation of the signifier.’ On this score, Guattari is indeed critical of Lacan’s conception of the symbolic, which relies on what Guattari considers to be a ‘really bad linguistics (Saussuro-Jakobsonian)’: ‘Lacan was wrong to identify displacement and condensation with Jakobson’s metaphor and metonymy on the level of primary processes.’ Even Foucault’s concept of discourse comes in for a similar criticism from Guattari: ‘I’m trying to read *The Archaeology of Knowledge* by Foucault; but it’s so hard for me to get through this kind of thing. It seems to me that your friend is getting lost in linguistics and other structures.’ In a prescient text entitled ‘Hjelmslev and Immanence’, we can see Guattari rethinking the signifier/signified distinction in terms of Hjelmslev’s notion of language as a system of continuous flows of *content* and *expression* – a shift that would come even further to the fore in *A Thousand Plateaus*. But in the end, this negative critique is

merely a propaedeutic to their positive appropriation of Lacan’s work. ‘I don’t personally think the linguistics is fundamental’, Deleuze later noted;

There’s no question that we’re all the more indebted to Lacan, once we’ve dropped notions like structure, the symbolic, or the signifier, which are thoroughly misguided [*mauvaises*], and which Lacan himself has always managed to turn on their head in order to show their inverse side. (*Negotiations*, pp. 28, 13–14)

This ‘inverse side’ of the symbolic is what Lacan called the Real, and *Anti-Oedipus* presented itself, from start to finish, as a theory of the Real. Yet an orthodoxy had grown up around Lacan that understood the Real (via the *objet petit a*) simply as an internal *gap* or *impasse* within the symbolic. ‘How many interpretations of Lacanianism’, Deleuze and Guattari asked, ‘overtly or secretly pious, have in this manner invoked ... a gap in the Symbolic?... Despite some fine books by certain disciples of Lacan, we wonder if Lacan’s thought really goes in this direction’ (*Anti-Oedipus*, pp. 82–3, 53). In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari attempted to follow a different path, but one they insisted had been marked out by Lacan himself. For Lacan, it was *psychosis* (and not *neurosis* or *perversion*) that was closest to the Real, since psychotics were ‘foreclosed’ from the symbolic – so Deleuze and Guattari followed Lacan’s lead and took psychosis (schizophrenia) as their model for the unconscious. ‘Lacan himself says, “I’m not getting much help”’, Deleuze later commented, so ‘we thought we’d give him some schizophrenic help’ (*Negotiations*, pp. 13–14). Moreover, they showed that there is an intimate link between psychosis and the social field. Far from being preoccupied with personal or familial concerns, psychotic deliriums are marked by an extraordinary political, geographic, and even world-historical content, which had often been ignored or explained away by psychoanalysts and psychiatrists. It’s the Russians that worry the psychotic, or the Aryans and Jews, or Joan of Arc and the Great Mongol, the circulation of money and the conspiracies of power – an entire unconscious investment of the social field. This is what allowed Deleuze and Guattari to establish a precise relation, indicated in their subtitle, between capitalism and schizophrenia, since capitalism itself, while perfectly rational in its axioms, is itself fully delirious in its functioning.

Guattari summarizes his and Deleuze’s relation to Lacan in a revealing text: ‘It was at the *end* of his analysis of the representation of desire that Lacan found the *objet a*, the residual object. We started

from the other end, production and desiring machines, and found all our figures of representation on the way' (349). Many of Guattari's papers, as indicated by their titles, are attempts to rethink the status of Lacan's concept of the *objet petit a*: 'In Lacan, the *a* Plays the Part of the Body without Organs', 'Of a Machinic Interpretation of Lacan's "*a*". Throughout, Guattari exhibits an inevitable ambivalence towards Lacan. At times, he praises Lacan's efforts at 'deterritorialization' ('What's interesting about Lacan is that he is crazier than most people, and that, in spite of his efforts to "normalize" everything, he manages to slip, and slip back into deterritorializing the sign'), while at other times he expresses his frustration that Lacan does not go far enough: 'I think he has only gone halfway on the path to deterritorialization'; 'he



interrupts his deterritorialization process to the letter (no doubt a defence against his own schizophrenia. It would be useful to reread his analyses of Schreber, and find where he gets stuck)'. Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari undertook extensive rereadings of the classic Freudian cases of Schreber, Little Hans and the Wolf Man in order to defend their position. And despite the disclaimer in *Anti-Oedipus* ('No, we have never seen a schizophrenic', p. 380), the *Papers* reveal that Guattari's reflections on psychoses were based on his experience with schizophrenic patients, which was rather considerable.

It seems to that it is *much easier to help a schizophrenic patient than a neurotic one*. Easy, on the condition that you work at it full time.... The case of R.A., my first schizo, took up at least four to five hours a day. It took over everything. Including my friends and even my girlfriends.

Revealingly, recent 'Neo-Lacanian' interpreters of Deleuze, like Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek, have deliberately ignored *Anti-Oedipus* – a rather obvious avoidance of Deleuze and Guattari's critiques of Lacan. Instead, they have tended to focus on earlier psychoanalytic texts of Deleuze such as *Masochism* and *Logic of Sense*, even though Deleuze himself insisted that '*Anti-Oedipus* marks a break' with these earlier works, which were still too timid (*Negotiations*,

p. 144). (Among interpreters, only Eugene Holland, in his *Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-Oedipus: Introduction to Schizoanalysis* [1999], has dealt with Deleuze and Guattari's relation to Lacan systematically and sympathetically.) The publication of the *Anti-Oedipus Papers* will perhaps help focus these debates concerning the Lacanian heritage on what seems to be their true *differend* – namely, the status of the Real. Put crudely, in the 'orthodox' view, the Real marks the points of 'impasse' or 'rupture' in the representative or discursive structure (the *objet petit a* as the 'impossible Real'). By contrast, Deleuze and Guattari's heterodox approach starts with the Real, and diagnoses the manner in which an immanent unconscious (the Real) comes to be represented, mediated and symbolized (transcendence), and yet is not an immediate or raw experience beneath its representations, but rather must itself be constructed and produced – the unconscious as a factory and not a theatre, or, desire as the production of the Real. In this sense, *Anti-Oedipus* could be said to have brought about an identification of the Real with the Idea (the syntheses of the unconscious).

A final surprise: Guattari's papers reveal that Lacan himself seems to have made efforts to monitor both the progress and the content of *Anti-Oedipus*. On 1 October 1971, Guattari received an 'urgent convocation to Lacan's office':

'What have you been doing over the past two years? We've lost contact.' ... He wanted to see the manuscript. I retreated behind Gilles who only wants to show him something completely finished. I told him that I still consider myself to be a front-line Lacanian, but I've chosen to scout out areas that have not been explored much, instead of trailing in the wake.

Lacan nonetheless insists on another meeting, where Guattari attempts to lay out verbally the entire argument of the book:

Dinner invitation, next week, to lay the cards on the table ... Impossible to back out.... 'So what is schizoanalysis?' [Lacan asks].... I laid it all out. The '*a*' is a desiring machine; deterritorialization, history.... He was pleased with our meeting. Reassured. Or so he said! Stooped, evidently exhausted, limping imperceptibly, his silhouette disappeared into the night.

Several months after the publication of *Anti-Oedipus*, Lacan would similarly summon Deleuze to his office, telling him, 'I could use someone like you'. We have no record, to my knowledge, of what Lacan actually thought about *Anti-Oedipus*, but Guattari's papers seem to indicate that he was anything but antagonistic towards them.

# The liberal international

David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005. 256 pp., £14.99 hb., 0 19 928326 5.

1917–21. 1944–48. 1968–72. Any accounting of the twentieth century worth its salt will hinge around the events – and ultimate defeats – of these pivotal years. No easy task, and one for forensic historians, since the forces of reaction buried the losers and the victims. Buried along with them were anticipations of a different world, glimpsed by the Kronstadt sailors, the council-communist partisans, and the autonomists of Mexico City and Bologna, among many. But whatever the effects of these quadrennial moments on individual human lives – and they greatly depended on accidents of place, family and generation – we are all living in their long shadow.

As for the aftermath of the 1960s, 11 September 1973 now seems a date pregnant with history. It is clearly time to gauge the enormity of that watershed, when the neoliberal counter-revolution was given its first airing with the assassination of Allende and the delivery of the Chilean economy to the ‘Chicago boys’. It is a foundational moment for David Harvey in *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, one of the first sustained efforts to chronicle the new global landscape of capitalism.

In May 1968 a junior lecturer from Bristol, having spent a good part of the decade imagining the modernization of his discipline, turned in a hefty manuscript entitled *Explanation in Geography* and left on a trip to Australia. The book was an ambitious work of abstraction, which was certain to meet resistance among empirically and historically minded geographers like Berkeley-based Carl Sauer, who once said he was ‘saddened by model builders and system builders and piddlers with formulas for imaginary universals’. Indeed, the very mention of the word ‘theory’ could still scandalize senior inhabitants of some common rooms, among them, as we personally recall, University College, London and Cambridge, where the young David Harvey, trained in historical geography, had produced a thesis on nineteenth-century Kent as a hop-growing region. Australians can usually muster an interest in hops but what they really wanted at that moment was news of the political convulsions in Europe. Harvey confessed that he had been so involved

in theorizing geography as a quantitative science of space (in Kuhnian-revolutionary terms) that he had barely registered events outside his window. By the time of Allende’s death and the appearance of his next book, *Social Justice and the City*, Harvey was acutely attentive to the politics of the streets.

Harvey’s vision of a deductive science of urban and regional planning at the service of the welfare state did not long survive a voyage across the Atlantic the following year. He went to Baltimore to take up a position at Johns Hopkins University, a conservative institution, but very soon found himself working with the Black Panthers, in neighbourhoods still smouldering from the recent incendiary riots. When *Explanation in Geography* was published, Harvey responded to one review by saying that he had never read the book and had ‘no intention of doing so now’. What needed explaining in particular was the formation of American ghettos. Any theory construction to be done, said Harvey, had to be ‘validated through revolutionary practice’. If there was required reading in inner Baltimore, it was more likely Mao than von Mises.

At the instigation of a small group of graduate students, Harvey embarked on a close study of Marx. And – no surprise this – he read Marx *geographically*. So began his grand project of giving *Das Kapital* a spatial fix, or, to put it the other way, of giving spatial science a Marxist fix. The first fruit of his intense engagement with Marx’s work was *Social Justice and the City*, which appeared in 1973. Since then Harvey has changed the face of academic geography with a series of books exploring the themes of capitalism and the city, space and accumulation, modernity and postmodernity, empire and globalization.

Harvey’s baptismal immersion in Marx coincided with developments that we can now see as inaugurating the counter-revolutionary response to the falling rate of profit and the crisis of the 1970s, as well as to popular insurgencies of the 1960s – concessions, that is, to pressure from wildcat strikes and widespread sabotage, Black Power, minority and indigenous movements, feminism, demands for disability rights and for environmental regulation, and the prisoners’ movement, not



to mention mutinous elements in the army drafted for the imperialist adventurism of the war in Indochina. At the same time the Bretton Woods system, forged by Keynes and White in 1944 to coordinate international trade and finance in the wake of a global war, went into crisis. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* attempts to map the dismantling of the social-democratic world in which Harvey grew up – in his case the peculiar British form of national Keynesianism, which was inflected by the command economy of the Second World War, but whose roots lay earlier in the response of the managers of North Atlantic capitalism to the Depression, and which came in the form of welfare safety nets, income redistribution, domestic industry protection, state-financed public works, and capital controls – embedded liberalism of the Polanyian sort.

Harvey aims to describe and explain how it happened that capital's compromise was supplanted by the regime of neoliberalism, which has 'not only restored power to a narrowly defined capitalist class ... [but] also produced immense concentrations of corporate power in energy, the media, pharmaceuticals, transportation, and even retailing.' Harvey is especially attentive to the differential diffusion and range of the phenomenon, and to the specificities of local conditions. At the outset of the important chapter on 'Neoliberalism "with Chinese Characteristics"' Harvey notes 'a conjunctural accident of world-historical significance', namely the coincidence of Thatcher's ascendancy with Deng's economic reforms of the late 1970s. He tracks the uneven development of neoliberalism, which is defined in ideal-typical terms as an economic regime based on the sanctity of private property rights and dedicated to the unregulated global flows of money and goods, the sale of public assets, and the dismantling of workplace and environmental protections in favour of market-driven solutions.

The results, tabulated in the book, have been strikingly disadvantageous, and even disastrous, for a large majority of the world's population, not to mention planetary ecology. And this despite the promises made by the salesforce of neoliberalism. Harvey returns again and again to the notion of a 'contradiction' between neoliberalism *as a theory* and the actual practice of neoliberalization on the ground, which always seems to fall short of market-utopian, textbook, ideals (as in 'rising tide' or 'trickle-down'). The chapter 'Neoliberalism on Trial' reveals a shabby scorecard even in terms of capital accumulation.

Confronted with neoliberalism's atrocious record, Harvey understandably asks: 'How is it, then, that "the

rest of us" have so easily acquiesced in this state of affairs?' Apart from the ancient tactic of 'divide and rule' (by age, sex, ethnos, nation, etc.), and the sheer spatial isolation of the victims of neoliberalization, and, often enough, the persuasive presence of tanks or goon squads, what is there to say about the novelty and power of neoliberalism as a theory?

From evidence internal to Harvey's own account, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that neoliberalism simply does not rise to the level of 'theory' in any non-trivial sense. This is not to say that neoliberalism is completely vacuous; however, to presume theoretical consistency and coherence is seriously to mistake the beast. Thus, we agree with George Caffentzis that the neoliberal dream of unrestricted movement of capital *and* labour power is its own nightmare; in fact, border controls and immigration restrictions turn out to be a pervasive strategy for capital. (As we write, Hillary Clinton sees the wall-building efforts of the Israeli state as the model for the US–Mexico border.)

All this suggests that 'neoliberalism' should be approached – could this possibly come as a surprise to a Marxist? – *as an ideology*. Any adequate account of its rise to hegemony should not assume a pure body of neoliberal theory 'lurking in the wings' of history, as Harvey has it. Rather it has to begin from the premiss of a contested discursive field among whose keywords are 'freedom', 'market', 'private property'. It is perhaps the *déformation* of a theorist to grant 'neoliberalism' the status of theory, yet Harvey is fully aware that the assault on national Keynesianism in the name of the market was hatched and propagated in reactionary political think-tanks funded by oil and armaments fortunes. Just as Harvey, in 1972, looked back to the nineteenth century for intellectual bearings, the right, planning its capture of the institutions, also turned to the past.

The year 1944 saw the publication of both Karl Polanyi's *The Great Transformation* and Friedrich von Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom*. Hayek, a native of Vienna who trained as an economist at the feet of Ludwig von Mises but is forever associated with a largely non-economic corpus produced at the London School of Economics and the universities of Chicago and Freiburg between 1940 and 1980, is widely recognized as the intellectual architect of the neoliberal counter-revolution. It was Margaret Thatcher after all who pronounced, at a Tory Cabinet meeting, 'This is what we believe', slamming a copy of Hayek's *The Constitution of Liberty* onto the table at 10 Downing Street. His critique of collectivism – that it destroys morals, personal freedom and responsibility, impedes

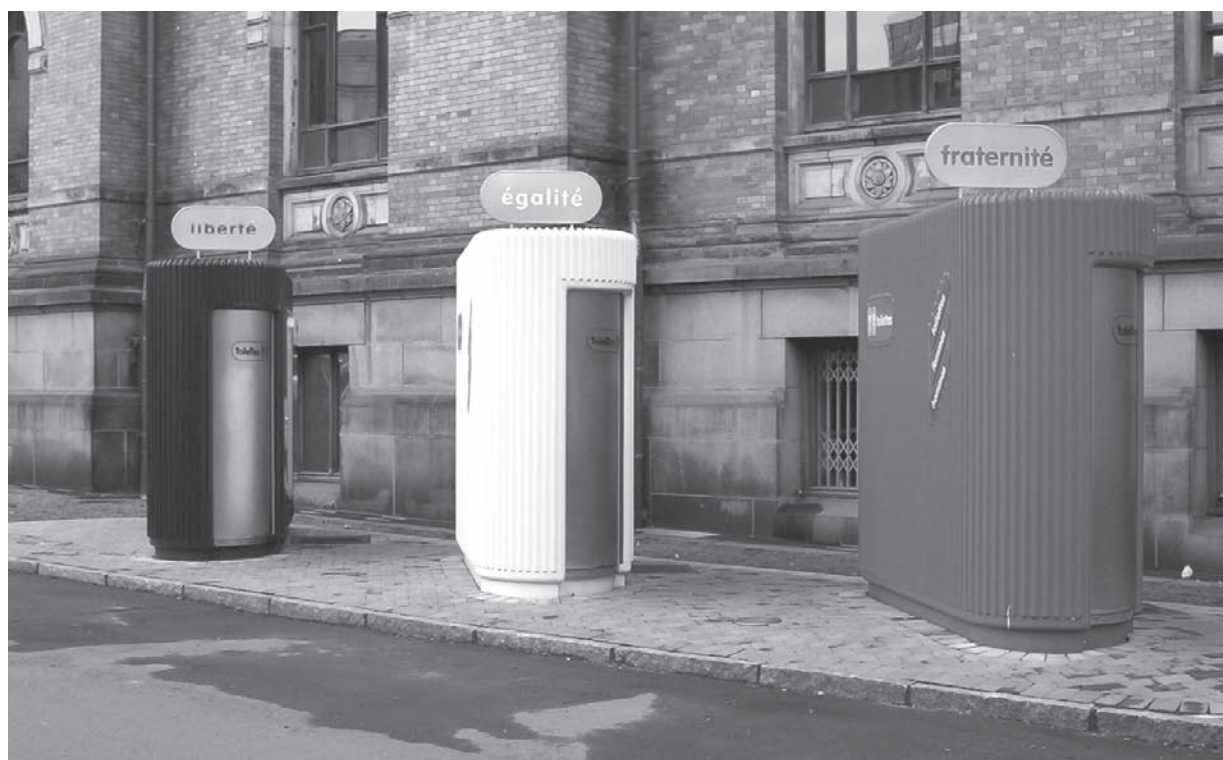
the production of wealth, and sooner or later leads to totalitarianism – is the ur-text for market utopians. Collectivism was by definition a made rather than a grown order – that is, a *taxis* rather than a *cosmos*. Collectivism was, Hayek said, constructivist rather than evolutionary, organized not spontaneous, an economy rather than a ‘catallaxy’, coerced and concrete rather than free and abstract. Its fatal conceit was that socialism (and social democracy for that matter) admitted what Perry Anderson described as the ‘reckless trespass of *taxis* onto the proper ground of *cosmos*’.

The other half of Hayek’s project was an apologia for Western civilization, conceived of as liberty, science and the spontaneous orders that co-evolved to form modern society (‘Great Society’ as he termed it). It is a defence of the liberal (unplanned) market order from which the preconditions of civilization – competition and experimentation – had emerged. Hayek, like Weber, saw this modern world as an iron cage constituted by impersonality, a loss of community, individualism and personal responsibility. But, contra Weber, these structures, properly understood, were the very expressions of liberty. From the vantage point of the 1940s this (classical) liberal project was, as Hayek saw it, under threat. Indeed, what passed for liberalism was a travesty, a distorted body of ideas warped by constructivist rationalism, as opposed to what he called ‘evolutionary rationalism’. The distance between ‘actually existing’ liberalism and Keynesianism was, on the Hayekian account, disastrously slight. What was necessary, as he made clear at the foundation of the

Mont Pelerin Society in 1947, was a grand purging, a restoration of true liberalism by way of the removal of ‘accretions’. There was to be no compromise with collectivism; all the ground ceded to creeping socialism had to be regained.

In his writing and his promotion of think-tanks such as the Institute of Economic Affairs in Britain – a brains trust for the likes of Keith Joseph and Margaret Thatcher – Hayek aggressively launched a cold war of ideas. He was one of the quartet of European theorists (Carl Schmitt, Leo Strauss and Michael Oakeshott were the others) whose ideas, while in a tense relationship to one another, have come to shape a large swathe of the intellectual landscape of the early twenty-first century. Hayek was not in any simple sense a conservative or libertarian; nor a voice for *laissez-faire* (‘false rationalism’ as he saw it). He identified himself with the individualist tradition of Hume, Smith, Burke and Menger and provided a bridge which linked his short-term allies (conservatives and libertarians) to classical liberals in order to make common cause against collectivism. To roll back the incursions of *taxis* required a redesign of the state. A powerful chamber was to serve as guardian of the rule of law (striking all under the age of forty-five off the voting rolls, for example) to protect liberty against popular sovereignty. As Anderson notes, the correct Hayekian formula was ‘demarchy without democracy’.

Karl Polanyi, from the other end of the empire, was a Hungarian economic historian and socialist who believed that the nineteenth-century liberal order had



died, never to be revived. By 1940, 'every vestige' of the international liberal order had disappeared, the product of the necessary adoption of measures designed to hold off the ravages of the self-regulating market – that is, 'market despotism'. It was the conflict between the market and the elementary requirements of an organized social life that made some form of collectivism or planning inevitable. The liberal market order was, contra Hayek, not 'spontaneous' but a planned development, and its demise was the product of the market order itself. A market order could just as well produce the freedom to exploit as the freedom to associate. The grave danger, in Polanyi's view, was that liberal utopianism might return in the idea of freedom as nothing more than the advocacy of free enterprise, in which planning is 'the denial of freedom', and the justice and liberty offered by regulation or control just 'a camouflage of slavery'. Liberalism on this account will always degenerate, ultimately compromised by an authoritarianism that will be invoked as a counterweight to the threat of mass democracy. Modern capitalism contained the famous 'double movement' in which markets were serially and coextensively disembedded from, and re-embedded in, social institutions and relations. In particular the possibility of a counter-hegemony to the self-regulating market resided in the resistance to (and reaction against) the commodification of the three fictitious commodities – land, labour and money – that represented the spontaneous defence of society.

There has been a Polanyi boom lately, not because Polanyi vanquished Hayek or because his hopes for a decommodified world were realized, but precisely the opposite, because his warnings went unheeded and the disembedding of the market intensifies around the globe. It is of course the Hayekian vision that is triumphant; the Liberal International has come to pass. Yet paradoxically there has been a less careful reading of the Hayekian ideas that spawned them.

The Long March from Mont Pelerin to the collapse of the Berlin Wall took about forty years, by way of the Chicago boys in Chile, the IMF/IBRD complex, and the Reagan–Thatcher dispensations. As Gramsci might have put it, there has been a Hayekian 'passive revolution' from above. We have witnessed what the Left's great pessimist Perry Anderson has dubbed a 'neoliberal grand slam'. The 'fluent vision' of the Right has no equivalent on the Left; embedded liberalism (let alone something called socialism) is now, we are told, as remote as 'Arian bishops'. Neoliberalism rules undivided across the globe and is the most successful ideology in world history.

The process by which neoliberal hegemony was established, and its relation to forms and modes and sites of resistance, remains a story for which, even with Harvey's synoptic survey at hand, we still have no full genealogy. The cast of characters may be lined up – from the school of Austrian economics to the Reagan–Thatcher–Kohl troika – but this explains very little, or rather it poses more questions than answers. Let us recall too that Hayek believed *The Road to Serfdom* had ruined his career and marginalized his entire project. By the mid- to late 1970s many of neoliberalism's intellectual architects claimed that nobody took their idea seriously; it was the inflation of the 1970s, said Friedman, that revealed the cracks within the Keynesian edifice.

Neoliberalism was a class reaction to the crisis of the 1970s (Harvey talks of a 'restoration of class power'); on that much Milton Friedman, David Harvey, and Robert Brenner are agreed. The TNCs and the Wall Street–Treasury nexus imposed brutal forms of economic discipline – 'structural adjustment', in the jargon – to eradicate for ever any residue of collectivism in the Third World. The fiscal crisis and bankruptcy of New York City in 1975, Harvey convincingly shows, 'pioneered the way for neoliberal practices both domestically under Reagan and internationally through the IMF in the 1980s'. But beyond such descriptions, which Harvey lays out clearly enough, we are still left with many paradoxes and puzzles.

Why, for example, did the LSE and Chicago – once the respective centres of Fabianism and a certain version of (American) liberalism under Robert Hutchins – become the forcing houses of neoliberalism? What were the facilitating conditions that fostered the arrival of the maverick Ronald Coase in Chicago, marking a neoliberal turning point? How did the Chicago boys come to occupy the commanding heights in post-Allende Chile and how did they live down the fact that their effects were, to use the language of the World Bank, 'disastrous'? How did the World Bank – a bastion of postwar development economics and, it must be said, of statism – become the voice of laissez-faire? Harry Johnson, who held chairs at the LSE and Chicago, is a spectral figure in the liberalization of the World Bank, but how can we explain the capture of key sectors of the Bank (often by second-rate economists) against a backdrop of robust Keynesianism? How can we grasp the fact that 'shock therapy' in Eastern Europe was more the product of the enthusiastic Hungarian reformers than of the more reticent American neoliberal apparatchiks?

It is sometimes noted that the 1991 *World Development Report* (shaped by Lawrence Summers) marked a neoliberal watershed in its refiguring of the role of the state. But was not the foundational moment a decade earlier with the 1980 Berg report on Africa, named after Elliot Berg, a Michigan economist to whom it seems nobody paid much attention for twenty years? It was Africa (not Latin America or Eastern Europe) that proved to be the first testing ground of neoliberalism's assault on the overextended public sector, on physical capital formation and on the proliferation of market distortions by government.

So the neoliberal grand slam seems to have been preceded by a some pretty mediocre hitting and a good deal of pessimism. Harvey is right to emphasize the unevenness of neoliberalization. Certainly the process by which a measure of consent was manufactured was contested all the way. In general, resistance to neoliberalism – if we are to chart the larger landscape – is heterogeneous and worldwide. The revolts in France, the factory occupations in Argentina, the oil nationalization in Bolivia, and the insurgencies in Iraq are all symptomatic, even if the national and local dynamics differ greatly. The historical 'map of resistance' compiled by Davis, Rowley and Yuen for *Confronting Capitalism* (2004) shows the range and depth of WTO protests dating back to the mid-1980s. Here there is perhaps reason to be less gloomy than Anderson's prognosis might suggest. The triumphalism of the 1990s is gone; the WTO is now a shambles, and ferocious fights within and between the IMF and the IBRD all suggest that the neoliberal project is itself in crisis. Whether the movement of movements represents (at this moment) a serious Polanyian 'global double movement' is an open question. Malcolm Bull's ruminations on the limits of the 'multitude' and the question of political agency show us how complex the issues are. For example, there is a startling observation at the conclusion of Andrew Gamble's book on Hayek (*Hayek: The Iron Cage of Liberty*, 1996), to the effect that Thatcher's old guru has something to offer anticapitalists. His own elitism and classical liberal temperament predisposed him to political despotism, yet his analysis of dispersed knowledge, horizontal coordination and spontaneous orders revealed that the most effective forms of social organization were decentralized and democratic. What is beyond question is that current neoliberal policies are producing radical inequalities concentrated in vast new human settlements which are, as Mike Davis puts it, 'sociologically UFOs'.

*A Brief History* was doubtless written as a sort of provocation – and indeed it provokes in a manner that

has been characteristic of Harvey's influential texts such as *The Condition of Postmodernity* and *The New Imperialism*. One central assertion – that the neoliberal project is a restoration of class power – provokes the question: is neoliberalism in fact at heart 'restorative'? Surely in many parts of the global South it has been as much about the consolidation of power by crony capitalists or the emergence of an entirely new class that stands awkwardly in relation to the market. Is the extraordinary history of China post-1978 really a case of 'Chinese neoliberalism'? The road from the New Household Responsibility System to the Township and Village Enterprises to Shenzhen seems like a very different trajectory of capitalist development than can be accommodated within the neoliberal counter-revolution. Here systematic comparison of early and late neoliberal reforms (Chile and France, Britain and France) may have much more to offer, in particular, about the way conjunctions of class conflict, the ideological origins of neoliberal ideas, the class basis for reform, and the velocity of the 'international opening' shape the forms – the unevennesses – of neoliberalism in practice.

In the years since that epiphany long ago in Baltimore, when the interpretation of ghettos seized David Harvey's imagination as a pressing priority, the neoliberal counter-revolution and the new enclosures have produced drastic revisions to the gazetteer of the globe. The figures are hard to comprehend; in the final buildout of humanity the new megacities will perhaps contain 20 billion people by the year 2030. These sinks of informal labour, says Mike Davis, constitute the 'fastest growing and most unprecedented social class on earth', and he poses the questions: 'To what extent does an informal proletariat possess that most potent of Marxist talismans: "historical agency"? ... Or is some new, unexpected historical subject, à la Hardt and Negri, slouching toward the supercity?'

Here surely lies a theoretical task adequate to the times, one grand enough to engage the doyen of radical urbanists. But there are signs at the end of *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* that Harvey does not relish the prospect of theorizing this new landscape. His somewhat perfunctory roll call of 'the movement of movements' suggests his heart isn't really in it; the 'variety of these struggles is simply stunning, so much so that it is hard sometimes to even imagine connections between them'. When the old Fabian modeller has finished his conspectus of the world that the Wall Street-IMF-US Treasury nexus had wrought, and looks out over the shambles, he pins hope on a 'rejuvenated class politics', which is no sooner invoked

than immediately glossed as ‘alliance politics on the left sympathetic to the recuperation of local powers of self determination.’ This might seem to be a gesture to the myriad forms of resistance to neoliberalism, but Harvey ultimately falls back into the old lesser-of-two-evils logic – ‘a strong and powerful social democratic and working-class movement is in a better position to redeem capitalism than is capitalist class power itself’, which he frankly acknowledges ‘sounds [like] a counter-revolutionary conclusion to those on the far left’.

As well it might, if the ‘far Left’ includes those who have taken direct action in the face of the lethal depredations of the IMF and the WTO. In any case, the worldwide resistance – on the receiving end of neoliberal nostrums administered as often as not by social democrats like Gordon Brown – is hardly going

to wait upon the theoretical insights of ‘histgeomat’. Of course, we understand the magnitude of the wager by strategists of horizontalism in the global anti-capitalist coalition who are gambling on changing the world without taking power. One can surely understand Harvey’s scepticism, but then he is committed to a wager of his own. That is, there are other Austrian ghosts haunting this book – the left logical positivists in Vienna who gambled that the canons of rationality and scientific inference (and the nomothetic models that inspired the young Harvey) could be a bulwark against the rise of fascism, its mystifiers and paralogists. There are no illusions now on that account. It remains, however, to shed remaining illusions about the long, and extreme, history of liberalism. Harvey’s immensely generative book helps us in that task.

**Iain Boal and Michael Watts**

## Kant, Kant, Kant

Katerina Deligiorgi, *Kant and the Culture of Enlightenment*, SUNY Press, Albany, 2005. 248 + xi pp., £45.00 hb., £16.50 pb., 0 7914 6469 5 hb., 0 7914 6470 9 pb.

Elisabeth Ellis, *Kant’s Politics: Provisional Theory in an Uncertain World*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2005. 260 + xii pp., £25.00 hb., 0 3001 0120 1.

Paul Saurette, *The Kantian Imperative: Humiliation, Common Sense, Politics*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2005. 305 + xiv pp., £48.00 hb., £22.50 pb., 0 8020 3882 4 hb., 0 8020 4880 3 pb.

The Kant of the critical and post-critical ethical and political writings has returned repeatedly, in a variety of spectral forms, over the past two hundred years. In the volumes reviewed here, the returns of the Kantian ghost are in many ways frighteningly familiar. At the same time, however, they demonstrate (again) that there is always difference in repetition, and one may still find elements of the strange in the well-known spirit of the Königsberg sage. Kant figures within these three volumes in three different guises: as agonistic critic; as pragmatist; and as sadist. We’ve seen these before, but in each case the reader is provoked to look at them again and re-evaluate them in relation to a particular reading of the philosophical and political woes of the present. Above and beyond the merits of the particular readings offered by these authors, their work also serves as a reminder of the tremendous powers with which Kant’s ghost is imbued; he is still being invoked (whether as inspiration or as warning) in order to settle the complaints and contradictions of liberal modernity.

Deligiorgi is concerned with Kant’s political thought not for its substantive claims, but for the light that it sheds on the idea of enlightenment reason. Her book

aims to provide a defence of this idea in the face of twentieth-century onslaughts from critical theory (Adorno and Horkheimer), poststructuralism (Foucault) and feminism (Gilligan). However, the majority of the text is taken up by a careful analysis of Kant’s response to the critiques of reason that were already internal to enlightenment thinking in the eighteenth century. Deligiorgi considers the work of Diderot and Rousseau, contextualizes Kant’s arguments in relation to these debates, and goes on to argue that Kant’s notion of a ‘culture of enlightenment’ deals with the problem of reason’s hubris, without undermining its authority. It is the emphasis on publicity and plurality that Deligiorgi sees as crucial to how Kant understands enlightenment reason. Reason is not egoistic: the call to think for oneself in Kant’s essay on enlightenment is a call to be willing to put the claims of one’s reason to the touchstone of public scrutiny and debate. This means that in order for the authority of reason to flourish, a culture of enlightenment is required: ‘A culture of enlightenment is simply a culture in which people are free to make public use of their reason.’

On Deligiorgi’s account, the culture of enlightenment is expounded and defended in Kant’s political

essays rather than in his philosophy of right. Crucial texts include 'An Answer to the Question "What is Enlightenment?"', but also the essays 'On Theory and Practice', 'Contest of the Faculties' and 'On Perpetual Peace'. Whereas Kant's philosophy of right deals with the authority of law, these other writings deal with the authority of reason. These are two different kinds of authority: the former is externally imposed; the latter requires both subjective agreement and 'the structural freedom and open scrutiny of communication'. This distinction between different aspects of Kant's thought enables Deligiorgi to interpret Kant's public sphere as much more open and inclusive than his account of property and citizenship in the theory of right would suggest. Deligiorgi is in no doubt that women and servants are invited to be part of the public sphere, even if they do not count as active citizens, since women are not delimited in principle in the same way as servants. Other troubling aspects of Kant's political thought, such as his philosophy of history, are dealt with in a similar way. Notoriously, Kant suggests that certain natural mechanisms of 'unsocial sociability', working through history, will deliver an end of history according to nature's plan. Deligiorgi offers an interpretation of this aspect of Kant's argument that reduces its strong teleological claims, arguing that Kant's own premisses would forbid the kind of closure involved in an end of history.

Having expounded and defended Kant's view of enlightenment reason and a culture of enlightenment, Deligiorgi goes on to examine critiques of Kant, including a chapter on Schiller, and, in the final chapter, an examination of the twentieth-century critics mentioned above. Schiller is accused of falling into the abstract utopianism with which he charges Kant, and each of the modern critics is seen as falling into some kind of performative contradiction, in which it turns out that they require the principle of reflective critique of which they are critical. Deligiorgi suggests that while this is something not properly recognized by Adorno, Horkheimer and Foucault, it is taken on board in Gilligan's ethic of care.

Deligiorgi's Kant is an agonistic critic, committed to reason as a public process of ongoing testing and revision. Ellis's Kant, although it is also the Kant of the political writings on enlightenment, publicity and history, is a peculiar kind of pragmatist. A pragmatist who, contrary to Deligiorgi, has already exhausted the work of reason, in the sense that he already knows what the ideal world must look like, but who recognizes the imperfect nature of the actual world and therefore formulates a series of maxims of right that

are *provisional*. Whereas the targets of Deligiorgi's account are the critics of enlightenment reason, in Ellis's case the targets are the kinds of Kantian political theory that ground themselves in his moral rather than his political philosophy.

In spite of the reference to an 'uncertain world' in the title of her book, there is little uncertainty in Ellis's account of Kant's political theory or, indeed, in her account of the world. In both cases, the fundamental premiss is that there is a split between real and ideal: 'Kant locates the motor of progress toward a more enlightened politics in the tension between commonly held ideals and pragmatic political reality.' In this situation, it is necessary to work out how to deal with a less than ideal world without undermining the possibility of progress towards that ideal, even though progress is not guaranteed. This provides a neat way of reconciling seemingly contradictory elements of Kant's theory, such as his outlawing of revolution in practice, whilst apparently approving of it in theory. In order to maintain this reading, as with Deligiorgi, Ellis dismisses Kant's teleological account of history and makes a distinction between Kant's theory of right and his writings on enlightenment and publicity. The former is dismissed both on grounds of internal inconsistency with the rest of Kant's work and of its intrinsic implausibility. The latter distinction between the theory of right on the one hand, and Kant's account of the public use of reason on the other is sustained by the argument that the philosophy of right deals with provisional rights, whereas the public use of reason is the way in which the gap between 'commonly held ideals and pragmatic political reality' may be substantively bridged.

For Ellis, the theory of right establishes the kind of political architecture best adapted to sustaining the possibility of progress. The foundation stone of this architecture is the guarantee of contractual relations, not because it is right in itself, but because without this, in an imperfect world, there can only be anarchy and therefore no progress at all (hence the primacy of obedience to the sovereign in Kant's requirements of political actors). The public use of reason is the sphere in which ideas can be disseminated and, over time, become part of common-sense culture, which can then in turn influence 'pragmatic political reality'. This will, however, be a long-term (potentially infinite) matter. Ellis castigates deliberative democrats for seeing the effects of good argument purely in short-term and individualized terms, rather than in terms of long-term collective learning. She does, however, find support for her position from some of the work currently

being done on the institutionalization of norms in, for instance, the case of human rights regimes. Ellis present a familiarly liberal and cosmopolitan Kant, with the emphasis on process rather than outcome, on gradualism rather than revolution, and on the crucial importance of civil society as an independent source of change. The book ends with a consideration of Marshall's threefold account of civil, political and social rights, and the argument that these need to be supplemented in order to enable citizens to be as autonomous as possible in the face of state power.

One can see clear links between Deligiorgi's and Ellis's Kants, although their portraits of a philosopher who made a principled link between politics and open democratic communication are very differently grounded. In comparison, Saurette draws Kant as a sinister Sadean figure, whose apparent commitment to the inviolability of the person masks a rather distasteful kind of disciplinarity. According to Saurette:



'Kantian autonomy thus not only fundamentally relies on a *philosophical conception* of humiliation to defend its theoretical cogency. Kantian morality requires practices that actively seek to cultivate an *affective experience* of humiliation as well.' Like Ellis, Saurette is concerned to critique the ways in which Kantian moral theory influences much contemporary ethical and political theory; unlike Ellis, his critique is based

on a reading of Kant's moral philosophy rather than his politics. At the centre of the argument is a passage from the *Critique of Practical Reason*, in which Kant refers to how respect for the moral law is inspired by the way in which it humiliates the moral subject through comparison with his or her debased carnal nature. For Saurette, this passage provides a thread with which to unravel what he terms the 'Kantian imperative' (reminiscent of Connolly's Augustinian imperative) – that is, the strategies through which Kant seeks to ensure that morality is understood in universal and necessary terms.

The 'Kantian imperative' incorporates four elements. At its basis is the view that morality takes the form of universal, necessary law. Saurette suggests that Kant's desire to defend this conception of morality against alternative views, such as those of Hume, is what drives the whole of the critical project. He also argues that Kant provides no convincing philosophical argument as to why his understanding of morality should be treated as self-evident. In place of philosophical demonstration, Kant turns to the second element of the imperative, the appeal to common-sense recognition. Saurette is not referring here to common sense as it is invoked in Kant's third *Critique*, or even in the account of political judgement in his political writings, but to the ways in which common sense figures in the moral philosophy texts, particularly in the *Critique of Practical Reason* but also in *Metaphysics of Morals*. In these texts, Saurette argues, the self-evident power of pure practical reason is 'demonstrated' via the claim that it is recognizable by common sense in individuals and in established norms and rules of morality. At work here, according to Saurette, is a third characteristic of the Kantian imperative, a kind of sleight of hand in which scepticism in theory ('if') becomes translated into dogmatism in practice ('must'). However, this translation does not remain at a purely philosophical level. The fourth characteristic of the Kantian imperative is a commitment to moral cultivation, using the power of humiliation to instil respect for the moral law. In effect, these techniques of moral cultivation are designed to create the common sense that Kant is elsewhere assuming as self-evident. Without them the production of moral subjectivity would not be possible.

Saurette links his reading of Kant to Adorno and Horkheimer's analysis of enlightenment reason in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (a strong contrast with Deligiorgi's interpretation referred to above). As with Adorno and Horkheimer, Saurette sees himself as unmasking the coercive dimension of enlightenment

reason, but with a Foucauldian emphasis on the technologies of subjectivity that such reason requires. He goes on to apply the analysis of the Kantian imperative to contemporary political theory, which he exemplifies in the work of Habermas and Taylor. Although these thinkers supposedly engage in alternative modes of political theorizing (liberal versus communitarian), Saurette argues that one can see in both the debilitating work of a universal and necessary conception of morality, and a reliance on common sense to do the work that philosophical reason is unable to do. Saurette traces these implications to the politics of humiliation exemplified by the notorious events at Abu Ghraib. In more constructive mode, Saurette argues, following Connolly, for exploring notions of moral cultivation from an assumption of deep pluralism about the form that morality must take.

So, which of these Kants do I like best? They all have a certain appeal. Deligiorgi's argument is scholarly and based on a deep and attentive reading of certain texts, though I remain unconvinced that Kant's ghost has managed to banish the equally troublesome spectres of Adorno, Horkheimer and Foucault. Ellis's argument is freshly put, confident and really does take the whole of Kant's *political* thought seriously, though I find her understanding of concepts of nature, freedom, ideas and progress worryingly simplistic, both philosophically and politically. Saurette's Kant provides a welcome counter to the more liberal versions, and raises important issues about morality and disciplinary power. However, it is based on a tendentious reading that risks falling into caricature, and exploits the Abu Ghraib example in a way that is becoming somewhat tiresome in supposedly 'critical' political theory. A more fundamental difficulty with these readings, in my view, is that, in spite of some cursory acknowledgements to the contrary, these books present Kant's ghost as having a single identity that is the basis of his power to sort out contemporary philosophical and political problems.

Deligiorgi knows that the truth of Kantian reason is agonistic and communicative, but also reliable. Ellis knows that Kant's political thought is pragmatic and provisional. Saurette knows that Kant is an inflictor of pain. But if we know anything about reading Kant, then we know that any claim to capture Kant's meaning will depend on exclusions that double Kant's haunting of our ethical and political imagination. This is not just a point about the exclusive effects of any reading, but relates to the ways in which each of these authors wants to intervene in the theorizing of our own time. Kant can be used as a basis for defending

reason, liberalism or pluralism (whether positively or negatively), but if he is then questions will always be raised about the relation between the Kant that is explicitly invoked and all the other Kants that are thereby occluded. In the case of Deligiorgi, it is the Kant of the second *Critique* and the theory of right that hovers at the margins of her story, with a legislative account of pure reason that threatens to undo the Kant of the culture of enlightenment. Ellis's account, in contrast, is most obviously haunted by Kant's teleological reading of history, and the ways in which its paradoxes dramatize the difficulties of thinking about history in terms of a duality of material and ideal determination. And the most obvious ghost in Saurette's particular machine, given the significance of 'common sense' in his argument, is the Kant of the *Critique of Judgment*. Whether it is being used as solution or as problem, Kant's is an unquiet spirit.

**Kimberly Hutchings**

## Alchemico-historiography

Esther Leslie, *Synthetic Worlds: Nature, Art and the Chemical Industry*, Reaktion Books, London, 2005. 280 pp., £25.00 hb., 1 86189 248 9.

Esther Leslie's *Synthetic Worlds* emerges from a fascinating question: what happens to art when science begins to compete with it in the production of a second nature, a fabricated parallel universe, a product of human hands? It finds its answers between Adorno's dour suspicion of science and Benjamin's more enthusiastic embrace of it. Leslie insists that industrial capitalism is rife with contradictory trends, raw material for staging the dialectical conversation that she unfolds in her book. The nineteenth-century development of a modern chemical industry, she explains, participated in an 'increasingly calamitous entwinement of natural and synthetic worlds', enacting a rupture between humans and nature as scientists inventing laboratory-produced substitutes for natural materials such as dyes, cotton and rubber expressed hopes of securing a human domain independent of nature. But this process cannot be taken for the whole story, since there is also, Leslie reminds us, evidence of convergence between art and science, nature and the human, during the same period in Germany, which she offers as a paradigm for the workings of industrial capitalism more generally.



Chemical science, she emphasizes, initiated quests for reciprocal human relations with nature as well as attempts to control it. Moving between Adornian pessimism and Benjaminian optimism, *Synthetic Worlds* brings together the well-known story of science's project of mastery with a less familiar story of its search for an empathy between humans and nature in order to foreground utopian possibilities suppressed by the capitalist form of science's development.

More specifically, Leslie shows that romanticism, dialecticism and experimental science cross-pollinate in German thought, at times resulting in assertions of a necessary imbrication of humans and nature, and even a recognition of the 'magical' aspect of a natural world endowed with purposes of its own; there were artist-scientists, as well as influential friendships between artists and scientists, encouraging such views. Leslie further suggests that alchemy's dream of a transmutation of lead and other base metals into gold resurfaces in the industrial project of transforming waste into use values, or superabundant resources (such as coal) into ersatz versions of resources Germany lacked. Spurred by necessity – specifically the paucity, and, after World War I, total loss of colonial holdings to pillage – German researchers would force out of coal tar, a by-product of steel production, a myriad of colours: blackness yielding its opposite, and trash transformed into value. Throughout her account, Leslie dredges up marginalized tidbits of the history of chemistry to insist we take a fresh look at influential theorizations of 'nature', such as the dialectic of enlightenment or the fetishism of the commodity. Since 'nature' is a concept that art and science share, a site of struggle between them, she is able to move back and forth between the implications of changing views of it to both. Her style is associational and dialectical, combining logical argumentation with a figurative play that repeats in form the entanglement of science and art, the rational and the aesthetic, that the book takes as its topic. I despair of adequately representing the range of examples or the subtle allusiveness that resonates through these chapters, but I will map out here some of her principal moves.

First Leslie takes up a 'poetics of coal': the preoccupation of Romantics, such as Novalis, Goethe and Schelling, with the close observation of nature, and their interest in mining in particular, which makes an easy division between science and poetry difficult. Against the alienating mainstream scientific view of a nature to be subdued and forced to yield to man's will, the romantic philosophy of nature emphasized instead continuities of the human and natural, as well

as the magical, fantastic possibilities that inhere in the world's various life forces – by no means only human – waiting to be released like riches from a cave. The second chapter comes at this problematic from the science side, offering a case study of Goethe's friend Friedlieb Ferdinand Runge, who pursued his chemical researches on a foundation of romantic philosophy and dialectical assumptions about the natural world as mutable, ever-changing from one form into others. Not only did he extract the first synthetic dye from coal tar, but, in the course of his research, he came to view chemicals as endowed with 'life force', which he studied in a series of experiments, dripping various chemical combinations onto blotting paper to produce remarkable eye-like configurations, which 'grew' themselves from a point of origin in patterns determined by the components in relation to each other; these revealed, according to Runge, their 'inner will'.

Leslie considers the chemical factory not only as the site of such experimentation but also as a site for the exploitation of labour, and segues to Marx's own complex theorizations of nature: his critique of the suspect transmutation of gold and other natural substances into synthetic ones as money, as well as the fetishization of the commodity form, which seemingly gives life to the inert and steals it from the human – but also his early speculation on a desirable 'metabolism' between man and nature in the 1844 *Manuscripts*. Capitalism's culture of substitution, so amply illustrated by the chemical industry – and the questions about authenticity raised by it – left a deep mark on Marx's thought, provoking some of his most significant theorizations as well as speculation about a rapprochement between alienated nature and man under different conditions of production.

Leslie proceeds to consider the implications of the development of photography – a chemical process – as well as utopian architectural schemes, such as Scheerbart's 'glass architecture' fantasies, which manifested themselves as a collective dream in the early years of the Arcades, with their glass roofs that allowed twinkling stars to appear as part of their structure, seeming magically to bring the heavens closer to earth. Later, as electrification of the cities removed the stars from view, photography attempted to capture heavenly bodies, reclaiming them for the human eye in synthetic form; but photography, like the Arcades, is also eventually diverted from utopian to regressive uses, becoming part of the aestheticization of war. Following this history of man's changing relation to the heavens mediated by technology, we move into

the hell of the dangerous nineteenth-century factories, and the history of worker actions to better their lot. In this case also utopian aspiration is stymied by the power of capital.

A substantial part of *Synthetic Worlds* explores the Nazification of the chemical industry and official art production in Germany. The war effort required a steady supply of rubber, oil and other materials difficult to come by under combat conditions. Nazi officials moved swiftly to make sure not only that Jews were pushed out of the chemical industry but also that its quest for synthetics was strongly supported. The big capitalist firms such as I.G. Farben, predicting large profits from war, were swift to fall in line. Abundant coal was celebrated with religious fervour – it was the potential origin of all things – but human control over nature was celebrated even more. The push to develop a synthetic world was eyed with suspicion and awe by commentators outside Germany as the war got under way: the technical creativity demanded respect, but the wholehearted embrace of the ersatz garnered a disgust that Horkheimer and Adorno would eventually theorize as the attempt to control nature redounding on man, who finds himself imprisoned in an administered world taken to terrifying extremes. The reduction of human remains to literal raw material in the concentration camps – the relegation of Jews and other ostensible social ‘waste’ to an exploitable equivalent of coal tar – and the eagerness of German firms to profit from death, destruction and the inhumanities of Nazi notions of racial purity as well as the war machine, are only the most graphic demonstrations of this self-imprisonment.

At the same time as ‘nature’ was subjected to control and rendered seemingly superfluous in the factory, however, official artists were urged to fight the trends of ‘degenerate’ art by conforming to a supposedly pure ‘nature’ of blood and soil – Volkish and eternal. Against this project, a tiny outpost of the chemical industry, Herberts and Company, provided refuge and employment for a handful of artists rejected by the dominant Nazi aesthetic. This resistant gesture did not impede the same firm from simultaneously deploying slave labour from the camps in its regular production facilities, nor did the dubious origin of the workers in other parts of the factory appear to deter the artists. Under cover of chemical experimentation, they alacritously continued their avant-garde projects in this industrial setting, working with new colours, lacquers, and, above all, attempting to allow a dialectic between materials and artist to determine artistic production, harking back – but this time from the side of ‘art’

– to Runge and his view of chemicals as having a life force of their own. At one and the same time, then, this marginalized contingent of artists indicated the utopian possibilities of chemistry, and its limits under conditions of fascism. The small, potentially liberatory, collaboration between chemistry and disparaged art was overshadowed by the massive collaboration of chemical industrialists with the Nazi war machine, including the development of rockets in slave-dug underground caverns that returned chemical production back to the earth, but in a diabolical form.

The final chapter looks at postwar developments, after the Nazi-sponsored synthetics innovations had been divided among the victors, and thus takes the story beyond Germany. A section on pop fascination with cryogenesis – freezing of human remains at death in hopes of future regeneration – at the height of the Cold War flows into the situationists’ critique of such techno-plots to extend the *quantity* of life without similar attention to its *quality*, which they viewed as degenerating precipitously daily. From here we slide back in time to Adorno and Benjamin’s theorizations of aura – ‘the experience of distance’ – and their sense that it had slipped from a ‘natural’ to a ‘synthetic’ mode under conditions of industrial capital, a trajectory Leslie finds critiqued in the poetry of J.H. Prynne as well. Then, picking up the thread of colour in particular, a short history of fluorescence follows, in which its military and commercial applications find their antithesis in the punk embrace of the artificial, the plastic and florid, as a critique of ‘hippy’ affirmations of the ‘natural’ which had become mainstream pretensions. Leslie tracks these 1970s emergences into the more recent burning of a million pounds – the reduction of ‘value’ to tr(ash) – by the ‘K foundation’ (techno-situationists Bill Drummond and Jimmy Cauty) and the content of the novels of Iain Sinclair, chronicler of contemporary urban second nature and decay.

A brief conclusion describes the simultaneously fascinating and tacky offer of the corporation LifeGem to transform human cremation ashes into diamonds. Their pricey service reprises the book’s themes of alchemy and transformation, while further documenting the human aspiration to produce simulacra of natural substances. It also illustrates, however, that technology’s promise to deliver a utopian second nature is continuously hijacked by the profit motive and realm of appearance necessary to capital’s reproduction. The rift between nature and the human thus remains. Just the same, Leslie’s own book attests that the attempt to bridge it persists as well.

A cultural theorist who previously produced a book on Walter Benjamin's concept of 'Technik', and then a second on animation, Leslie is particularly well positioned to tease out the relations of chemistry and art in all its complexity. She writes the kind of dizzying, sweeping, idiosyncratic cultural history that has too rarely been inherited from the Frankfurt School. *Synthetic Worlds*' contribution to this genre consists in exposing utopian possibilities of science and technology through an examination of marginalized sites in which such possibilities were pursued in earlier moments. Instead of a monolithic story about the progressive or regressive trajectory of science, she indicates its dialectical rhythm: the emergence of redemptive energies and their suppression, followed by the re-emergence of utopian possibilities in another location, and so on.

Some may find Leslie's cultural studies too poetic and allusive. Suggestion and rhetoric, as well as the sheer diversity of topics and examples adduced, can override argumentation. But the very qualities now celebrated in Benjamin's own writing are less often appreciated in those who write *about* him. Despite moments of local doubt about the argument, cumulatively the book is very powerful, provoking fresh thought about the relation of art, nature and science. At a moment when science has entered a phase in which it has managed not only to synthesize extra-human nature, but is moving towards reproducing the 'human' as such – through robotics, artificial intelligence, cloning, prostheses, and so on – a book that puts into play a compelling 'afterlife' of the Frankfurt School's discussions of the 'human' and the 'natural' is well worth the reading.

**Crystal Bartolovich**

## Qui n'est pas arrivé

Michel Kail, *Simone de Beauvoir: philosophe*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 2006. 155 pp., €12.00 pb., 2 13 054101 1.

This short but rich book begins by implicitly situating itself in a new wave of writing on Beauvoir unburdened by the defensive obligation to justify the idea that she counts as a philosopher. This leaves the way clear for the identification of the central concepts and problems in Beauvoir's philosophy, its specificity and its originality. The challenge, according to Kail, is to understand Beauvoir's innovative and mysterious

claim, in the Introduction to *The Second Sex*, that the dependency of women on men '*n'est pas arrivé*' – that is that, having always been the case, it is not the result of an historical event or an evolution (*devenir*), it is not something that 'happened'. This dependency which 'did not happen' – that is, which did not come about as the consequence of antecedent conditions – is, Kail says, an unprecedented object of analysis in any kind of theoretical discourse. Its elaboration in *The Second Sex* is based on a distinctive form of phenomenological existentialism indebted to, but different in important respects from, both Sartre and Merleau-Ponty.

Kail's argument shows that a great part of the effort in expounding Beauvoir's philosophy consists in rendering explicit the inaugurating moves that animate its manifest content. Most commentators, Kail writes, recognize the strong anti-naturalist current in Beauvoir's work, and tend therefore to identify it as part of the tradition of Enlightenment criticism concerned to distinguish between nature and 'man' and his culture. But the assumption of a natural world from which the human distinguishes itself by transforming it – in brief, the distinction between nature and culture – is from the very beginning bypassed or annulled, according to Kail, in Beauvoir's assumption of the phenomenological–existential concept of the 'world'. The world, in this sense, is chronologically but not logically anterior to me; it exists 'before' me and yet is dependent on me. The world and 'the subject' are strictly contemporary, and thus the 'subject' and the 'object' can only be understood in their constitutive relation to each other. The world *is* only the world of men. There is no 'natural' or original world behind the scenes, subsequently veiled by ideology or interpreted by culture. Further, Kail claims, the world is, for Beauvoir, quite specifically, the world of *men*, in the sense that it is a masculine world or a world of masculine 'values' (remembering the extended meaning that word enjoys in French existentialism). The distinction between nature and culture is the organizing principle of this world. Accordingly, man affords himself the privilege of the subject, transcending nature or the object, the latter identified with woman, the Other. In implicitly refusing the co-originality of its terms (in effect positing nature as the given upon which culture works) the nature–culture distinction is itself a naturalist thesis. Beauvoir's anti-naturalism (or 'anaturalism') then consists not in the privileging of culture over nature, but in the refusal of the nature–culture distinction as internal to naturalism, with naturalism now identified as a presupposition of the masculine world.

Kail's account of the importance of this anaturalism in Beauvoir's work, from her earliest philosophical essays, entails a defence of her appropriation of Sartre's concept of consciousness and an attempt to explain how her enduring commitment to a concept of absolute freedom is distinct from certain idealist notions of the detached, empyrean (and 'masculine') subject that many feminist critics of Beauvoir have claimed to find in her work. Kail agrees with the now-common view that the originality of Beauvoir's work consists in part in her repeated attempts to think, beyond Sartre, the relation between freedom and situation. And he stresses that the spur, for Beauvoir, was the need to understand and indeed justify the political concept of oppression. (In this sense Beauvoir's philosophy may be seen, according to Kail, as primarily a political philosophy.)

Beauvoir's preoccupation with and attempts to understand the oppressive situation have been interpreted by many commentators as a criticism of Sartre, on the basis that her analysis is incompatible with the thesis of absolute freedom. But as Kail convincingly demonstrates here – via a critical reading of Sonia Kruks, one of the best-known exponents of this view – this presupposes precisely that separation of freedom and situation that Beauvoir's ontology denies. The situation does not 'limit', and hence relativize freedom, 'as if freedom waited in its own private box before being plunged into the scenery of a situation'. Freedom and situation are strictly contemporaneous, neither existing outside of the relation which constitutes them. The situation is not therefore the ensemble of external 'objective' conditions confronting the subject, not least because the world is a world of other freedoms and our relation to these freedoms. The idea that the situation could limit freedom makes the naturalist mistake of confusing 'the given' with the mythical idea of the *naturally* given and leads inevitably to deterministic explanations of oppression, when it is rather oppression that explains the tendency towards deterministic explanations: 'nothing better characterizes an oppressive situation than the fact that it is interpreted by the consciousness that exists in it in deterministic terms, and when it seems to them to be a matter for a causal explanation.'

The distinctiveness of Beauvoir's philosophy, Kail argues, is in the attempt to think the given outside of naturalistic categories, through an existential ontology of the human, in order to understand the specificity of the oppression of women that 'did not happen'. In Beauvoir's philosophy the given emerges as already 'inhabited' by the meanings with which others have

invested it. The given is composed of both subject and object or, better, the relation between them: 'The given is relational, the given is relation itself.' Accordingly, the oppressive situation is characterized by the network of relations that constitute it and not by any objective elements in themselves. The relation between oppressor and oppressed determines the latter's relation to all the other elements of the situation, dictates the meaning that the situation can have for the oppressed, and thus circumscribes their possibilities. The oppressive situation is one in which the transcendence which constitutes the subject is not limited or annihilated but condemned to fall back upon itself uselessly, as Beauvoir writes in *The Second Sex*.

If the subordination of women must be understood in these terms this explains, according to Kail, why it 'did not happen' – that is, cannot be explained in terms of an objective cause. On the basis of this understanding Beauvoir famously criticizes three types of naturalistic explanation – or discourses of justification, as Kail says – the physio-biological, the psychoanalytic and the dialectical materialist. The first, the most obviously naturalistic, is insufficient and dubious for having overlooked the fact that the 'givens of biology' are revealed by and hence dependent for their meaning on the subjects who allegedly discover them in their objectivity. Psychoanalysis makes up for this deficit in foregrounding the role of symbolization but is compromised by its reductive sexual monism – specifically, the assumption of an evolutionary or developmental model of sexual functioning onto which meaning is subsequently grafted – abstracting human existence from its world. Historical materialism (that is, Engels's *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*), in its turn, does not fail to consider the worldly context of human existence, especially its social and economic dimensions, but it reduces men and women to economic entities and collapses into a naturalist economic determinism. In each form of explanation something is gained and something is lost, but all three ultimately put the 'cause' of female subordination – and hence its possible overturning – out of human hands.

Kail's reconstruction of Beauvoir's various positions is achieved through a strong philosophical interpretation. This is what recommends the book. It is most obvious in the discussion of the givens of biology, where, for Kail, the contradictions in Beauvoir's argument cannot be reconciled simply through a choice of emphasis. According to Kail, Beauvoir's exemplary analysis of Sade – in which sexuality and sexuation are treated as part of existence (expressions

of freedom) that invite, rather than provide, explanation – anticipates the problems with the sex–gender distinction that are central to one recent strand of philosophy. In claiming that the spirit of Beauvoir’s critical discussion of biology paved the way for the critique of the metaphysics of sex found in Delphy’s materialist feminism and Butler’s deconstructive epistemology, Kail treads familiar ground with less familiar steps, insisting on the centrality of the basic existentialist elements in Beauvoir’s analyses. And yet, Kail argues, Beauvoir’s trenchant insistence on ‘the facts of biology’ and her uncompromising presentation of those ‘facts’ fall prey to precisely that error with which she charged Freud: the assumption of a functional, reproductive model of sex difference ‘behind’ gender. Thus Beauvoir, in what is perhaps the most important chapter of *The Second Sex* for recent philosophy, succumbs to the idealist, naturalist assumptions of the prevailing socio-philosophical ideology that, Kail argues, it is her main achievement to have put into question. Even so, the general conclusion of this chapter ‘conforms to the principles of existentialist philosophy’ and contains Beauvoir’s

essential teaching, providing the groundwork upon which her successors could build.

As Kail’s project in this book is reconstructive, he is primarily concerned to correct various criticisms of Beauvoir by insisting on the nuances of her existentialism, thus enabling us to appreciate the distinctiveness of her analysis of oppression. It is not his aim to ask, further, whether she was right. While Kail therefore convincingly demonstrates the critical force of much of Beauvoir’s work, and fruitfully suggests an interpretative reorientation around her anaturalism, even its most obvious deficiencies remain unaddressed. For example, Beauvoir herself was nothing if not reductive in her analysis of ‘historical materialism’, and the residual idealism in her account of oppression is not hidden by repeating the mantra of the primacy of the relation. Nor does Kail consider what happened to the specifically existentialist theses that make up Beauvoir’s ontology in the materialist and deconstructive philosophies of her successors. After all, there has been no significant tradition of existentialist feminism after Beauvoir and an alternative Beauvoirian feminism has proved difficult to define.

**Stella Sandford**

## Feeling abstract

Stephen Zepke, *Art as Abstract Machine: Aesthetics and Ontology in Deleuze and Guattari*, Routledge, London and New York, 2005. 318 pp., £45.00 hb., 0 415 97155 1.

In the ongoing evaluation of the legacy of the thought of Gilles Deleuze there has of late been an increasingly clamorous assessment of the precise role played in his career by his collaborations with Félix Guattari. The caricature by Žižek of the ‘guattarized’ Deleuze, who needed Guattari as an ‘alibi’, is complemented by Alain Badiou’s determination to edit Guattari out of Deleuze’s curriculum vitae. Other voices, while they differ in their estimation of its value, correctly identify the salient role played by Guattari in orienting Deleuze’s thought after the still ‘structuralist’ *Logic of Sense* towards the ‘machinic’ ontology of the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Among the most vociferous defenders of the jointly authored books has been Éric Alliez. Alliez has convincingly argued that *What is Philosophy?* is far from the sell-out, about-turn or conservative portrait of philosophy for which some have taken it. Following on from this, then, comes the publication of Stephen Zepke’s study of Deleuze and Guattari’s ontology and aesthetics. Not only does Zepke – who attended Alliez’s seminar at Vienna – afford Guattari an equal billing in his title

– this despite the fact that Deleuze’s output in the form of books devoted to art far outstrips that of Guattari in terms of quantity – in one chapter he affords Guattari the central position in the development of his own argument regarding ‘Songs of molecules: the chaosmosis of sensation.’

The book begins by stating that the notion of the abstract machine (initially developed by Guattari independently) as it appears in the work of Deleuze and Guattari issues what Zepke calls ‘an imperative’. This is identified as the first principle of the notion of art as abstract machine in its generality: namely that the abstract machine is real and not a representation. As Zepke reminds us, for Deleuze and Guattari, on the one hand (in *What is Philosophy?*) neither sensation nor art of any sort has ever been representational, while, on the other, specific artists seem to practise a resistance to the representational more than others. The abstract machine itself is, Zepke points out, *against* representation. As Mireille Buydens put it in her 1990 study of Deleuze’s aesthetics, ‘the abstract machine is ... “before” every form or beyond these, hooked into

an intensive molecularity in a variable manner depending on the artist which it characterises.' (Indeed there is one quibble in this regard concerning the protocol of citation adopted here: surely Buydens's enduringly persuasive study, complete with the imprimatur of its subject, deserved some attention.)

The range of artists selected by Zepke for consideration in separate sections following expository material are either already those favoured by Deleuze (Antonioni features as the exemplar of the cinematic abstract machine for example, Pollock in relation to sensation, Bacon 'hapticity', and so on). Such rereading has been a feature of several recent books on Deleuze, not least the three volumes of Ronald Bogue. Zepke goes somewhat further in extrapolation, presenting, for example, his misgivings concerning the limitations of Guattari's reading of Duchamp. The work of Pollock is positioned, as is Deleuze and Guattari's thought on it, in relation to other important canonical statements on the artist (thus the writing of Clement Greenberg and of Michael Fried is discussed in a depth never entered into by Deleuze and/or Guattari). However, this is less true of the analysis of Deleuze's reading of Antonioni, which does not venture as far into contiguous debates in film theory and film history. The method, rather, is to produce a montage of the various scattered statements on Antonioni throughout *Cinema II* and to present a coherent survey of these as amounting to a systematic account of the specificity of his abstract machine.

On this level, then, the book succeeds in being a fresh contribution to the growing body of work engaging with Deleuze and Guattari's approach to art theory and aesthetics. Moreover it positions their work in a way which brings it into insistent dialogue with the tradition of critical reflection on art in the twentieth century and beyond. Thus, for instance, Zepke makes a convincing case that Worringer's empathy and abstraction are rewritten by Deleuze and Guattari as the smooth and striated of *A Thousand Plateaus*. The lack of reference to music is justified by the lack of any systematic exposition of it in Deleuze and Guattari's writing. The emphasis on Greenberg and Fried, while understandable from the point of view of anglophone art history and aesthetics (explicitly announced as an aim of one of the chapters) is at the expense, however, of any reference to the influence of, for instance, Henri Maldiney, who was especially influential on Deleuze.

The imperative of what Zepke identifies as Deleuze and Guattari's 'anti-Platonic physiology of art' puts the work of art in a position which he describes, in quite an

unDeleuzian idiom, as ethical. By invoking this term, Zepke makes a move towards a kind of translation, for which his foregrounding of Spinoza's 'mystical atheism' (in Chapter 2) serves as the catalyst. While Zepke concurs with other commentators in stressing the 'great identity Spinoza–Nietzsche' in respect, say, of an ontology, he is original in his insistence on a central role for Spinoza in respect of an onto-aesthetics which the latter might facilitate. Indeed, so much does the idiosyncratic emphasis hold sway that the concept of the abstract machine (of Zepke's title) in fact operates as the understudy to 'atheistic mysticism' in the book's cast of concepts. For Zepke, the mysticism of Spinoza, presented as a radical alternative to negative theology, is at the core of the onto-aesthetics made possible in his wake, including in Nietzsche, whose own invocation of what Deleuze will come to call 'the powers of the false' is already, as Zepke asserts in a footnote, an atheistic mysticism.

Zepke helps in the move from the generality of aesthetics to a particularity of art criticism: 'Art as abstract machine therefore involves an ethical choice, a selection and conjugation of those matter-flows which are in the process of escaping from themselves, it must affirm only that which is the most deterritorialized.' Art as abstract machine, then, is not just any art – even if all art is in some sense the abstract machine because no art has ever been representational. The (Nietzschean) processes of choice, selection and conjugation may be located on the plane of the artist, the work or the viewer. What each of these planes have in common with one another is the imperative, one aspect of which it is now clear is: *experiment*. Art, in its generality, is the privileged site for corporeal experimentation.

Zepke ends by invoking the leap of faith which is the adjunct to the imperative with which he began. The book then comes to an end on the very interface which is so often invoked by the very concept of the abstract machine, that between aesthetics and ontology: 'To believe in the break, to affirm a disjunction in which product and production are in absolute immanence, to affirm, finally, a plane of abstract machines, is the very condition of art's possibility, the very condition of its *actuality*.' If this latter term has a particular resonance in the thought of Deleuze considered separately from Guattari – specifically in the concept of *counter-effectuation* – *Art as Abstract Machine* may be considered as subjecting the thinking of each to a counter-effectuation beyond their jointly authored work.

**Garin Dowd**

# Alternative ideals

Iris Marion Young, 1949–2006

She entered the room with a smile, putting me at ease at once. I had emailed to request an interview for the *Women's Philosophy Review*. She had agreed, and we set up the meeting while she was visiting the University of Bath in 1999. All was recorded, all transcribed; the result was published unedited, including her gentle laugh, often with a playful edge, always with the grace of one immersed in and continuously learning from the world around her ('Theorizing with Practical Intent', *Women's Philosophy Review* 26, 2000). This August, an email from a feminist colleague informed me of her passing away. After a year and a half fighting cancer, she had died at the age of fifty-seven.

Hers was a unique voice – bold without being abrasive, serious without being humourless, incisive and introspective in equal measure. She was a generous writer who took care to draw attention to lesser-known works than her own. In this, she lived up to the feminist ideal of mutual support. She lived her values.

Iris Young saw her work as following two tracks: a political theory or philosophy track, on the one hand, and this female embodiment track, on the other. *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton University Press, 1990) marked her debut in the world of political philosophy. It was followed a few years later by *Intersecting Voices: Dilemmas of Gender, Political Philosophy, and Polity* (Princeton University Press, 1997) and *Inclusion and Democracy* (Oxford University Press, 2000). In the second track, *Throwing like a Girl and Other Essays in Feminist Philosophy and Female Body Experience* (Indiana University Press, 1990) brought together work in the phenomenology of female embodiment that she had begun in 1977. Recently republished in the series Studies in Feminist Philosophy, under the title *On Female Body Experience* (Oxford University Press, 2005), these path-breaking essays were joined by the previously unpublished 'Menstrual Meditations'. Here she revisits Simone de Beauvoir's reflections on the 'ambivalent' experience of feminine maturation. She fondly describes



the experience of reading *The Second Sex* again as one of coming home to a mother to find her wiser than she had thought in her younger days. Still, she finds a tone of resignation in Beauvoir. Ever optimistic, Young writes of menstruation: 'This female body experience does not offer the possibility of transvaluing the values of a commodified, efficiency-oriented, rationalist culture. It can, however, speak to all of us about the reflective

possibilities of moody meditation, if we listen.’ With barely suppressed naughtiness, she writes, ‘Heidegger himself would no doubt be shocked to have his lofty text appropriated for the sake of revealing human possibilities in unspeakable menstrual experiences.’

In her work in political philosophy and policy, Young saw herself as following the method of critical theory, which ‘reflects on existing social relations and processes to identify what we experience as valuable in them, but as present only intermittently, partially or potentially.’ Thus, to identify ideals of inclusive democracy, she reflected on ‘the experience of actually existing democracy, looking for possibilities glimmering in it but which we nevertheless feel lacking – experiences such as reasonable yet passionate persuasion, accountable representation, participatory civic activity linked to authoritative state action, or transnational institutions for discussing and addressing global problems’ (*Inclusion and Democracy*). She developed the idea of deep democracy, whilst noting the recent blatant abjuration of one of the basic principles of democracy, when ‘nineteen of the world’s leading liberal democracies have waged a ghastly war without any of them formally consulting with either their citizens or their elected representatives about whether to do so.’

Iris Young was an activist-intellectual, engaged in grassroots political activity: joining pickets with striking workers, marching in anti-war demonstrations, collecting signatures. Her activism taught her that an open and fair democratic process can sometimes enable weaker parties to get across the wisdom of their position. In this she valued the heterogeneity of the public as a resource. She also underscored the importance of identifying the affective element in political communication.

She showed what it means to theorize with a practical intent: ‘I think of it as a normative principle that theory that is self-enclosed and is not supposed to be revealing in a way that could inform action is only a game!’ Her writings attempt to ‘recover’ the human values that lie distorted, hidden or ossified in the trappings of patriarchal norms. The values of care, meaningful work, homemaking, affectivity in communication or heterogeneity of the public are used to envision alternative ideals of social organization.

Young’s political work was complemented by her prolific writing and her travelling to engage in dialogue with other thinkers. As an interpreter for the United Nations, she spoke more than a dozen languages. Her own work has been translated into more than twenty languages. She was born and grew up in New York City, graduating from Queens College (1966–70). She was led to philosophy by the congruence of two unrelated factors: her disenchantment with the scholarship required of an English major, her first choice at college, and an attraction to debating encountered in the youth groups of the Presbyterian Church in her high-school days. In college, she was influenced by existentialism. Her PhD. from Pennsylvania State University was a reading of Wittgenstein’s later philosophy. She taught philosophy and political theory in various places, including Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Miami University, University of Pittsburgh, and the University of Chicago. Her influence extends beyond political philosophy to philosophy of education and social policy.

At the time I interviewed her, Young had found herself needing to think more about war and violence. She thought it important to ‘take up again the question of glorification of violence, the connection of violence with power, and the connection of violence and power with men’. We can read her views on the subject in her forthcoming *Global Quandaries: On War, Self-determination and Global Justice* (Polity, 2006). She was developing a social-connection model of responsibility for justice, covering a whole range of issues from labour conditions in the clothes industry to reparations for slavery and colonialism. We would do well to continue her work in her spirit.

**Meena Dhanda**

Meena Dhanda’s interview with Iris Marion Young, ‘Theorizing with Practical Intent’, is available at [www.dur.ac.uk/swipuk/datapubs/2000\\_iris\\_young\\_interview.pdf](http://www.dur.ac.uk/swipuk/datapubs/2000_iris_young_interview.pdf).