POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY AND PUBLIC PURPOSE

BETWEEN POLITICS AND ANTIPOLITICS

THINKING ABOUT POLITICS AFTER 9/11

DICK HOWARD

Political Philosophy and Public Purpose

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Between Politics and Antipolitics

Thinking About Politics After 9/11

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Political Philosophy and Public Purpose
ISBN 978-1-137-60377-7 ISBN 978-1-349-94915-1 (eBook)
DOI 10.1057/978-1-349-94915-1

Library of Congress Control Number: 2016950216

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The registered company is Nature America Inc.
The registered company address is: 1 New York Plaza, New York, NY 10004, U.S.A.

SERIES EDITOR FOREWORD

The twentieth century has seen a gradual transformation of the concept of politics. With the collapse of the European imperial powers, of the grand ideologies of fascism and communism no less than the emergence of new movements for liberation, the concept of the "political" has become a catchword, perhaps a kind of amorphous signifier, for what many want to see, after popular writers such as Hannah Arendt, as a new kind of human activity. But as Dick Howard makes clear in this book, we must keep in view that the philosophical reflection on politics means keeping the "political" alive as a core concept of any rationally informed and progressive understanding of politics more generally. The "political" means, in its broadest sense, a kind of ceaseless project of justification, of argument, and of contestation. It means grasping that politics is not to be captured by any other agency than our own, that it is a self-critical, self-authoritative enterprise.

Its opposite is "antipolitics," or the attempt to foreclose just this project of seeing our social world as necessarily in contestation, as irreducibly plural. Antipolitics is in play whenever a philosophical system absorbs politics as a distinctively human activity. Whenever it is captured by the juggernaut of historical or economic determinism or when it posits some absolute totality toward which human beings should strive, we witness the eclipse of politics as a creative, truly democratic enterprise. Antipolitics is the denigration of humans from self-governing, self-critical, and creative beings situated in historical circumstance to that of mere cogs, parts of a larger, impersonal force determining our good and our destiny. For Howard, the collapse of communism as well as vulgar Marxism and fascism all represent a gradual opening up for us as contemporaries in that now we can see that politics is becoming liberated from the clenches of antipolitics. At the same time, philosophy sheds its role as a purely analytic, contemplative enterprise and is revealed as having genuine political potential.

Perhaps not unlike Aristotle's insistence on the notion of citizenship as action rather than as legal status, we can see each of Howard's chapters in this book as different peregrinations through a novel way of framing the relationship between politics and philosophy, blending together dialectically, even organically, what has been compartmentalized analytically for too long. Of course, antipolitics still persists. Amid various and unrelated social forces from Islamic terrorism, bureaucratic statism, and the technocratic impulses of global capitalism, antipolitics continues to push against the grain of the political. But Howard's interesting proposal is that we see that antipolitics is itself *a kind of politics*. As such, it therefore deserves our attention as a force that persists—even after the triumphal fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989—and which in many ways *requires* philosophy as a means to elucidate the constant tension between politics and antipolitics. Howard's provocative thesis is that we need to revisit the idea of politics as a practical, but nevertheless philosophically informed, enterprise and that this is in danger of being swallowed once again in a post-9/11 context where force, nationalism, or rigid ideology take the place of real political engagement.

Howard's insistence on the relation between politics and philosophy continues one of the core themes of the series of which it is a part: specifically the notion of philosophy as an engaged form of praxis and of politics as a form of rational human activity that transgresses the bounds of utilitarian and methodological individualist models of man. Howard reminds us that political philosophy is best understood as a shared capacity, one that requires the members of any truly democratic community to adhere to the values of inquiry and critique. With this in mind, this book is of real importance at a time when we seem to be falling back into a curious form of antipolitics: where technocracy expands as a response to economic crises and moral rage now masquerades as genuine politics—both left and right. His book should therefore find favor among all who share a vision of a political community dedicated to the principles of democratic citizenship and intellectually engaged political praxis.

Michael J. Thompson
New York City

PREFACE

The first versions of the chapters that follow were written and published over the course of the past quarter century. I have revised them, sometimes quite extensively, during the last year as the thesis that unites them became increasingly clear to me. The chapters are regrouped thematically around the four types of engagement that have been crucial to the development of my argument. Because these chapters originated as articles written in different contexts over a little more than a decade, some repetition has been inevitable. I have done my best to limit it while maintaining the coherence of each chapter as at once independent and yet interdependent within the argument as a whole. I have also added some footnotes in order to more clearly link arguments that relate to one another across different chapters.

Some of the articles in which these chapters originated were written and published in French, others in English; two of them are based on notes from talks given for German audiences. The translations are my own, which means that in addition to the rewriting that was done to preserve the unitary thesis of the book, the reader who searches out the original will inevitably find differences from the present version. I have listed below the publications where the versions from which I did the last revisions appeared. I thank the editors and publishers for permission to revise and reprint these materials.

I should thank in particular Olivier Mongin, the director of the journal *Esprit*, where I have published a wide variety of essays (including the original versions of several of those that appear here) over a period of nearly half a century. It is often the case, at least for me, that writing in another language, for a different public, encourages the kind of intellectual freedom that and self-critical perspective that I hope is evident in the chapters that follow.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS[1]

Chapter 2
This chapter first appeared as : " 'These Petrified Relations Must be Forced to Dance': An Interview with Dick Howard" by Douglas La Rocca and Spencer A. Leonard, The Platypus Review, Issue #50, October 2012.

Chapter 3

This chapter first appeared as the following essay: "Politics and anti-politics" by Dick Howard in *Critical Theory and Democracy* (2012) edited by Enrique Peruzotti and Martin Plot, Routledge, pp. 29–40.

Chapter 4

This chapter first appeared as the following essay: "Western Marxism, Morality, and Politics" by Dick Howard in *The Modernist Imagination* (2009) edited by Warren Breckman, Peter E. Gordon, A. Dirk Moses, Samuel Moyn, and Elliot Neaman, Berghahn Books.

Chapter 5

This chapter first appeared as the following article: Howard, D. (1999). Toward a Democratic Manifesto. *Constellations*, 6: 237–243. doi: 10.1111/1467-8675.00140.

Chapter 6

This chapter first appeared as the following article: Howard, D. (2001). Philosophy by Other Means? *Metaphilosophy*, 32: 463–501. doi: 10.1111/1467-9973.00204

Chapter 7

This chapter first appeared in as the following article: Howard, D. (2013). Andre Gorz and the Philosophical Foundation of the Political, *Logos*, 12:3

Chapter 8

This chapter first appears as the following article: Howard, D. (2015). Citizen Habermas. *Constellations*, 22: 523–532. doi: 10.1111/1467-8675.12190

Chapter 10

This chapter first appeared in English as the following article: Howard, D (2013). The Actuality of the History of Political Thought, *Veritas*, 55:1:67–81. This chapter was originally published in *Globale Rekonfigurationen von Arbeitund Kommunikation. Festschrift für Hermann Schwengel*, Voike Rehbein and Klaus-W. West (Eds.), Konstanz: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft, 2009, p. 241–254.

Chapter 12

This chapter first appeared as the following article: Howard, D. (2011). Claude Lefort: a political biography. *Continental Philosophy Review*. 44: 2:145–150, © Springer Science+Business Media B.V.

Chapter 13

This chapter first appeared as the following article: Howard, D. (2005). The Necessity of Politics. *Danish Yearbook of Philosophy*, 40:37–56. Museum Tusculanum Press.

It has also appears in *The Logos Reader* (2006) published by The University of Kentucky Press.

Chapter 14

This chapter first appeared as the following article: Howard, D (2009). What is Revolution? *Logos*, 8:3

Chapter 15

This chapter first appeared as the following article: Howard, D (2014). How to Think About the Great War, *Logos*, 13:3

Chapter 16

This chapter first appeared as the following article: Howard, D. (2002). From Anti-Communism to Anti-totalitarianism: The Radical Potential of Democracy. *Government and Opposition*, 37: 551–572. 10.1111/1477-7053.00114

Chapter 17

The text of this chapter first appears as reformatted text of an oral lecture given by the author at Social Science Research Council's original After September 11 essay forum, launched in October of 2001.

NOTES

1. I have indicated below the publication of only the first English translations of these chapters. Many of them first appeared earlier in French or German, or were later translated and published in modified forms in those other languages.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1 The Dialectic of Politics and Antipolitics

The thesis of this book is simple; its articulation is more complicated, as it moves between philosophy and politics, the present and the past, a New Left and an old one. Two dates form its bookends:1989 and 2001. The first, symbolized by the fall of the Berlin Wall and realized two years later by the disappearance of the Soviet Union, opened a new era of political possibilities. The second, September 11, 2001, posed a challenge to the irenic vision of a new democratic future. My thesis is that the interpretation of 1989 as the overcoming of totalitarian communism and therefore the advent of democracy was misleading; as a result, political thinkers have been unable to understand the new challenges that arose in the wake of 9/11. They reacted to terror with force because they did not understand the paradoxical dialectics of antipolitical violence and political freedom. They were caught between politics and antipolitics. This short introduction will outline the justification of this thesis and make clear the way in which it is then articulated in the chapters that follow.

The political world during the first half of the twentieth century was colored by reactions to the unimagined horrors of the Great War; its second half was overdetermined by the Cold War. The revolutions of 1989 seemed to promise that the twenty-first century could be the age of democracy. But the defeat of totalitarianism came so suddenly, smoothly, and nearly effortlessly that it hardly seemed necessary to reflect on what had been left behind, and why. The opposition between communist totalitarianism and

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D. Howard, *Between Politics and Antipolitics*, Political Philosophy and Public Purpose, DOI 10.1057/978-1-349-94915-1_1

capitalist freedom seemed self-evident; each represented different economic systems on which the rights and freedoms of their citizens depended. The revolutions of 1989 upended this perspective; they were political more than they were economic. They made evident the paradoxical nature of totalitarianism. It was a political regime that denied the autonomy of the political at the same time that the power of the state was used to suppress any perceived challenge to the existing framework of social relations. The creation of an independent civil society broke the barren loop that nourished a paradoxical political regime that was built on the denial of politics.[1] The autonomy of the political became possible once the power of the state disappeared. The democratic potential that emerged was dynamic, open, and imaginative; but it was precarious because there existed no shared foundation for individual choice. Seeking stability, unsure of their identity, wanting to insure security, some who were now freed would opt for an authoritarian government while others clung to a national or ethnic identity, and still others saw the integration into global capitalism as their only choice.[2] The variety of options that were opened with the defeat of totalitarianism meant that democracy was not the inevitable default position. It was one option but not the only one.

A quarter of a century later, the revolutions of 1989 have failed to realize the democracy they made possible. More troubling from my perspective is the fact that the existing Western democracies have persevered in their course, as if 1989 were a confirmation of their own virtues. The idea that democracy incarnates the good while totalitarianism is inherently evil, along with the implication that the overthrow of the latter automatically opens the space of the former, is a vast and misleading simplification. I will instead interpret communist totalitarianism as a manifestation of what I call *antipolitics*, which is a paradoxical vision of the political that seeks to eliminate particular conditions that produce the need for politics. Antipolitics can manifest itself in different forms.[3] After 1989, it adopted the costumes of authoritarianism, nationalism or, more easily, it simply surrendered to the global market. Each choice incarnated a paradox since each of these forms of antipolitics proposed specific concrete political actions. This paradox—the fact that *antipolitics is a form of politics*—has recurred repeatedly in practice as well as in theory. It might appear that 1989 overcame the paradox of antipolitical politics. The communists had been a political party whose maintenance in power was justified as the means to realize political goals whose rational and historical justification had been articulated by Marx. They may not have wanted to rule as totalitarians (which explains the existence of reformers in their midst) but their power depended on, and enforced, a form of antipolitics by denying the legitimate existence of other possible political frameworks.[4]

It would be misleading to criticize the moral intentions of the proponents of antipolitics, or to deny the difference between living under regimes of communism, technocracy, or fundamentalism. But the revolutions of 1989 illustrate the presence of a more fundamental problem. The overthrow of the totalitarian state opens the domain that I call *the political*. This is a universe of possibilities which, because they are only possible, are sometimes intoxicating, at other times sobering, and always precarious. The freedom to choose becomes an imperative; it is impossible to remain suspended in a world without gravity, to live in a space where everything is possible and nothing is certain. Once that political choice is exercised, whatever it may be, the domain of the political has been de facto closed; antipolitics now stands on the horizon. A horizon may point beyond the present but it can also close it off. Although some forms of antipolitics may be more open and thus more desirable than others, the dialectic of the political and antipolitics will perdure. The trick is to articulate a self-critical politics that avoids being fixated as an antipolitics in order to preserve the open horizon of the political. Practice has to look to theory, political will has to be supplemented by judgment, present problems have to be seen from the horizon of historical experience.

This is where the second bookend of this volume becomes important. On September 11, 2001, the dialectic of antipolitics and the political failed. Terrorism incarnates, fixates, and freezes the horror of antipolitics. However nihilistic it may be, terrorism is an antipolitics that does seek a type of political end. Its perverse political aim is to provoke an overreaction that will weaken its enemy at the same time that its own courage attracts new followers. This is the point where the failure to understand the revolutions of 1989 came to be felt. The response to the antipolitical threat should have sought an opening for a renewal of political space. Instead, the declaration of a "war on terrorism" had the opposite effect. It itself was an antipolitics. The reply to violence with violence has no end, literally or politically. The war against the perpetrators of 9/11 became the "*global* war against terror" that knows no limit; for that reason it is also incapable of defining victory. The preservation of the animal existence of the citizenry is not the realization of the political; it is the most brutal and also the most banal form of antipolitics.

The failure to understand the revolutions of 1989 took its revenge with the decision to invade Iraq. Whether or not they believed that Iraq was producing nuclear weapons, the neo-conservatives[5] within the Bush government as well as the "liberal hawks" in the intelligentsia recognized that a war with no political end was doomed to failure. In order to give their use of force a political goal, they drew a false analogy to 1989, asserting that once the dictator was gone, the Iraqi people would enthusiastically embrace democracy, pelting the conquering army with roses, returning immediately to work in order to insure that the invasion was financially and morally cost free. It should be no surprise that the result has been just the opposite: anarchy, tribalism, and religious conflict that have endured for more than a decade. This openness without limits destroyed the horizon for the reconstruction of the political. One source of the false analogy was the failure to recognize the difference between an opening of the political that was the result of the experience of a civil society refusing to kneel in the face of antipolitics and a "liberation" (and occupation) by a foreign army.[6] The other source was the misunderstanding of the revolutions of 1989 that underlies the chapters of this book.

2 The Origins of this Book: The Actuality of the New Left

On September 12, 2001, the day after the shock, I was asked by the editors of the German monthly, *Kommune*, which had regularly translated my political commentaries for French publications to write an essay on the political significance of 9/11. The invitation was a sort of blessing; in the face of such unmitigated horror, an intellectual tries to construct meaning with the aid of his only tools, words and thoughts. I began the next day, when the air in New York smelled still of the carnage, and the atmosphere of uncertainty weighed even as the autumn sun warmed the blue sky. My essay, published also in the French monthly *Esprit*, was given different titles by the editors, each stressing different aspects of the same analysis. The Germans posed a simple question, "War or Politics?" That was indeed the question of the moment. The French editors were more declarative, "When America tragically rejoins the World."[7] Their title alluded to the fact that, after 1989, George Bush senior had declared the creation of a "new world order" which he of course expected to be dominated by the hegemonic power of the USA. In that context, the always critical French were saying that 9/11 demonstrated that, like it or not, America is part of the world, *and* that this world is multipolar, open to violence and subject to the whims of fortune. It cannot be dominated by sheer force or terror, nor ruled by unilateral power. In effect, America's reply to the terror had to be based first of all on learning how to say "welcome" to the world. That meant that politics is necessary, but it didn't prescribe what form such a politics should it take.

As is often the case when trying to think the unthinkable, I looked back to my own past for some anchor to hold together the uncertainties of the moment. The first paragraph of my essay began with a rhetorical question that tried to fix the immensity of the shock. "Where were you on November 22, 1963?" Even the young remember that date because the assassination of John F. Kennedy on that day began a new political age for a suddenly sobered America. A similar question was posed more painfully by September 11, 2001. However, if the murder of Kennedy was followed by a blind engagement in Vietnam, that same American society also engaged in a 'War on Poverty' that was a culmination of the battle for civil rights. "Which would it be this time," I asked, "when we hear of a 'war' against a non-identified enemy and when society seems to forget itself in a patriotic spirit that threatens either to dissipate in the long term or to explode into a demand for an immediate and terrible revenge?" Although I might formulate these considerations in more theoretical terms today, they reflect still my way of thinking about politics and antipolitics.

This search for political meaning links the challenge posed by 9/11 to my experience as a participant in the New Left of the 1960s and 1970s; and that earlier engagement also hints at the source of my interest in the experience of the revolutions of 1989.[8] In 1967, I attended an international conference in Veszprem, Hungary, organized by the Quakers bringing together two youth leaders from each of the major countries in the East and the West. It seemed like a good occasion to present a petition against the Vietnam War. Only one participant, a Czech, refused to sign. Her argument was precisely the one that would be developed by the future dissident leader, Vaclav Havel, in his 1978 book, *The Power of the Powerless*, which expressed the political logic that animated the anti-totalitarian dissidents. In a word, she asked why should I go through the motions? Why should I alienate my voice by signing a meaningless petition? Why join the consensus? In short, why accept the values of antipolitics? This was an early manifestation of the stubborn power that opened the hard path to 1989; it is the expression of the power of the political.[9]

It remains to ask what was "new" about the New Left in the West? That question helps to explain why could and what should the West have learned from the revolutions of 1989? The paradoxical dialectics of antipolitics suggests that those revolutions represented a challenge to the dominant Western *liberal* mode of thinking about the political. Although some participants in the New Left did not shy from rhetorical excess, denouncing political liberalism as a subtle form of totalitarianism, the essential weight was directed at liberalism's defense of what I call antipolitics.[10] In effect, the Western New Left was seeking to redefine the political, to open it to critical questioning, and to refuse the limits of polite liberal discourse. The sad story of the dissolution and self-destruction of the New Left can in turn be explained by the dialectics of antipolitics and the political. The unlimited field of the political that it opened was precarious, uncertain, and anxious; it was tempting to fall back on theories, to look for certainties, and to define fixed identities. Varieties of Marxism flourished, dogmatism replaced curiosity, the inventive slogan that identified the personal as the political turned against its proponents. That story has been told before; I refer to it here only to explain the kinds of engagement that are reflected in the chapters that follow.

3 The Structure of Engagement

It would be necessary to write another book in order to develop the theory of engagement that unifies this collection. In truth, I was trying to formulate that larger book when I came to recognize the unity of the chapters that compose this volume. What I describe here are four general types or dimensions of political engagement. I do not claim that this typology is either necessary or complete. It is built from questions that have concerned me during the years that have followed the revolutions of 1989. It also expresses a way of thinking that is typical of the New Left as I have briefly described it here. I leave the justification of my theory of what a New Left could become to the larger study to come.

Engagement does not result from either political or moral certainty; it is both an ethical stance and a political commitment. It is an attempt to see and to feel clearly the fault lines that constitute present reality without the expectation that they can be overcome by an intervention from the state or by any other authority. The varieties of such engagements depend on the particular circumstances of the moment. They are the product of reflection and the result of judgment. They are an expression of the experience that has made a person who he has become, and for that same reason each new engagement is a challenge to the legitimacy of previous engagements, and also of oneself. In this constantly self-critical manner, the diversity of the chapters in the present volume reflects a unity. In order to make that unity theoretically more coherent, I have revised and rewritten the chapters while trying to call attention to the different engagements that each reflects.[11]

The first type of engagement presented here recognizes that in order to confront the dilemmas of the present it is necessary to reflect on the heritage of the left. In what way was it, and why is it no longer a challenge to antipolitics? Marxism was the leading source for the left, but its legitimacy has been challenged, and rightly so. My analysis of the relation of Marx's theories to the totalitarian regimes that claimed his heritage suggests that what Marx was trying to understand was not the material rise of capitalism as such but the "specter of democracy." It is nonetheless the case that capitalism presents real difficulties for the realization of that democracy. This recognition leads to the second type of engagement. Marx had to be challenged, but so did capitalism; and Marx himself provided fundamental insights into the logic of what can be called antipolitical capitalism. The founders of modern sociology at the beginning of the twentieth century intuited the difficulty, which became more clear as the century advanced. In France, in Germany, and in the USA, political thinkers seized on the material questions they posed. Among them are André Gorz, Jürgen Habermas, and Hannah Arendt. They are today's predecessors, who remain our contemporaries.

The motivation of the first two types of engagement was practical; but its result is theoretical. There remain unanswered and perhaps unanswerable questions that can neither be resolved by empirical research nor for that reason be abandoned. A third type of engagement is necessary. The turn to philosophy induces a necessary humility and the recognition of limits. The problem of the political and the temptation of antipolitics were not born in the twentieth century. What I call the "actuality" of political thought at the outset of the engagement with philosophy culminates in the recognition of the "necessity" of politics. The result is a fourth type of engagement, the confrontation with contemporary ideologies. It will be no surprise to find that the revolutions of 1989 and the terror of 9/11 are central to the illustration of this fourth type of engagement. Once again, the primacy of the political has to be reaffirmed against the temptation of antipolitics in order to understand a more philosophical account of "what is revolutionary" about these revolutions. From another perspective, the attempt to discern "What's New After September 11, 2001"echoes the preoccupation from which this project began, the attempt to understand and to revitalize the idea of a New Left. With these two bookends, the dialectics of politics and antipolitics has come full circle; it cannot be escaped but it must be engaged.

Notes

1. There is an ambiguity in the preceding two sentences due to the difference between the French and English languages. When I refer to "the political" I have in mind what the French designate as *le politique*, which refers to that framework of meaning within which "politics" in the ordinary sense (as *la politique*) takes place. It is not always possible to maintain this distinction in English, as in this example. I have tried throughout this book to maintain the conceptual distinction when the linguistic usage tends to confuse the two meanings.
2. There were many choices open, including withdrawal into private life, a return to religion, or even the attempt to recreate a socialism free of the taint of totalitarianism. The latter was the most difficult, most ambiguous, and least trod path. In the case that I know from experience, the former German Democratic Republic (GDR), most of my leftist–reformist friends did not join the reformed communist party that has competed (with some success) in united Germany's elections under the name of "Die Linke" (the Left). The hopes of those friends for a new start were disappointed, perhaps inevitably.
3. The paradigm case of antipolitics can be found in Plato's theory of the need for a Philosopher King to insure the truly good life. For a history of antipolitics, c.f., my account of *The Primacy of the Political. A History of Political Thought from the Greeks to the American and French Revolutions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011). A short sketch of this historical development is found in "The Actuality of the History of Political Thought," Chap. 10 below.
4. Before casting stones at Marx, it should be noted that the same structure recurs when government is handed to technocratic experts, to liberal ideologues, or to religious fundamentalists. The realization of their political aims entails the closing of other political possibilities. C.f. for a recent illustration David Rieff's critique of "philanthrocapitalism" *The Reproach of Hunger* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015), in chapter 12 titled "Philanthrocapitalism: A [Self-]Love Story." An excerpt from this chapter criticizing the political implications of the work of the Gates Foundation was published in *The Nation*, June 15, 2015.
5. Many of the neo-conservatives had been active in the anti-communist Congress for Cultural Freedom. However, they did not draw the anti-totalitarian lesson from their experience. C.f., "From Anti-Communism to Anti-Totalitarianism," Chap. 16, below. Hannah Arendt had pointed to their blind spot when she argued that "ex-communists" (as distinct from "former communists") show the same traits as the communists: the same

self-certainty, the same vision of historical necessity, and the willingness to use any means because the end they serve is historically justified. Arendt's essay, published in *Commonweal* in 1953, is reprinted in her *Essays in Understanding, 1930–1954* (New York: Harcourt, 1994).

6. The most astute study of this failure, which both takes account of the false analogy while reflecting critically on the revolutions of 1989 is Andrew Arato's *Constitution Making under Occupation. The Politics of Imposed Revolution in Iraq* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009). C.f. also "The New Left and the Search for the Political," Chap. 3 below as well as "What's New After September 11, 2001?," Chap. 17 below, which reflects the political choices facing the left in the *immediate* aftermath of 9/11, before the disastrous invasion of Irak. I have retained this chapter in spite of the changed circumstances because the questions that it asks retain their relevance.
7. I do not know if either title was my choice as I am unable to find the French original (there was no English version). I returned to these themes in a Forum organized by the Social Science Research Council called "10 Years after September 11." That essay is available at http://essays.ssrc.org/10yearsafter911/echoes-of-911-anti-politics-and-politics-from-bush-to-obama/
8. I describe some aspects of that experience in the rewritten biographical interview that constitutes Chap. 2 of this volume under the title (borrowed from the young Marx), "Make these Petrified Relations Dance…."
9. She did eventually sign when she was convinced that the petition could have some real significance; and she remained a dissident in her home country until the revolution of 1989. C.f., also my essay on the origins of the Arab Spring that began in 2011, first published in *Kommune* in October, 2011, and translated into English as "The resistance of those who desire not to be ruled," in *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, Vol. 38, No 4–5, 2012, pp. 517–523.
10. Whereas totalitarianism is generally imposed from the top down, antipolitics can have its origins within society itself. This implies that antipolitics is not necessarily totalitarian, although totalitarianism is always a form of antipolitics.
11. As in the case of the just-mentioned essay on 9/11, I have left aside much of the occasional writing that I have published elsewhere. I call attention in this footnote to that other kind of public engagement to underline the fact that the conceptual arguments in this volume are based on regular and critical commentary on day-to-day politics. Aside from writing in daily newspapers or monthly journals, at the suggestion of my French editor, I wrote for a full year weekly commentaries on American

politics with the proviso that none would be published until the year had gone by and a book had been produced. The result was *La démocratie à l'épreuve* (Paris: Buchet-Chastel, 2006). In another such long-term engagement, I contributed weekly 8-minute commentaries for Radio Canada (Montreal) during the 15 months leading to the 2012 American elections.

PART I

Engaging with the Left

CHAPTER 2

"These Petrified Relations Must Be Forced to Dance": An Interview with Dick Howard

> I have attempted to preserve the conversational and improvised nature of this interview published in the journal *Platypus* edited by a group of young intellectual activists. The title of their publication makes clear their openness to critical thought: it refers to Frederich Engels' dogmatic refusal to accept the discovery in Australia of an animal that was an egg-laying mammel. That seemed to the author of *The Dialectics of Nature* to be a logical impossibility. Calling their journal the *Platypus* suggests their own critical attitude toward Marxist dogmatism. Thanks particularly to Douglas La Rocca for his initiative. His creative imagination, initiative and persistance made it possible; Spencer Leonard's editorial work is reflected in the restructuring of the discussion for publication in the *Platypus*, which I have modified where necessary.

Spencer A. Leonard
In *The Development of the Marxian Dialectic* (1972), you countered Louis Althusser on the question of Marx's relationship to the Young Hegelians and, through them, to German Idealism as a whole. And you specifically instanced Lukács as a crucial forbearer in arguing that

[T]he dialectic is the key to Marx's position—his theory and his practice… dialectical philosophy is the only kind that can break the monotony of word games and historical or philological research [typical of philosophy departments at the time], and the only one whose method does not, by its very nature, condemn it to be a defense of the established order. (Howard 1972)

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D. Howard, *Between Politics and Antipolitics*, Political Philosophy and Public Purpose, DOI 10.1057/978-1-349-94915-1_2

What at that time demanded the sort of return to Marx's dialectic that you undertook? How do you see your work as fitting in with the larger New Left "return to Marx"?

Dick Howard
First of all, there was really no "Marx" to return to in America. There was only a Communism that had become completely irrelevant. The 1844 Manuscripts were not translated into English until 1959 by Martin Milligan and, then, more influentially in 1963 by Tom Bottomore. These writings brought out things that were new, particularly with regard to the canonical communist Marx. Although I didn't realize it at the time, the theory of alienation became the basis of a critical humanism that was used by some European communists to challenge the rigid economic determinist orthodoxy of the established communist parties—or to provide a reason to leave or avoid them altogether. But few of us in the States were aware of these stakes.

Why, then, was I concerned with political economy? When I arrived in Europe as a graduate student, I discovered Althusser, as you mentioned. My first impression of Althusser, particularly of his *For Marx*, was astonishment. His idea that Marx discovered through his critique of political economy a "new continent" could not help but fascinate someone who was looking for a new left . I actually made an appointment to see Althusser at the *École Normale* because I wanted to attend his seminars. It was one of the strangest conversations I've ever had—I talked, he listened, he said nothing. I talked some more, he listened, yet still he said nothing. Finally, as I tried to find a good way to end the conversation he said, "Well, of course, you can come to my seminar." When I arrived on the first day, there was a sign on the door saying "Monsieur Althusser est souffrant." He was having one of his nervous breakdowns. That was certainly not the only reason that I never became an Althusserian, although I did study diligently and later taught the canonical works of the structuralists, from Saussure onward. And I remember sitting in an hot and overcrowded lecture hall at the Sorbonne where Althusser delivered to the French Philosophical Society his lecture on "Lenin and Philosophy." By that time Althusser's sophistry at the service of extra-philosophical ends (hidden under the guise of "science") had become apparent.

That first encounter with Althusser does explain at least in part the subtitle of *The Development of the Marxian Dialectic*: "from philosophy to political economy." What I wanted to figure out was how and why Marx started as a critical philosopher but ended up doing political economy. Was there a rupture between the "two Marxes," as Althusser argued; or was there a continuity, as I hoped?

This is where the influence of Lukács was crucial. His 1923 collection of essays, *History and Class Consciousness*, developed the thematic of continuity, particularly in his chapter on "reification and the consciousness of the proletariat." The same year also saw the publication of Karl Korsch's *Marxism and Philosophy*, which I also discovered at this time. Both books were condemned by the Communist International, but Lukács went to Canossa, accepting the condemnation, and took his book out of circulation. Korsch continued on his crirtical path. Why the condemnation? Here we come to the dialectic, and to political economy. Lukács developed his major thesis concerning reification and alienation by reading *Capital* as a critical Hegelian. In this way, he anticipated many of the insights that only became known when the *1844 Manuscripts*, of which he was not aware, were finally published. (The editor of the *Manuscripts*, Riazanov, would himself be purged; and the text was considered sufficiently threatening that the standard German edition of Marx's writings published after 1945 did not include them).

After Lukács renounced the book, it disappeared. A few people knew it,[1] including Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who read it early and who, in his *Adventures of the Dialectic*, makes Lukács, along with Weber, into the foundation stone of what he calls "Western," i.e. non-Soviet, Marxism. I might add here that Lukács had been a participant in Weber's Heidelberg circle, along with another figure who would also become a heretical Marxist, Ernst Bloch. I knew Bloch as a student in Tübingen when he was in his 80s or 90s. He would talk about some of those Heidelberg *salons*, evoking dinners at which he would wax on with a sort of mystical Marxism to which people responded, "What's he saying?" Lukács would then clearly and precisely explain the dialectical core of Bloch's apparently mystical élan.

This background explains in part why I also co-edited *The Unknown Dimension* (1972) during the same time period. You can see again from the title that what the book was looking for was something like that 1844 insight: the rediscovery of the dialectic. The subtitle of that book was "European Marxism *since* Lenin." When Karl Klare and I put that volume together, we had the then-existing New Left in mind as the audience. We wanted to combat Leninism, the orthodoxy that was always there as a temptation. Of course the paradox was that what we wanted to discover could itself become a heterodox orthodoxy if it became part of a militant political party. I had become aware of this danger, and wanted to alert readers to it in a final chapter in *The Unknown Dimension*. The chapter would have presented the work of the group that published the French journal *Socialisme ou Barbarie*. I had learned of it during my student years in Paris when I was involved in some clandestine anti-Vietnam war activities as a result of which I met Pierre Vidal-Naquet. Through Vidal-Naquet, I met Claude Lefort and Cornelius Castoriadis and they in many ways turned out to be the most important influence on my development. When I asked Lefort to write the chapter, he was busy finishing his Machiavelli book; but the next week he told me to come back to meet a potential author…who turned out to be Castoriadis! He was at the time preparing the republication of four volumes of his previous works (1973, 1974) while completing *L'Institution imaginaire de la société* (1975). The person he proposed as an author never delivered!

SL
When you returned to Marx thirty years later in 2002 in *The Specter of Democracy* what had changed and what had not? How have the intervening decades changed Marx's significance? What makes Marx necessary after the collapse of Marxism and the socialist workers' movement?

DH
It's of course impossible to answer simply such vast questions, all the more so since on my reading Marx was and remained a philosopher. That means that he is a thinker whose work cannot be reduced to a set of theses, positive affirmations or negative criticism, let alone to utopian visions of happy tomorrows. Having recognized this, I didn't just stop reading him in 1972 and then return to him thirty years later. I wrote about him, and tried to teach him, many times in those intervening years—as I continue to do today.

Let me try to answer in part your question by using the examples of Lefort and Castoriadis. Both began as Trotskyists and formed a dissenting group within the French branch of the Fourth International around 1946–1947. Two insights became fundamental for them: first, the danger of bureaucracy or bureaucratization, *including* that of the most orthodox of dissenting movements, Trotskyism. To become a Trotskyist is to join a secret order. (When I was a student in Paris I went to some Trotskyist meetings, and one of the things that was strangely funny was that you had to sign in to go to these meetings, but you had to do it under a pseudonym!) Beyond the anecdotal, what's the basis of Trotsky's theory? We know his critique of the Stalinist deformation of the true revolution of 1917 led by himself and Lenin. That revolution could occur because of the role of the vanguard party to which Trotskyism was to be the heir. But the basis of his picture, from a more philosophical perspective, is a vision of history. History is going to go on, the contradictions are going to ripen, and the revolution will come. The problem is that the working classes have been deceived by Stalinism; but since the Trotskyists have maintained the pure faith, when the revolution breaks out, when the working class is suddenly struck by the "lightning of thought" (as Marx put it in 1843), the working class will have *us* there to guide them so they won't go astray. In other words, Trotsky is indeed just what he claims to be, the true heir of Lenin. This is the basis of Lefort and Castoriadis's early insight into bureaucratization whose basis is the separation of the rulers from the ruled, the state from the citizen, the party from the class.

Their other insight was reinforced by the constant working-through of Marxism. If you follow Castoriadis' evolution, what he does is constantly turn Marx against himself. He reads Marx dialectically and, in the end, he recognizes that, in the last resort, Marx bet on the logic of history and he lost. Or, more precisely, Marx bet the future of the revolution on history. Because history did not do what it was supposed to do Castoriadis concluded that, "If I want to remain a revolutionary, I have to give up Marxism. And I have to do so for what might be called 'Marxist' reasons." In a word, he abandons Marx as a Marxist, as a philosopher of revolution.

Of the two, Lefort was more interested in the problem of bureaucratization. He and Castoriadis split around many issues, but two in particular stand out, both hinging on the question of bureaucracy. Lefort's argument was that in effect, if a revolutionary party is consistent with itself, it is going to become bureaucratized. There are going to be those who know and those who are subordinate to and depend upon those who know, leaders who know what history must bring, and followers who are blinded by the supposed wisdom of the leaders. Eventually, there will develop a structure that is the opposite of what we might call revolutionary spontaneity.

On the other hand, Lefort's relation to Marx is much more consistent and long-term. He wants to read Marx not as having a unique theory of history and a vision of the absolute, but rather Marx as a thinker and analyst. In this respect, think of that long chapter on the working day in *Capital*. It does not fit into a grand theory—certainly not into Althusser's (as I recognized at the time, without knowing quite why)—precisely because it is a kind of a phenomenology of the working class. More than that, it is a dialectical phenomenology in the sense that even as the working class makes material gains it becomes still more alienated in a consumerist society. The best example of this phenomenological Marxism is found in Lefort's polemical critique of Sartre, "Le marxisme de Sartre" (1953).

Lefort constantly returns to Marx, always critical but always alert. For example, in a 1986 essay he returns to the *Communist Manifesto*, asking "Why did Marx call it the *Communist Manifesto*?" What is a "manifesto"? A manifesto is a making-manifest. So what's Marx saying? He's saying, in effect, all that I'm doing is letting history express itself. I'm bringing it to its "ripeness," to its fruition. But in that sense, Marx has to deny his own revolutionary contribution, historical indeterminacy and the vision of human freedom as able to *make history*. Lefortis saying, on the one hand there's that element of Marx that bets on history, but on the other hand, because Marx is such a rigorous thinker, he's constantly doubling back on himself, reflecting on himself, and thus opening the space for radical action.

Douglas La Rocca
Would you say Marx positions himself as the Hegelian self-consciousness of the workers' movement?

DH
I would not say "Hegelian," at least not for Lefort. I would rather say phenomenological. Marx analyzes the situation of workers, the proletariat, and shows that they are constantly challenged by what they in fact do. In another essay that is part of a polemic between him and Sartre, Lefort presents a sort of phenomenology of the working class. Quite literally, it raises the question of "What do you do when you work? What happens, how does consciousness find itself, lose itself, and so on?" He published this phenomenological critique of Sartre's existential vision in *Les Temps Moderne* when Merleau-Ponty, who was Lefort's teacher, was still part of the journal's editorial board. Sartre, who was in one of his Stalinist phases (he had just published his infamous essay on "Les communists et la Paix"), wrote a reply in which he argues that, "What Lefort didn't understand is that the working class can never become fully self-conscious, it needs the Party." Lefort's counter-polemic shows is that the dialectic is not simply thesis-antithesis-synthesis—it keeps on going, as the previous apparent synthesis becomes a new starting point for analysis. To that degree, phenomenology, and particularly as it develops with Merleau-Ponty and Lefort, is more adequate than what could be called the "simple" or rationalist dialectic of Hegel.

In this sense, phenomenology is an example of what Marx calls immanent critique. In his *Introduction to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, Marx has a phrase that translates roughly like this: "We must make these petrified, reified relations dance by chanting before them their own melody." Note: *their own* melody, not ours, nor that of History. Of course, Marx could be making a claim to know what the melody of the stones is, a claim that the stones do not know their own melody except through the intervention of the theorist. On the other hand, he could be saying as a phenomenologist that we need to look more critically at them to see what they are saying (or trying to say). Not what we bring them to say, but what they are trying to say. If we think we know what they are trying to say, then we think we know better. It is like when a professor says to a student, "What you're trying to say is …" But the professor does not actually know what the student wanted to say.

DL
In Rosa Luxemburg, too, you traced a tension between a theory *of* and a theory *for* the proletariat.

DH
Luxemburg is in a sense why I turned to this series of questions. In the volume of her essays that I edited (in 1970), my introduction made her into much more of a Leninist than she actually was.[2] When I re-read it a year or two later, in preparation for writing the chapter on her that appeared in *The Marxian Legacy*, I said basically that Luxemburg *did not* have the answers. The first part of the essay presents Luxemburg as a spontaneist—all the things about her that make her so appealing, so attractive, so alert to what's happening in the world. But then, in the second part, I asked why in her refutation of Bernstein's revisionism, her critiques of Kautsky's orthodoxy, and in her critical relation to the leaders of the German Socialist Party, each time, in order to clinch her point, she quotes Marx as if it were sacred text whose invocation sufficed to seal the argument. And so I asked, how could she be, at the same time, the most spontaneist and yet the most orthodox of Marxists? I just tried to pose this problem; I had no answer to it. Before publishing the essay, I delivered it at a conference of Luxemburg scholarly devotees in Reggio Emilio, Italy, where criticizing orthodoxy was *verboten*. On the third day of the conference, incidentally, the *coup d'état* in Chile against Allende took place, an

event that united us all in opposition to the coup, but hardly encouraged critical reflection.

SL

In preface to *The Unknown Dimension*, you nod to the formative role played by the Civil Rights Movement in the formation of the New Left, mentioning specifically the Montgomery Bus Boycott and SNCC's agitations in the South. This is before you go on to mention May 1968, "the indomitable people of Vietnam," and the women's movement. Elsewhere in your work, when speaking of your experience and travels in Europe in the late 1960s, you relate your feeling upon returning to the U.S. that the New Left here was or had become "parochial." What was the significance of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement to the New Left internationally and what were the limitations in how Americans (and Europeans) recognized and practiced internationalism in the early 1960s? How did the centrality of opposition to the Vietnam War figure? Does the current preoccupation with "cosmopolitanism" and human rights represent a legacy of or a falling off from New Left internationalism?

DH

As for the "indomitable people of Vietnam," there are lots of things I have written that appear to play to the prejudices of my intended audience, the Left. There are lots of naïve assertions. One might call them utopian, but they certainly also show little real understanding of the world. I suppose that these can be explained as necessary rhetorical devices, "speech acts" in the language of historians of ideas.

One of the first articles I published appeared in 1966 in the SDS journal, *New Left Notes*. The title was "The Reactionary Radicals." I was asking about some of our dogmas. Without claiming that I somehow anticipated something, there was always a certain suspicion, a certain fear, of what you call here "parochialism." Although "reactionary radicals" were, if you really want to take that phrase literally, fascists, I wasn't saying that SDS was fascist, but, perhaps, "parochial" fits best here.

When I came back from Paris to the States, SDS was in its death throes. I was in Austin at the convention where the break-up began to take place. The Progressive Labor Party was spouting its slogans, Maoism was emerging… soon there would be the Weathermen, claiming to be a violent vanguard. Another apparent option was the idea that we students had to become workers. We were to deny our own spontaneity, our own judgment. In general, we wanted access to the revolutionary truth, rather than freedom to exercise our judgment in our own particular conditions. So we as students had to somehow assimilate to the working class, especially since "we" white students had been thrown out of SNCC as ideas of black power took hold. I was at the Champaign-Urbana convention when SNCC said, "No white people." Out of this jumble of ideas came Maoism and, in the end, the break-up of the New Left. It didn't come immediately; there was still something of a New Left until at least 1976. There was still a quest, at least on campuses, to think critically. When I was a young professor at Stony Brook, we would meet with groups of students, both graduates and undergraduates. We were searching for something different, something new. Was that "parochial"? No, I think it is better understood as groping around. But there was always that desire to be part of history, to become part of something bigger, broader. That explains, in part, the break-up; we were incapable of being ourselves, of assuming our identity rather than looking for another one.

The first half of the '70s was dominated by a kind of guilt. That is one reason that people became leftists in America in the 1970s and1980s: guilt for being part of this wealthy, imperialist nation. We learned to appreciate Lenin's *Theses on Imperialism*. Why is there no revolution in America or in England? Because imperialism draws in surplus profits that are used to buy off the working class,.... As a result we privileged (white…male…) Americans are guilty, we must do something, sacrifice ourselves to redeem our debt to the exploited. And remember, this was the time of the Vietnam war.

Intellectually, what was happening is that a couple of journals are thrashing around. The three I knew were *Radical America*, *Telos*, and to a small degree *New German Critique*. If you look at the back issues of *Telos* we editors had the fortune and the misfortune of conducting our education in public. Issues numbers six and seven contained studies of Lukács, who was not yet translated. And there came Korsch, then the Frankfurt School and Marcuse, and onward to the young Habermas, and then finally to Castoriaidis and Lefort. We didn't have teachers. On the one hand, this was good. But it also meant we made lots of errors. When I see students' books today on these figures, they are much more sophisticated. They see all sorts of things we didn't see.

This brings me back once again to a book title, *The Marxian Legacy* (1977). That title suggested that we new leftists were confronting the question of what it meant to bear a legacy: Is it a burden? Sartre says somewhere, “When I give my child a name I’m essentially determining that child’s future.” Similarly, when I get a legacy, I’m also determined. On the other hand, without a legacy, what am I?

DL
You took up this question in an essay on Merleau-Ponty, where you pointed to how both Marxism and philosophy share a concern with their own self-becoming. As you then said, “Each is what it is only as having become, and each is continually reinterpreting the sense of the distance it has traveled. More: each lives the paradox that the distance is only a return to the source, for the task and the goal remain constant”(Howard 1977). At that time, then, you sought to undertake a critique of the New Left on the basis of its failure to move beyond “the critique of everyday life” to what you termed “the historical.” What distinguished you and your comrades within the New Left from others in the movement such that you felt a need to work through and re-appropriate the Marxian legacy? What blocked the New Left from thinking itself historically?

DH
We knew foreign languages and we knew some history, which other people didn’t know, but we were not content with what we had. There was always something more, something further to be discovered. For example, when I wrote a 30- or 40-page introduction for *The Unknown Dimension* which was a sort of history of the period after the Russian Revolution. I had to cobble that together. There was no non-dogmatic leftist historical analysis of that period. But I was helped by Karl Klare, who, like many in the New Left, was a red-diaper baby. He knew the classical history of the working class. His dad was a Teamsters’ organizer. Karl knew a lot of this stuff, particularly about the Eastern Europeans because his dad, I believe, had probably been a member of the party. I never asked, but he probably left in 1956 with the Hungarian revolution. I, on the other hand, am the son of an elementary school teacher from Ohio and a traveling salesman who dropped out of college after a semester. I had no background in this political tradition whatsoever.

SL
Keeping with the ’70s, in a recent volume honoring the work of your lifelong friend Andrew Arato, you describe when you first met in 1970 as follows:

> [At that time] the New Left knew that it had to be more than a counter-cultural movement, and that it could not simply mobilize the resentment of those who might be drafted into the vain and vainglorious anti-communist crusade in Vietnam. "From Resistance to Revolution" was the vague slogan of those who began to call themselves "comrades" as they abandoned what they called their bourgeois liberalism for one or another variant of Marxism (a few Stalinists, more Trotskyists, still more Maoists and of course the Castroist- Guevarist).(Howard 2012)

You then go on to remark that, "For all their differences, these groups shared an orthodoxy built around the legacy of Lenin." You describe your collaboration with Arato as an attempt to retrieve the legacy of a post-1917 Western Marxist tradition. Even in your book on Luxemburg, you seem to want to distinguish her strongly from Lenin and the Bolsheviks. How and why did Lenin make a comeback in the 1970s? Why did you split with many of your fellow new leftists over this? How, if at all, do the relevant questions seem different to you today than they did more than forty years ago?

DH

The crux was the idea of substitutionism, the notion that the Party that knows has to replace that amorphous mass. In *The Critique of Dialectical Reason* Sartre talks about what he calls seriality, for example, a line of people waiting on a bus. They are a group in some sense, if, say, you look at them from above, if you treat them as an object (which implies that they cannot act as a subject). They have no relation among themselves. The proletariat as a class of workers is also in a serial relation. For Sartre, what has to happen is that they become a "group in-fusion." They have to fuse together to become an active historical force rather than remaining alienated, objectified individuals. But how is this to be accomplished? In Sartre's vision, and here he takes a position that's quite orthodox Leninist (indeed, I call it Stalinist in one essay on Sartre): you need the party to catalyze the proletariat. But when it is catalyzed, it will become fused as a group, this fusion takes place from without. But if it is unified from outside, it is extremely fragile, potentially massified or reified. This explains why Leninism is a tempting position and how it fits with Marxism insofar as Marx offers a theory of history, of inevitable history.

SL

How do we square the varying legacies respecting democracy of liberalism and Marx? For instance, Immanuel Kant and his French disciple Benjamin

Constant conceive of politics as deeply bound up with civil society, so much so that both Kant with his notion of "public reason" and Constant with that of "representation" uphold the possibility of liberal politics even in the face of Prussian absolutism or the Restoration in France. Both seem to extend Locke's vision of the socialization of the state, its subordination to society, treating the completion of that process as, so to speak, necessary and inevitable. Marx, by contrast, views the question of the democratic state as standing somehow over and against society, a situation he describes variously as Bonapartist or imperialist. Marx, of course, calls for the Bonapartist state's revolutionary overthrow and "smashing." Given your attempt to recover Marx as a democratic thinker, what do you make of Marx's own self-conception as a critic of democracy?

DH

Kant doesn't talk about civil society. It is really Hegel who is the crucial figure in this context. In any case, when you read the young Marx, you can see him assimilating Hegel. In a sense Marx is trying to materialize Hegel: to take Hegel's Spirit and anchor it in material reality. And he gets very good at it. For instance, one of the interesting things that you notice when you read the *Grundrisse* (Marx's massive first draft of what would become *Capital*) is that when Marx writes spontaneously, he uses Hegelian categories. He is really a Hegelian. Marx's theory of history, insofar as it is a theory of historical necessity, has a Hegelian structure, a Hegelian inevitability.

You say that Marx views the state as somehow over and against society, which leads to the idea of the "smashing" or the revolutionary overthrow of the state. That does not work. For there to be a clash, the state and society would have to be of the same element; otherwise they remain indifferent to one another.[3] The separation between the state and society is at the same time a mutual implication: that the one can't live without the other. In that sense, Hegel's theory of civil society has civil society standing between, as the common element shared by, the family as the immediate and particular existence of morality and the state as universal. That's how civil society becomes the place where individual or personal desires become political.

From here, we can go back to the New Left, if you will. The slogan "The personal is political" is at one and the same time extremely rich and awfully dangerous. You no doubt know enough about the history of the New Left to know that some people destroyed themselves by trying to be political in *all* aspects of their lives.

DL
That still happens.

DH
I'm sure it does. In some ways, it is an abiding temptation. What is political correctness, after all? This is where civil society becomes at one and the same time the source of problems and a place where fruitful clashes can occur. This is where the question of judgment returns. One of the claims of *From Marx to Kant* is that Kant, or more precisely the Kant of the Third Critique, gives us the tools to understand and perhaps to do what Marx sought to understand and to do.

Kant distinguishes between two kinds of judgment. There is the form called determinate judgment, where I start with a theory, e.g. what a physicist does, and I encounter some new facts. I have both a theory and new facts, which have to be accommodated to it. Or say I'm an orthodox Marxist, a Leninist: History is assumed to be moving towards some overcoming of contradictions; I'm confronted with a fact—say, the Burmese government has let up on censorship, meanwhile China is threatening to go to war with Japan over some rocky outcropings in the South China Sea to which both nations (as well as Vietnam and the Philippines) lay claim. I confront these things, and as a Leninist, I immediately have the answer because I fit the facts into a theory of history. In this context, there's a quote from Harold Rosenberg that Lefort often emphasizes: "The communist militant is an intellectual who does not think." He does not judge; he subsumes. You've met Leninists—they're often absolutely brilliant, they read everything, they know exactly what's happening in Burma, say, or what is it about Thailand's development that has led the Burmese to open up, and so on. They are intellectuals in some sense; they exercise their brains in some way. But they don't ask questions. They know the answer, which lies in universal history. They just ascertain where we are at this moment.

This leads me to Kant's other kind of judgment, what he calls reflexive judgment in which one has to move from the particular to some universal claim. If we take art for example, and I say to you, "That painting is beautiful," you might ask "Why?" and wait to hear a theory about how beauty is necessarily and always structured.[4] But that does not work. What I have to do is start with the particular and show you why what I see as beautiful is not only beautiful in my eyes, subjectively, but that you *ought* to see it, rationally and/or morally as beautiful as well.

Now translate this distinction into politics: I look at the 99 percent versus the 1 percent, or I see how the election is being financed, and I *feel* we can't live like that. But now I've got to convince people, and there's no absolute rule to which I can appeal. This is where, in the move from Marx to Kant, the problem of judgment emerges. But this is not a concern that a Leninist or an orthodox Marxist would have. That is because, if I use my reflexive judgment, I have to also accord to other people the right to judge, which means that they have the *right to be wrong* . In other words, I can't seize power and force everyone to accept my vision of beauty, and I am certainly anxious that a populist majority may try to impose their idea about what's good for society.

This is where we come to the theme of democracy in *Specter of Democracy*. Recall Lefort's question: What is it Marx thinks he is making manifest? The inevitable future. But I want to say that in fact what he is showing us is that society is no longer structured by fixed hierarchies, and that implies that there can longer be that permanence, that inevitability anymore. Capitalism, precisely because it is constantly changing, is doing what we said a moment ago Marxism does: putting itself into question. And, if that is the case, then capitalism is not simply a form of economic relations, but is a form of political relations among people. For example, in capitalism, under the kind of relations Marx describes in the *Manifesto*—relations in which "all that is holy is profaned"—a kind of alienated civilization is in dialectical self-contradiction. This is what Marx tries to illuminate.

DL

Two figures that do battle in your work are the modern revolutionary and the modern republican. Broadly speaking, the revolutionary is anti-political, yet another scribe of world spirit, while the republican could be thought of as a revolutionary "cured" of the pathological desire to overcome or transcend modernity. You contrast the republican's "Freudian" way of coming to terms with the indeterminacy of modernity to the revolutionary's desire to *overcome* it altogether. However, when we look at these two today, while the revolutionary appears to be increasingly lost or insane, the republican appears *unable* to hold open the political in the face of the overwhelming dominance of capital. How has the "dialectic" of these two changed throughout your experience on the Left?

DH

There is a passage somewhere where Freud asks, "Does psychoanalysis cure?" To which he replies, "No, all psychoanalysis can do is replace extraordinary unhappiness by ordinary misery." It's a nice phrase. The idea that we can somehow leap over our shadow to create a new world overnight makes no sense; it ignores the fact that we all inherit a legacy.[5] On the other hand, it makes no sense to live with extraordinary suffering. So what we would want to do is find an institutional structure that would ameliorate those conditions. This is where the idea of a republican democracy finds its place.

SL

In your recent book *The Primacy of the Political* you trace the history of political thought from its origins before entering into a discussion of modern political thinking in the Renaissance and Reformation. You imply that in the earlier history of mankind politics is, in some ways, bound up with other forms of thought and sentiment such as religion and virtue, such that political life does not come into its own as democracy until the modern world. What if anything distinguishes modern politics from the politics of earlier times? To the extent that your work is historical or even an attempt at a renewal of the philosophy of history, what is the salience of a sense of the modernity of politics? How is it bound up with social domination?

DH

The argument of *The Primacy of the Political* is that there is a structural tension inherent in human sociality, if you will. This structure can be called "dialectical," so long as one grasps that a synthesis overcoming once and for all the antitheses is impossible. Instead of reconciliation, there is a constant movement between the political and the anti-political, each of which is transformed in the process. The political is the framework, the institutional structure, which gives meaning to all aspects of life. It can be thrown into question insofar as its fragility emerges because it must uphold a total meaning. It can be thrown into question by events. Such moments of crisis are reflected on in turn by philosophers. When the political order is thrown into question, what happens is curious: It is challenged by what I call the anti-political. The anti-political is in its own way a new kind of political meaning. A peasant *jacquerie* could have been an affirmation of a new form, one that overcomes the church-bound, tradition-bound, hierarchical world of the past. At the same time, if it is successful and becomes the new form of the political, it no longer poses a political challenge but passes over into anti-politics.

The same dialectic can be seen if we return to the example of the 1970s, with its slogan "the personal is political." That claim is anti-political insofar as it challenges the bourgeois-liberal vision of politics: it says that politics has to have this form of intimacy, this form of sociability, this fusional character. But if that set of values becomes dominant, then in effect, we have a new form of the political, but it's an anti-political form of the political: It closes rather than opens social self-questioning. This is the paradox here. What I want to suggest is that anti-politics is a "politics" insofar as it rejects or challenges the reigning vision of politics. But it is a politics that wants to put an end to the political.

DL

In the history of political thought, and in these categories, how do you read the difference between, for example, 1789 and 1848?

DH

Let's take the passage between 1789 and 1794, which is simpler (although it foreshadows in a way 1848, when the February revolution was radicalized in the June Days). What you get, in effect, is an overcoming of the *ancien regime*, the emergence of new possibilities, indeterminate possibilities, in a situation that is, as the Maoists and Althusser used to say, over-determined. What happens is that Robespierre and the Jacobins then enter onto the historical stage with a new totalizing anti-politics. The genius of Robespierre—he's really the ancestor of Leninism, in this sense, as Lenin himself claimed—is that he never talks in his own name. Rather, he speaks in the name of the Revolution (although not yet in that of World History). And you can't beat him. If you claim that he and the Committee of Public Safety are somehow oppressive or wrong, you are accused of "particularism." So if you look at the history between 1789 and 1794 each time you get an opening or an emergence of a break and the possibility of the new it is immediately accused of particularism, what Leninists would later call "bourgeois self-interest"! As a result, it is accused of endangering the revolution, and it must be repressed. Revolutionary anti-politics turns out to be intensely conservative, if not reactionary!

DL

Marx has the idea of 1789 as moving in an "ascending line" compared to the "descending", "retrogressive motion" of the Revolution of 1848 and the rise of Bonapartism.

DH

But 1848 does not immediately lead to Bonapartism. By Bonapartism Marx means a return of plebiscitary, pseudo-democratic centralized state structure overriding and overarching the society. That does not come with the election of Napoleon III in 1848, but later with the *coup d'etat* in 1851 and its plebiscitary ratification. So that is a different story.

There is an absolutely brilliant essay by Harold Rosenberg on the *Communist Manifesto* to which I referred a moment ago. It's an interesting story: When Merleau-Ponty in 1948 decided to publish an collection of essays on the great figures in the history of philosophy, he asked different people to write chapters. For the chapter on Marx, it would have been difficult to pick a Frenchman because the editor would be accused of partiality since everyone knew the politics of everyone else on the Parisian stage. So, instead, he asked Rosenberg to write the chapter. Rosenberg begins his essay: "Nowhere in history have there been more ghost-inspectors, more unexpected returns, than in Shakespeare and in Marx"(Rosenberg 1956). In other words, he brings out a kind of Shakespearean dimension which, to my mind, and, again, because Rosenberg was a critic and because his entire critical structure builds around the idea of judgment and of action, fits very nicely and in a way rounds out our discussion.

In this context, let me add a sort of footnote about critics in America. The two great critics of the American breakthrough in painting—abstract expressionism—were Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg. Greenberg was a former a Trotskyist, and if you read his theory, you see that he has a vision whereby painting is going to go through a series of stages through which it is going to more and more free itself from representation and become absolute, pure two-dimensionality, paint. On the other hand, faced with abstract expressionism, which has no claim to represent anything, appears to Rosenberg to be radical in a different, dare I say more anarchist perspective. He stresses the *action* of painting—think of those famous photos of Jackson Pollock throwing the paint on the floor, it is the action, the brush that counts, the subject learning to act and learning in action.

DL

The critique of political economy and the question of capitalism, both time-honored on the Left, seem in some ways to have been displaced in your work. For instance, Marx, as you present him, was wrong to theorize the crisis of modern society in 1848 as the crisis of capital. This led you to propose a re-reading of Marx after 1989, one that would re-join the Marxian legacy to the historical project of democracy. Do you view things differently now, as we enter ever more deeply into the post-2008 “new normal” of stagnant wages and joblessness?

DH

I don’t think that the “critique of political economy” is identical to the “question of capitalism.” Rereading Marx after 1989 means returning to the critique of *political* economy to get a broader perspective; it means revivifying the political, which cannot be reduced to what you call the “new normal.” In a sense, that was what I was trying to do in that 1972 book that tried to understand how and why Marx moved “from philosophy to political economy.”

People don’t take their fate into their hands because of “stagnant wages and joblessness”—as if there existed a sort of revolutionary “tipping point” after which the revolutionary reflex would take hold. When are wages high enough, and what kind of full employment make for a fulfilled human society? In May ’68, our slogan was “l’imaginaire au pouvoir”; that was just an updated version of the young Marx’s claim that “to be radical is to go to the root; and for man, the root is man himself.”

SL

The now seemingly spent #Occupy movement arose as a belated response to the massive economic crisis that began in 2008. The situation seems not unlike the exhaustion of the Seattle “anti-globalization” movement during the election year that followed. Both of these movements arguably looked more to 1968 than to any other historical reference point. And, of course, between 1999 and 2011 came the anti-war movement, which was perhaps the last (and final?) time when the ghost of Marxism came unmistakably back to the fore in the form of anti-imperialism. None of these seem to have escaped the sort of repetition compulsion operative on the left for some decades now. There even seems to be something of a recognition of this in the form of widespread depoliticization. What stretches before an increasingly demoralized younger generation is the prospect of the total exhaustion of the post-1989 left (such as it was) with little prospect of anything taking its place. What possibility do you see in the present for at least bringing to a close a left imagination that seems increasingly to run on auto-pilot? Does politics today generate any prospect for actually being able to set aside the “200 years of error” that you speak of in your work?

DH
One can't predict the imagination! That is one of Castoriadis' most fundamental points. All one can do, I think, is to learn to avoid the anti-political temptation. And one aspect of this temptation is what I'm about to accuse you of!

Your question supposes that there *could be* something and that someone *could know* it. All I can do is to judge what is going on as it takes place and try to contribute to some understanding of the need to do more than just "everyday politics." From this perspective, although I am not any longer an activist, one of the things I do is write and speak publicly about day-to-day politics. Today, for example, on my weekly commentary for Radio Canada,[6] I talked about what's going on with the Republican convention: I thought it was wonderful that this jerk from Missouri—Todd Akin and the "legitimate rape" controversy—is probably going to cost the Republicans the presidential election. It may also cost them the Senate.

I do not expect Obama to transform the world: Many of us had wonderful hopes in 2008, but it was naïve to think that one person could do it; after all, charismatic leaders are doomed to routinize their charisma in order to preserve their power. But old Civil Rights Movement people like me certainly were nonetheless amazed and elated by his election, wishing/hoping/imagining it was a sign that society had been transformed. What one could have hoped was that he would have kept alive this movement of which we thought/hoped/imagined that he was the representative. I say "movement" despite its being a potentially anti-political term. It suggests, as did the idea of the "proletariat" for Marx and the Marxists, the idea that society can somehow crystallize or "fuse" into a frictionless unity. Although I've suggested reasons why that Platonic-Marxist, anti-political, dream will never be realized, I don't want to say that those who participate in movements are somehow "wrong." After all, I would not be who I am had it not been for the Civil Rights Movement. Movements are indeed "right" precisely because they restart the wheel of the dialectic that "makes those petrified stones dance because it sings before them their own melody."

NOTES

1. Among them was Hannah Arendt, who refers to Lukács in an review-essay on Karl Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia* published in 1930 under the title "Philosophy and Sociology." An English translation is found in *Essays in Understanding, 1930–1954*, edited by Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken, 1994).

2. Remember: I was trying to become a New *Leftist*! That meant that I wanted to be critical of the USSR but still hold out hopes for communism. In this sense, I had some sympathy for Trotsky, particularly after reading Isaac Deutscher's three volume history of his life. There was another reason for my attitude in that first preface. The only English translation of *any* of her works (published by the University of Michigan Press in 1961) featured her critique of the non-democratic nature of the Russian Revolution, written in 1918 shortly before her assassination in the failed German revolution, and appended to it her critique of Lenin that dates from 1904.
3. That is the reason that Lukács puts so much emphasis on the idea of "totality," as Martin Jay demonstrates elegantly. C.f., "The Antitotalitarian Left between Morality and Politics," Chap. 4, below.
4. That kind of claim recalls the structuralist arguments of Althusser that we discussed briefly at the outset of our talk.
5. It's hard not to recall here the passage from the first act of Goethe's *Faust*: "Was du ererbt von deinen Vätern hast, erwirb es, um es zu besitzen." I'm struck by the fact that I have published revised or new editions of several books, as well as collections of my essays rather than attempt to rework them into unified statements of grand theory. The reason for this is that I write for the present, expressing judgments and trying to justify them or to modify them as needed.
6. During the 15 months that preceded the November 2012 American elections, I did a weekly commentary on Wednesday mornings for Radio Canada (Montréal).

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CHAPTER 3

The New Left and the Search for the Political

It is perhaps presumptuous to write about oneself and one's friends as reflecting the theoretical project of a political movement as diverse and also as ephemeral as "the" New Left. Yet a contribution to a *Festschrift* offers the occasion both to recall a shared past and to reflect on one's own passages over the years. It is also an occasion to express esteem for the person whose contributions are being honored.[1]

Recalling my first meeting with Andrew Arato more than 40 years ago, I'm struck by a continuity in our concerns in spite of the different subjects we've studied over the years. It was 1970, a time when many participants in the New Left knew that it had to be more than a counter-cultural movement, and that it could not just continue to mobilize the resentment of those who might be drafted into the vain and vainglorious anti-communist American crusade in Vietnam. "From Resistance to Revolution" was the vague and ritually recited slogan of those who began to call themselves "comrades" as they abandoned what they called their bourgeois liberalism for one or another variant of Marxism (a few Stalinists, many more Trotskyists, still more Maoists, and of course the Castrist–Guevarists). For all their differences, these groups shared an orthodoxy built around the legacy of Lenin. What united them was the idea that there must be a vanguard, a tightly-knit and theoretically sophisticated organization that would take the leadership of and give coherence to the impending revolution. The model was the Russian Revolution of 1917; the ancestor was the Jacobin radicalism of Robespierre and Saint-Just, and the antipode was the American Revolution.

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D. Howard, *Between Politics and Antipolitics*, Political Philosophy and Public Purpose, DOI 10.1057/978-1-349-94915-1_3

This was the context in which Karl Klare and I decided to co-edit a volume called *The Unknown Dimension*: *European Marxism Since Lenin*.[2] Our goal was to show that critical political thought had not ceased after 1917; that a radical tradition that was critical, curious, and above all anti-dogmatic that had continued in Europe could help Americans understand the need for critical theory. We thought that this "unknown" tradition could help the New Left to understand what was truly "new" about it, how its goals related to those of the classical "left" and how from this comparative perspective our New Left belonged in fact to a deeper tradition of critical thought. Karl and I asked Andrew Arato to write the chapter on Georg Lukács, who stood at the origins of what Maurice Merleau-Ponty, himself looking for the roots of critical political thought, had called "Western Marxism."[3] Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness* (1923), along with Karl Korsch's *Marxism and Philosophy* (1923) marked the beginning of a radical rethinking of the history of critical philosophy. The concept of "western" Marxism was intended to point to a non-Leninist approach to radical politics. *The Unknown Dimension* offered readers a panoply of radical and critical theorists culminating in the contemporary work theories of a "new working class" formulated by Serge Mallet and André Gorz.[4]

The collaboration that began with that first project continued in the journal *Telos*, whose editorial board Andrew Arato joined beginning with issue nine, in the Fall of 1971. In those years, *Telos* was a privileged place where a few young multilingual American new leftists had the luxury of, so to speak, getting our education in public thanks to the extraordinary dedication of the journal's editor, Paul Piccone. Looking back through its early issues, *Telos* passed from leftist versions of Husserlian phenomenology mixed with a dose of Gramsci to Lukács and Korsch, and then onward, beyond the then popular Herbert Marcuse, to the various co-stars of the Frankfurt School. It was a heady time. No orthodoxy could hold back the editors' curiosity or prevent their forward movement. There was a brief pause—but only for a moment—when editors hesitated to publish the openly *anti-Marxist* work of Claude Lefort and Cornelius Castoriadis.[5] Could we be leftists while criticizing Marxism? It took some conceptual acrobatics. In this context, I proposed the idea of a "Marxian legacy" (as opposed to a Marxist tradition) that would radicalize critical theory by criticizing its own inheritance.[6]

By 1975, after the US withdrawal from Vietnam and the accompanying decline of the anti-war movement, the question of what counts as "left" theory became a rather academic matter. Theory and its radicalization became an end rather than a means to political change. A kind of intellectual orthodoxy crept into the pages of *Telos*—or so it appeared to me at the time. The journal became an academic project with a good conscience. The thrill of discovery was gone; it was a fallow period, I dare say even scholastic. A new source of energy came from the East, with the emergence in Poland of the trade union movement *Solidarnosc* in 1980. The brilliant editorial work of Andrew Arato, and his own interpretative essays, showed the importance and novelty of this radical politics that did not seek to seize state power but to render powerless the state while empowering civil society. The heady days of the old political adventure returned; *Telos* sought to give voice to the new movement that was emerging. The twin themes of democracy and civil society became leitmotifs of the journal's quest for something like what Karl Klare and I had called an "unknown dimension" of left-wing political thought and action.

In spite of the well-earned label of "European intellectuals," some of us began to see that these themes could be found also in American history, considering particularly the revolution of 1776 and its effect. This was a challenge to the model that had been furnished by French history and consecrated by Lenin's equation of his Bolsheviks with the French Jacobins. During these years the work of Hannah Arendt also became increasingly influential, although she had never identified herself explicitly as a leftist, old or new. Others in the circle around Paul Piccone turned elsewhere; *Telos* was increasingly drawn toward the ideas of Carl Schmitt and turned, so to speak, from red to brown.[7] Andrew could not hold back the tide; he left, as did I and others.

For my part, 40 years later, the search for an "unknown dimension" that can fructify radical political reflection and prevent its dogmatic stagnation, remains a loadstar. Whether it can fulfill the old Marxist—and more specifically Lukácsian—goal of uniting theory and praxis is another question, and probably not the right one. The analysis which follows leaves behind the old vocabulary but does not abandon the goals that I've shared with Andrew and others over these four decades. I will return to Arato's later work briefly in my conclusions.

1 Defining the Political

What is politics? What is the goal that defines it? The classical answer since Plato is justice; the modern definition borrowed facilely from Machiavelli is power. Today, the fact is that we use the word in a variety of disparate contexts which reflects a flattening of the concept. We speak of office politics, family or gender politics, racial or class politics, domestic or foreign politics. We may express our disdain for someone by saying that he or she is just "playing politics." At the university, professors are sometimes accused of trying to advance their careers through "academic politics." The term politics seems to act like a sponge, soaking up adjectives that qualify it while having no substance of its own; what was the sun around which social life turned has become the moon that, at best, reflects it.

In its contemporary uses, politics cannot be separated from forms of power; but it cannot simply be reduced to these. Power is a means which cannot define the end for which it is used. Yet political power is not the same thing as material force, which is imposed on others without their consent. Although material force may be used, it will bring diminishing returns as those subjected to it resist (actively or, more often, passively). Successful political power must have legitimacy in the eyes of those subject to it. Such legitimate power generates authority to which individual members of a society implicitly or explicitly consent. They do not feel that they are obeying someone else's wishes but are carrying out their own freely chosen projects, exercising their own will to achieve ends that they have rationally chosen. The source of the legitimacy of power will differ in different societies: the kinds of authority on which it depends may be secular or sacred, rational or customary, institutional or charismatic. Its basis may be strength, knowledge, or wealth, each of which will in turn be defined according to historical conditions. Each of these sources of legitimate power and authority is an example of the more general phenomenon that I am calling the political. The members of any society that is not subjected to brute force share a basic, minimal, set of values that provide meaning to their *all* aspects of their lives, not only to those that concern government.[8] This shared meaning is defined by the political, which concerns not only social institutions but also the character of the men and women in the society.

This general definition of the political provides a framework for the analysis of concrete political choices. The journalists' "first draft of history" describes the *particular* facts; but to evaluate them, it is necessary to fit them into a more *general* framework. That is why anyone who is interested in politics must be concerned with political theory. Without the help of some theory, the student of politics is lost in the thicket of discrete events; the parts don't fit together into a whole. However, just as the word "politics" seems to function like a sponge that can absorb multiple, even contrary, meanings, the same is true of theory. Its claims are universal; they eliminate factors that are due to accident, subjective bias, or contingent events. The social sciences offer many such theories, some at a macro-, others at a micro-level. But then, seemingly out of nowhere, history seems to take a new turn; *Solidarnosc* emerges, the Berlin Wall falls, and the Arab Spring spreads rapidly. Theory's ability to put particular choices into perspective fails in the face of the new political horizon. Social theory cannot explain the political. The universality of the claims of the political blinds it to the particularity of historical experience.

Part of the problem is that social science looks at its object from outside of it, as if it were using a telescope or a microscope to study facts that are neutral and unaffected by observation. It sees of course differences among individuals and groups, some natural, others cultural. But it cannot say which ones count. For example, the sociologist describes differences of economic wealth, social status, or political power; he may then chart ethnicity, gender, religion, or levels of education; finally, a correlation among them is sought. But correlation is not causation; what is here today may be gone tomorrow; might does not make right. What is missing from the analysis is the standpoint of the participants, for it is they who give meaning to the differences described. They are the ones who complain about the injustice of this or that situation in the expectation that others will support their grievance. That is why some social differences may be accepted even though they give advantages to one group or person over others. This meaning-giving aspect of social relations is a particular expression of the political. It defines legitimate power; and in so doing, it draws the line between the licit and the illicit, the just and the unjust, the known and the unknown. It establishes a shared background of values and meaning that leads the participants to treat certain differences as salient whereas they accept others silently.

This interpretation of the nature and role of the political owes more to continental thought than to the reigning Anglo-American approach. Rather than focus on the facts that *are* the case, the Anglo-American orientation is concerned to establish what *ought* to be the case. Since the publication of John Rawls' *Theory of Justice* (1971), normative theory has become dominant. In its original version, it attempted at once to legitimate liberal political values while criticizing those practices that were inconsistent with them, most particularly those social arrangements that distorted the possibility of realizing the values of the liberal creed. In the intervening decades, the Rawlsian version of normative theory has been criticized in particular for its assumption that free, rational individuals exist *before* they come together rationally to form a community. That appears to put the part before the whole. It would seem politically more accurate to examine first the bonds that tie together the community, since there are no individuals who do not belong to some sort of community. Whether one agrees with this general criticism or not, both sides of the Anglo-American debate share the goal of explaining the rational *reasons* that lead men and women to consider their social relations as legitimate.

Normative theory makes no moral assumptions about the particular nature of the good; rather, it sets out to determine what duties and rights a person ought to agree to in a society that all its members would agree is just, whatever their effect on their own particular lives. In this way, the normative theory is a modern reformulation of the classical liberal social contract theories that try to show how and why men leave their natural, pre-political conditions to form political society.[9] It asks what natural rights can be legitimately surrendered to the political state, and what that state owes (or does not owe) to the members who accept the bargain of living together. What freedoms are given up to the state, and what obligations does it have toward its members? Citizens of a political society must be equal to one another (at least as concerns their political rights), but they must also retain at least some of their natural liberty (which can lead to differences among them). What makes the normative theory effective is that its account of the relation between equality and liberty is political in a limited but important sense insofar as it is solely concerned with the public activity of the members of society—not with their private moral beliefs—while at the same time its normative force binds the individual with a subjective force similar to the way a moral imperative affects a private person. In this way, normative theory claims to explain the existence of a political unity that leaves room for moral diversity, permitting believers in different gods, followers of different cults, agnostics, and unbelievers to live together in public harmony whatever their private differences.

2 The Political and the Moral

The attractiveness of normative political theory lies in its attempt to take into account the *rational* perspective of the actors in society. This permits it to study the way in which political action becomes the basis of legitimate power rather than the dumb exercise of brute force. Although it claims to be indifferent to the personal values of the members of the society, normative theory is ultimately a moral rather than a political theory. In the most simple terms, the difference between moral and political claims is that moral relations concern only two participants whereas political action takes place among three (or more) actors, one of whom is affected only indirectly by the behavior of the other two who must, however, take into account his perspective in making their choices. This fundamental distinction needs to be explained more fully in order to understand the practical role of the political.

Relations between two persons are direct and immediate; they are governed by a code of morality. In a dyadic relation, the participants can look one another in the eye; they can directly challenge the claims of the other both as to their veracity and to the sincerity with which the speaker emits the claim. The moral actor is never alone; but he is never in mixed company. When he asks what ought to be done in a given situation, the question is directed to himself, that is, to his self as if it were another, the representative of moral humanity. If I resolve to act in a moral manner, it is because I have to continue to live with myself, and I don't want to have to spend my time with an amoral opportunist or an immoral evildoer. I look at my actions through the eyes of an other who is, however, identical with me. This is the other with whom, in the normative theory, all individuals as identical participants agree to participate in a political society. This other is at once like me and yet—at least in principle—different from me. If he were me, there would be no reason to inquire about his judgment of my behavior. But if he were completely other, there would be no reason for me to care about his opinion, which would not matter to me. This second party through whose eyes I look at my own actions represents my better self, the one whom I *should* become in order to truly be myself, an other who is sufficiently similar to me that I want to act together with him. In principle, there is no reason why I cannot achieve this goal, becoming what I am by joining with this universal other in order to become a fully human, truly universal self. In this sense, morality has a political dimension because it affects individual character; but it cannot be identified with the political, which concerns participants whose difference from one another is more important than their shared moral reason.

Relations among three (or more) persons depend always on the mediation of a third party whose relation to the other two can never be made fixed or permanent because any of the participants can in principle take the role of the Third. The Third can be another person, a group of people, or even an institution. It stands outside of the relation that the other two establish to one another; their accord was based on moral considerations and is in principle the private, subjective relation of two individuals. The

Third threatens the unity of purpose sought by the dyad because it makes manifest the public, objective character of their relation which challenges its claim to moral justification. As a result, one of the members of the dyad, feeling the critical gaze of the Third, may try to draw it into complicity with their couple; but the danger is that the previous partner will resent the lost immediacy of the dyadic relation, looking jealously at the attempts by its former partner to widen their entente. This jealous partner may become a new Third in whose eyes the new partnership has acquired an intimacy that seems to exclude its participation. At this point, the new dyad may react by trying to eliminate the former partner, who has now become a threatening Third. But in taking this action, the newly formed dyad violates its own moral structure, which was based on the immediacy of mutual recognition; it treats the new Third instrumentally, as foreign, other, and inassimilable. The new Third, in turn, denounces as a private conspiracy what the members of the previous dyad had considered a moral protest against the refusal of the Third to respect their rights. The members of the previous dyad reply to the accusation by denouncing the Third for "politicizing" their relation for its own benefit. In short, full political unity as moral fusion can never be achieved; but the quest for moral unity renews the dynamic of political relations; in this process it demonstrates the necessity of the political. Although the political is not distinct from morality, it cannot be identified with morality, which is based on dyadic relations.

The distinction between morality and politics can be made more concrete by showing how and why there is always a temptation to replace the autonomy of the political by theories of morality. Moral values are justified by claims to universal validity; what is good for you is good for me and for all others as unique individuals. There may be difficulties in determining how to apply moral principles in specific situations; but the principle of universalizability is unchanging. For its part, the political deals with conditions that are always particular; solutions that have worked at one time will be inadequate just because their previous successful application has changed the conditions in which the new action must take place. In the previous example, the attempt to integrate the Third led to the perception by one member of the previously successful dyad that the assimilation of the outsider is a threat to its formerly stable partnership. Its suspicious reaction has the effect of cementing the new dyad, one of whose members now perceives its former partner as a threat. The result is a dynamic that feeds on and reproduces instability; the participants know that they must take into account not only the effects of their action on their immediate partner but also the way in which their action *appears* in the eyes of the Third. In this sense, "public opinion" itself becomes the Third whose allegiance is at once sought after but always fickle.

The attempt to formulate a normative political theory fails to recognize the distinction between the creative potential of the political and the stabilizing role of morality. It does not recognize that the existence of the Third means that *particularity* rather than universality is the essential characteristic of the political. The normative theory imagines a sort of contract made between what might be called universal individuals, persons who are like one another in all public aspects (although differing in other, private, ways). Treating everyone as equal to all others appears to be a virtue; but the resulting theory can deal only with the rule rather than the exception; it cannot take account of particular cases—which is the task of the political. For this reason, the implications of normative theory, and the various types of moral theory to which it appeals, are ultimately *antipolitical.*

If politics is based on the legitimate presence of the Third, antipolitics can be defined as the attempt to eliminate that disturbing particular who stands outside the moral unity and shared values that make a people or nation what it is. Antipolitics seeks to eliminate the need for the political. The twentieth century offered two stark illustrations of the attraction of antipolitics in the forms of communism and fascism. In both cases, democratization and capitalism were replacing aristocratic societies that left no room for particularity. The idea of individual rights and the possibility of social mobility legitimated conflicts that threatened a static, hierarchical world in which everyone and everything had its proper place. The promise of communism was to overcome class divisions, economic exploitation, and political injustice by creating a classless society in which power based on private property would be eliminated and the state would wither away. Analogously, the promise of Hitler's fascism was to insure the unity of the German *Volk* by exterminating the parasites that were threatening its purity while conquering the territories needed to incorporate all Germans into one *Reich* whose 1000-year life would in effect put an end to any possibility of change. One remarkable aspect of these twin totalitarianisms was the expansionist and imperialist megalomania that resulted from their antipolitical projects whose goal of eliminating particularity meant that they were unable to recognize any limits—since to do so would be to admit the legitimacy of particularity. Equally remarkable is the degree to which they found willing supporters who joined not (only) because of the material rewards they expected but because they were supporting what they considered to be a moral cause. In their eyes, totalitarianism was a legitimate form of power because it was being used to eliminate the particular interests that threatened social unity.

The fact that totalitarianism appealed to moral motivations calls attention to the fact that the antipolitics is not an aberration; it expresses a very human desire to insure social unity, whatever the cost. Totalitarianism is the most extreme form of antipolitics. But particularity can also be denied without being exterminated, as can be seen in the case of capitalism. At first glance, capitalism constantly produces new products; and the free market depends on the constant creation of new needs and the invention of new commodities to satisfy them. But the magic of the market makes this particularity into a form of universality insofar as the new products are no more different from one another than one brand of laundry detergent from another.[10] Particularity here is illusory, a mere appearance, and a difference that makes no difference. Whatever novelty appears in the world of commodities is engulfed into the universality of the market where it is homogenized by the "invisible hand" working behind the backs of the players to arrange an outcome that ensures the good of all. Capitalism too makes a moral appeal; but its moral principle of private choice ignores the debilitating effects of unbound liberty on social relations that were supposed to be based on an equality of rights.

The fact that capitalism is also antipolitical poses the question of its compatibility with democracy. After all, the two general types of totalitarianism that illustrate the way antipolitics functions were attempts to overcome what they took to be the particular immoral effects of democracy and the threat to social unity that it represented. Is capitalism therefore comparable to the other totalitarianisms, as some critics of economic globalization maintain today? This question, which only be suggested here, points to the need to distinguish among the types of antipolitics.

3 The Necessity of the Political

It is time to ask: what *is* the political? Every society has to have a political dimension. Without it, men and women who co-exist in a given space and time would be no different than a random mix of entities which now and then make contact only to move on, and on, and on…. Just as the members of an athletic team are united by what is often called a team "spirit" that transcends the particular or private concerns of any one of them without denying their validity in their own sphere, so too are citizens joined together by a shared framework of meaning and values that unite them in spite of their particular or private differences.[11] People may belong to many social organizations, each of which is defined by the particular goals that it seeks. The political is the principle that organizes the relations among these particular groups (which themselves have their own organizing principles since their members have more than one single framework that gives meaning to the diversity of their lives). It establishes a hierarchy among these groups, which can be challenged and replaced if it loses its ability to maintain the unity binding this diversity. In this way, the political can be said to define the grammar and the syntax that govern relations among the members of society. Just as there are some things that cannot be said, some expressions that cannot be understood, and some music that cannot be heard, so too in any political society there are things that cannot be done, actions that no one will join, and projects that no one could imagine.

The political must be distinct from the social relations that it organizes; but its legitimacy depends on the fact that the members of society perceive it as the expression of their own will. How can it be both without and within, transcendent and yet immanent? That is the paradox of the political, to which the consent of the governed is the modern solution.[12] Even if only tacit, consent distinguishes political power from brute force. If the political becomes too far separated from the society that it governs, it appears foreign, either constraining obedience, fostering rebellion, or sullen and silent indifference. Respect for the law is lost, and with it disappears the solidarity that binds a plurality of individuals into a whole. Conversely, if society recognizes itself wholly in the political, this would destroy the transcendent (and universal) character of authority that makes the particular exercise of power legitimate. Social relations would then be governed solely by material force, and the law degraded to merely a tool of the powerful. The participants in such a society would be bound by nothing more than personal interest; they would be incapable of governing themselves, and when faced with unexpected conditions they would not be able to transcend the particularity of their immediate concerns to understand and act for the good of the whole.

The history of political theory can be understood as the story of attempts to preserve the paradoxical structure that has been outlined here. The principle that gives the political its authority cannot become wholly external to society; but the attempt to insure that it is recognized by the consent of the members cannot be assumed to be fully immanent to their social relations. The authority of the political may be based on nature or reason, on gods or God, on tradition or science. In each case, this principle is at once external to social relations and yet reflected in them. Nature's lawfulness is beyond men's power; yet they make use of its laws in their social relations and their modes of production. Reason is never fully present in human society; yet a wholly irrational society could never maintain itself. The gods or God govern the behavior of men; yet they can never deny to them the freedom to choose to obey or to rebel. The same paradoxical structure holds for the ideas of tradition and science; they are transcendent principles that are also present within human society. The danger in each case, however, is that the tension can be broken; immanence or transcendence becomes absolute. The gods may desert the universe, nature may come to be seen as mere stuff, or reason as an abstract and merely formal rule. Or, from the other side, nature may be divinized, reason rationalized, and religion replaced by science. The result in each case will be antipolitics.

This same paradoxical structure can be observed at a more directly political level in the classical regime forms of monarchy, aristocracy, or democracy. These forms are political principles which must be at once incarnated in the actual monarch, aristocracy, or democracy, while retaining their value as principles that are not entirely realized in any present or past society. Monarchy, the rule of a single person (*monos*), realizes the overriding need for unity of action in any society; there must exist, somewhere, a source of ultimate decision. But of course some monarchs play this role better than others; and none can claim perfection. The monarch at times incarnates the transcendent principle of unity; at other times, he is the voice of the people, its representative, and the head of the body politic. But the rule of one can become arbitrary; or a weak-willed monarch may fear to take initiatives. The resulting antipolitical government will eventually be replaced by a political structure that is open to the best (the *aristoi*). Once again, familiar paradoxes reappear. How does this superiority manifest itself? Is the aristocrat defined as the most brave, or wise, or strong? Those are tangible qualities. But what of those with the best judgment, the most experience, the greatest piety? Those qualities are harder to measure. Nonetheless, in today's representative democracies, we consider that those whom we elect are "the best"—or at least, better than any other candidate. They have convinced us that they are sufficiently like us, and yet better than we. But if they fail to maintain this equality and equidistance, such that the aristocracy becomes an oligarchy, the rule of the (wealthy) few, then the political dynamic becomes antipolitical, insofar as it attempts to recreate equality in the form either of government by technocracy or by a demagogic populism.

This political tension reaches its most acute form in a democracy. The name means literally that it is a form of power (*kratos*) by the people (*demos*). It appears at first that this rule by the people over itself eliminates the difference between the political and the social. Self-rule, moreover, is a form of freedom that is not arbitrary or capricious but the expression of autonomy in which the self (*autos*) gives itself its own law (*nomos*). In spite of this affirmation of freedom, the laws that a people gives to itself nonetheless *govern* the relations of those who are subject to them. The concept of *ruling* remains; democracy is not anarchy, the absence of rule (*arche*). The difference between the people as governing themselves and the people as governed (by themselves) remains; in the one case the citizens are active, in the other they are passive. The active citizen makes rules that apply to himself in his non-political life in society as a producer, family member, or participant in the marketplace. In the one case, the citizen is a public person; in the other, he is a private individual. The greatest danger in a democracy is that private interests come to dominate over the public good; when that happens, immanence destroys the regulative role of the principle of democracy which is the "virtue" of the citizen who knows how to sacrifice his private interests. On the other hand, there are times when such transcendent values do return to the democratic stage, often expressing themselves under the concept of a republic (the *res publica*, the public thing or commonwealth). Was this not the "hope" that some felt with the emergence of *Solidarnosc*, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and again with the "Arab Spring" of 2011?

The fundamental principle of democracy as a political regime is not reducible to an institutional structure. In previous regimes, the principle of legitimation that distinguished the authority of power from the imposition of sheer force was located in a transcendent source *outside* of the society, in ideas such as gods or God, nature or natural law, tradition or reason. Relations within society were structured by this transcendent principle which remained distinct from the relations it legitimated. The distinction between the two levels meant that either the existing social relations could be challenged because they were not adequate expressions of the transcendent principle of legitimation; or the adequacy of the interpretation of that principle could be put into question by the fact that it contradicted the actual relations among the members of society. Thus, a failed monarch did not destroy the principle of monarchy, nor did a corrupt aristocracy tarnish belief in a government of the best. However, the distinction between the two levels in these two types of regime did not make necessary a critical political dynamic. The tension between the political principle and the society that it structured could be broken; politics then simply goes into abeyance, antipolitics triumphs.

Democracy's uniqueness is seen in the fact that the source of its political legitimacy is *immanent* to the society. The source of authority is immanent in democracy; yet it must continue to perform the political role that it played when it was conceived as a transcendent principle. This appears to be a paradox. Sovereignty belongs to the people; yet the people are subject to the government that they establish. When the political principle is said to be realized wholly within society, the social and the political have become identical; the separation that had existed in previous forms of the political is overcome. But this same movement that overcomes the opposition destroys the political, which is replaced by antipolitics. The political has lost the critical distance that legitimated social relations or served to criticize them for not being adequate to their own principle. The result is an instability due to the uncertainty about which relations are legitimate. While this instability may result ultimately in a crisis, at best it is a recipe for stagnation and opens the possibility of domination by force.

This double movement in the immanent logic of this regime illustrates both the strength and the weakness of democracy. The identification of the principle of political legitimation with the actual competition among the interests that make up society only appears to guarantee stability. Democracy need not look outside itself to justify the actions it takes and the legislation it proposes. This can become a weakness insofar as it may lose sight of the whole, which is more than the sum of the diverse and competing interests in a pluralistic society. With this movement, the history of political philosophy comes to an apparent end; the great political thinkers of the nineteenth century are *social philosophers*: Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Émile Durkheim. They recognized the necessity of the political, but they could only describe its effects not its origin. We will return to their work in Chap. 6, "Philosophy by Other Means."

The political paradox of democratic self-governance explains a fundamental aspect of modern political life. The essential difference between the people as active and self-governing and the people as passive and governed expresses the fact that society is essentially divided. Marx called this "class division," insisting in the *Communist Manifesto* that "all history is the history of class struggle."From the standpoint of political theory, this claim is questionable. Marx is projecting onto earlier historical regimes a distinction that emerges only in democratic societies whose political principle is immanent to them. There is no reason that monarchy or aristocracy should produce clashes within the hierarchical societies over which they rule. Only within the immanence of a democratic regime does social difference generate political antagonism that could lead to regime change.

4 Recovering Political Thought

Marx misunderstood the nature of a democratic regime because he treated the political as dependent on social relations rather than as the source of their legitimation. He did not see that in fact the division of rulers and the ruled exists in every society because social relations are always structured by the political. The challenge today is not to eliminate political division but to invent forms of the political that promote the general welfare. The attempt to define the political is the "unknown dimension" from which Andrew Arato and I began four decades ago. In his case, it has produced significant empirical and theoretical results. What began as a series of analytical essays in *Telos* in the early 1980s charting the emergence of forms of autonomy within civil society in Eastern Europe, beginning with the Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia and brought to a fever pitch by Solidarnosc in Poland, led Arato the critical theorist to a theoretical reevaluation of the idea of revolution, which he presented in the comprehensive study (with Jean L. Cohen) of *Civil Society and Political Theory* (1992). Influenced by Habermas's style of critical theory, that comprehensive volume represents critically—taking seriously the strengths of each type of theory in order, precisely, to accentuate its fatal presupposition of an overcoming of contradiction—the major theories animating sociological debates. More important, Arato's active participation in the transition from communism in Hungary helped him to understand more clearly how and why the old idea of a revolution has become meaningless and misleading. It has become necessary to find and invent new links among what Arato called in a collection of his essays, *Civil Society, Constitution, and Legitimacy* (2000). The triadic title was well chosen. Arato demonstrates the way in which, today, the particular role of a political constitution has become central to understanding the transformation of regime types in our increasingly unstable globalized world. This triad, whose empirical pillars Arato elaborates in the book's successive essays charting critically the transformations that culminated in the Fall of the Wall, can be understood within the parameters of the theory of the political and its avatars suggested in the preceding account. Or perhaps it would be more honest to say: my proposed theory owes a serious debt to Arato's critical perspective on our world as we've lived it together.[13]

His most recent book, *Constitution Making Under Occupation: The Politics of Imposed Revolution in Iraq* (2009), is a tightly argued account of the failures of what he calls "revolutionary constitution making" as illustrated by the disastrous US invasion of Iraq. The pretense that thinks that democratization can be imposed on a society from without is convincingly dismantled. In its place, Arato introduces a "two-stage model" of constitution making which tries to take account of the both social political imperatives.[14]

The title of this concluding paragraph refers to one aspect of the work that Andrew Arato and I (and others) began more than four decades ago. Each of us has taken a different path, sometimes more empirical than theoretical, sometimes more engaged with actual problems, at others more concerned with historical analogies or with fundamental principles. Parts of the preceding analysis were part of a draft of the Introduction to *The Primacy of the Political: A History of Political Thought from the Greeks to the French and American Revolutions.*[15] That project was a stage in my way of developing the insights that have guided four decades of thinking about politics that have been marked by a basic intuition: that there is a need to analyze the "unknown dimension" of political life to both understand it and to help change it. That journey continues for both of us, and many others of our generation.

Notes

1. A first version of these reflections appeared in a volume honoring Andrew Arato titled *Critical Theory and Democracy* edited by Enrique Peruzzotti and Martin Plot, *Critical theory and Democracy. Civil society, dictatorship, and constitutionalism in Andrew Arato's democratic theory* (New York: Routledge, 2013).
2. (New York: Basic Books, 1971). In addition to an essay by Arato, the volume contained chapters by Stanley Aronowitz, Robin Blackburn, Martin Jay, Bertell Ollman, and Alfred Schmidt, among others.
3. C.f., Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Adventures of the Dialectic*, translated by Joseph Bien, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973).

4. The chapter on Gorz in this book treats the philosophical foundations of the sociological analysis that I discuss in *The Unknown Dimension*. C.f., "André Gorz and the Philosophical Foundation of the Political," Chap. 7 below.
5. Lefort was published in Number 22, Winter, 1974–75; Castoriadis appeared in Number 23, Spring 1975.
6. C.f., Dick Howard, *The Marxian Legacy* (New York: Urizon Books, 1978), which includes my Introductions to the two translations of Lefort and Castoriadis in *Telos*. In the second edition of this book (Macmillan & University of Minnesota Press, 1988) I devote a long Afterward to this criticism of the inherited Marxian legacy.
7. C.f., "Rereading Arendt after the Fall of the Wall," Chap. 9 below. On Schmitt, c.f., the brief discussion in "Philosophy by Other Means. The Philosophical Origins of Sociology," Chap. 6 I might mention here that I sensed an ambiguity in the thinking of the New Left already in 1966, when I first read Karl Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia*. I published a critical essay in *New Left Notes*, the national journal of Students for a Democratic Society, under the title "Reactionary Radicals?" C.f., volume I, Nr. 40–41, 1966, pp. 1, ff.
8. An assemblage of people governed by brute force is a "society" only in a metaphoric sense.
9. It is a modern formulation insofar as it does not presuppose a natural individual whose psychological dispositions it examines; its foundation lies in reason's universality. That is why I distinguish the moral standpoint from the universality of the political perspective.
10. This is the process that Marx called the "fetishism of commodities." Goods that are produced as use values are transformed by the market process into exchange values; use values that were qualitative are considered by the market only in terms of their exchange value. There is of course a difference between the types of detergent; but that difference is only a means to the capitalist end: profit.
11. It may appear that morality can play this role. But morality is based on the identity of the participants. The political encompasses this moral identity—we are equal as citizens—while legitimating the existence of a plurality of differences among the citizens. The political does not exclude the moral, but it cannot be reduced to morality. That is, for example, the lesson of Machiavelli's *Prince*.
12. The classical form of the paradox can be seen in Plato's *Republic* which insists on the correlation of types of individual souls to institutional forms. An early modern variant is found in Montesquieu's insistence on the types of virtue required by different political regimes.
13. I should not that his most recent book, *Constitution Making Under Occupation. The Politics of Imposed Revolution in Iraq* (2009), was pub-

lished in a collection at Columbia University Press of which I am the editor. The collection is titled "Political Philosophy/Political History," and each volume is contains a Series' Editor's Introduction. Due to a miscommunication, there is no editor's comment for this volume. I agree with Arato's account of the failures of what he calls "revolutionary constitution making" as illustrated by the disastrous US invasion of Iraq. The pretense that democratization can be imposed on a society from without is convincingly dismantled. In its place, Arato introduces a "two-stage model" of constitution making which tries to take account of the both social political imperatives. Rereading this essay in 2015, it seems to me that the framework suggested here could help to disentangle the stages of the mess in which Iraq, and the region, find themselves.

14. The same idea was called a "self-limiting revolution" by the dissidents in Eastern Europe whose movement broke the power of communism in 1989. C.f., "Toward a Democratic Manifesto," Chap. 5 below.
15. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2110).

CHAPTER 4

The Anti-Totalitarian Left Between Morality and Politics

Martin Jay introduces his wide-ranging study of *Marxism and Totality* with a "topography of Western Marxism" that concludes with some remarks about what he calls the "generation of 1968."[1] They were a "distinct generation of non-dogmatically leftist intellectuals," in whose number he counts himself. Similarly, in the Introduction to a collection of his essays published two years later,[2] he explains that although he wanted to move beyond Critical Theory to other projects, "I was drawn back into its orbit." The reason for this continued appeal was first of all intellectual curiosity, because he was "never certain that Marxism, Western or otherwise, offered all the answers." But there was a political appeal as well, since he thereby avoided the deadening experience of a "deradicalization" when the excitement of the initial discoveries gave way to a "theoretical and practical" loss of confidence. That changed mood, he goes on to say, was "evident" in my own book published in 1977, *The Marxian Legacy*, and "apparent" also in articles in the journal *Telos*. In contrast, Martin Jay cites the volume that Karl Klare and I had published only five years earlier as part of "a burgeoning awareness of the richness as well as the inadequacies of a tradition of thought."[3] Could it have been simply what he calls the "disheartening events of the 1970s" that explains the changed intellectual landscape?[4]

As always with Martin Jay's historical reconstructions, the picture is not black and white. He points out that the loss of confidence had not produced a kind of "dogmatic anti-New Leftism comparable to the 'God that failed' anti-Communism … of an earlier disillusionment." He does not

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D. Howard, *Between Politics and Antipolitics*, Political Philosophy and Public Purpose, DOI 10.1057/978-1-349-94915-1_4

believe that “the story is over,” or that the historian’s task is simply to trace a “bleak tale of dashed expectations.” After all, he had described the search for what Karl Klare and I called an “unknown dimension” of European Marxism as seeking both its “richness as well as [its] inadequacies.” That was precisely the duality I had sought to portray in *The Marxian Legacy*. That is why I insisted that my publisher replace the proposed cover photo of a May 1968 demonstration in Paris with Breugel’s painting “The Blind leading the Blind.”[5] True, I left the editorial committee of *Telos* around that time because it seemed to me that the journal was increasingly publishing what I called “meta-commentaries” that veered ever more toward traditional academic arguments rather than pursue the political project of critical theory. But when *Telos* rediscovered the political–intellectual project that had inspired its first phase—as it became increasingly involved in understanding the new social movements that emerged first within the Communist bloc and then also in the West, particularly with the “second Left” in France—I had no problem rejoining the editorial group with whose political and intellectual projects I agreed. It was then that I also published a second, updated edition of *The Marxian Legacy* in 1988.

Rereading *Marxism and Totality* recently, I could not help but wonder why Martin Jay stressed the signs of defeat—even when he also insisted that “the story” would also continue. I then looked back at the two books of mine to which he referred. The major difference between them (aside from the fact that one is the product of many hands) is that *The Marxian Legacy* concludes with two long chapters on the work of Claude Lefort and Cornelius Castoriadis.[6] I had managed, with great difficulty and over many objections, to have essays by each of them published in *Telos* (in 1974 and 1975), although their critique of Marxist pieties grated on many an ear among the editors and still more from readers. To understand this attitude, it has to be recalled that while the New Left was “new” insofar as it challenged the stale party politics of communism as well as the pieties of liberalism, it also was “left” in its refusal of the dominant politics of mainstream anti-communism as well as its uncritical identification of democracy with capitalism. The result was that it sought to somehow hold on to Marx (or at least to an “unknown dimension” opened by his work), and also to adopt a politics of “*anti*-anticommunism” to express a critique of the existent liberal capitalist political system.[7]

The fact that Lefort and Castoriadis had taken the critique of bureaucratic totalitarianism as the fundamental thread that led through a rereading of Marx toward the invention of a radical politics was hard to digest in this context. It seemed to give both theoretical and political arms to the Cold War critics of the Soviet Union.[8] That is why I was not surprised when I came to the brief mention of Lefort and Castoriadis at the very end of Martin Jay's historical reconstruction of the place of "phenomenological Marxism" in the winding ways of *Marxism and Totality*. Jay explains that they had "a period of influence" in 1968, but that it was "short-lived." With that lapidary remark, the "*adventures of a concept*" moves on to a chapter discussing Louis Althusser's "structuralist reading of Marx."[9] While the intellectual historian is not a prophet, and his book was published in 1984, Martin Jay did define his goal as the "rescue [of] the legacy of the past in order to allow us to realize the potential of the future."[10] Needless to say, in the decades since, the structuralist vogue has come and gone. It is worthwhile asking why it was for a time so fascinating; and why it faded rather quickly and quietly.[11] The answer to both questions lies in the anti-subjectivism preached by Althusser and his disciples which was in its essence *antipolitical*. Its claim to justify a radical politics by appealing to a new "science" denied its own role and the political responsibility of those (such as the French Communist Party, of which Althusser remained a member) who want to use that science for political ends. Ironically, this faith in science coupled with a denial of political responsibility is simply another variant of what Lefort and Castoriadis's critique showed as the foundation of the totalitarian temptation. Each of them in his own way, using his own concepts and points of reference, denounced the failure to recognize the autonomy of the political domain as such. In this way, they were in phase with what I consider to be the essential spirit of the radical politics that shot forth in the 1968 movements, which could be understood as attempting to reclaim the political.[12]

1 American, West European, and East European New Left Experiences

Marxism and Totality is only incidentally the history of a generation, but the relation of the "adventures" of a *concept* to the political experience of a generation is worth exploring. Part of the difficulty is that the sixty-eighters were also—and perhaps primarily—concerned to develop a new understanding of the political. That is why *The Unknown Dimension* began with Karl Klare's essay on "The Critique of Everyday Life, the New Left and the Unrecognizable Marxism." At that time, not so long ago, when very little of Marx's work was available in the USA,[13] a new political spirit was in gestation, emerging from the civil rights and then the anti-war movement, and then branching quickly from feminism outward toward what Klare described as the "critique of everyday life." Concepts were needed if the experience was to take hold, and give itself a coherence by which to avoid the fate of being "short-lived." Thus, after 1968, New Leftists in the USA (readers, e.g., of *Telos*, *New German Critique* or *Radical America*, perhaps some readers of *Dissent*) tended to seek a renewal of Marxism, calling it a "critical theory" (often recognizing their debt to the Frankfurt School and to Martin Jay's reconstruction of its history in *The Dialectical Imagination*). With the end of the Vietnam War, and the exhaustion of radical energy in spasms of identity politics, what was left of the New Left had retreated to the academy where the theory of politics was replaced by the politics of theory. Meanwhile Europeans, feeling the need to draw conclusions from the failed general strike of May–June in Paris and from the crushing in August of the reform experiments of the Prague Spring by the Warsaw Pact, turned (slowly, but quite but steadily) away from Marx and toward the idea of an autonomous civil society and the renewal of democratic politics.[14]

These different orientations within the New Left are explained only in part by the history and the institutional structures of the state in Europe and USA. The old *topos* that distinguishes the French and the American revolutions by stressing the French orientation toward social equality as opposed to the American concern with political liberty is an oversimplification of the paradoxical politics of daily life sought by the New Left. For example, the civil rights movement in the USA, despite its moral power and civic mobilization, demanded the intervention of the central state (first from the courts and eventually through presidential leadership) to impose egalitarian change in a recalcitrant segregationist society. At the same time, many of the young who mobilized to demand this equality of rights remembered their grandparents telling them how the New Deal helped them escape dependence and to create a (limited but real) social safety net. The goal of these young Americans, which they could not express in so many words, was the creation of what may well be an oxymoron: a radical and social democracy.[15] The radicalism remained after the social movement ebbed; but it now took the form of a moral imperative coupled with criticism of the existing social order rather than a positive attempt to define the political. I will return in a moment to the consequences of this transformation.

Similar but inverse political paradoxes faced leftists in Europe. On the one hand, French Jacobinism and Soviet-style command economies made clear the constraints imposed by statist centralism on civic autonomy and individual liberty. On the other hand, a political movement to transform or take over the state in order to make possible free and full civic and individual liberty would need to use the power of a centralized organization that would be the antithesis of the liberation that was sought. The result was a dual alienation from the political; the rejection of the bureaucratic power of the state was accompanied by a refusal of the means necessary to organize successful opposition to it. This double alienation helps to understand the increasing influence of the critique of totalitarianism at the end of the 1970s. Totalitarianism was perceived as an antipolitics that destroys the possibility of political renewal. First in Eastern Europe, then gradually in the West, it became necessary to reevaluate the project of democracy, which could no longer be treated, as it was during the Cold War, as simply the abstract formal legitimation of capitalist material exploitation.

In the eyes of many on the left, the Fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 that symbolized the final end of the communist dream marked only the first stage of a revolution. For some, the next stage would be played out in the radicalization of Western democracy, as they had sought it since the heady times of the New Left. For others, particularly in the wake of the shock waves sent out by the attacks of 9/11, the next stage would take place in the non-Western world. These were the sixty-eighters who became known, pejoratively, as "liberal hawks." Their self-justification reflects what could be called a "European" political sensibility, strongly affected by the critique of totalitarianism. For example, they justified the invasion of Iraq on the grounds Saddam Hussein was a "fascist totalitarian" who would surely make, and make use of, weapons of mass destruction (as he had done already in the Anfal attacks on Iraqi Kurds). The problem for these anti-totalitarians was that this was the rhetoric of the Bush administration and its neo-conservative supporters who claimed to support democratization by the force of arms against the protean threat of a totalitarianism. Nonetheless, these former New Leftists who became liberal hawks had convinced themselves that the victory over communism (and fascism before it) was achieved by an alliance with the devil, which could be imitated two decades later by another shady deal. In their eyes, an example of such deals with the devil was support for Reagan's stationing of Pershing and Cruise missiles in Europe (which seemed to have convinced Gorbachev of the need for reform); a later example was support for NATO interventions in Bosnia under the Clinton government. Conversely, the failure to intervene in Rwanda had led to disaster that had to be avoided in the future. These positive and negative examples weakened democratic scruples against the neo-conservative pressure for armed intervention in Iraq.

But there is a slippage in this neo-conservative claim, which is in the last resort the same argument as the one made by supporters of "realism" in international relations (who, for different reasons, often opposed the war in Iraq). What these liberal hawks forgot is that anti-totalitarianism supported a politics of human rights that began to take shape in the late 1970s with Poland's *Solidarnosc* and with Czechoslovakia's *Charter 77*. It was only then, when an immanent foundation existed, that there could be hope for a domestic, self-generated democratization of society. In a word, the liberal hawks' attempt to unite politics and morality ignored Aristotle's warning that the good citizen is not necessarily a good man. A political decision based on morality is not necessarily a wise political decision. They forgot as well Kant's distinction between the political moralist (or moralizing politician) and the moral politician (who recognizes the place of political prudence). "the moralizing politician," says Kant, "by glossing over principles of politics which are opposed to the right with the pretext that human nature is not capable of the good as reason prescribes it, only makes reform impossible and perpetuates the violation of law"[16] Although they would never admit it, rather than bringing morality to politics, the liberal hawks may be the ultimate heirs of political Leninism!

2 On the Genesis of the Liberal Hawks

Although the liberal hawks painted themselves into a corner, the political logic that led them there is not therefore simply wrong-headed. Their reasons for supporting the invasion of Iraq were not those of the Bush administration. Of course, the road to hell is paved with good intentions; and the hawks of the left have stumbled over themselves in attempting to apologize for, or to justify, their choices. Their voluntaristic moralism did not come from nowhere, and its abuse does not mean that it is or will be always and everywhere without use. Two decades after Martin Jay questioned the effect of the "disheartening events of the 1970s" on the "distinct generation of non-dogmatically leftist intellectuals" who were the heirs of Western Marxism, Paul Berman, an active member of that generation, published *Power and the Idealists*.[17] His title captures a bit of the *frisson* no doubt felt by many of the newly minted hawks who remembered their New Leftist past but still dared to sup with the devil. Indeed, this element of risk is what makes Berman's text a *Bildungsroman* rather than polemical tract. He reconstructs the evolution of an international, and internationalist, generation that learned how to translate its moral ideals into a practical politics based on a recognition of the need to use power to defend human rights.

The generational story is recounted in a lengthy first chapter that, by chance, was published in *The New Republic* one week before the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Berman follows the odyssey of Joschka Fischer, a high school dropout, a radical and a street fighter who became a Green Party politician and, as Germany's foreign minister, was the nation's most popular politician. The threads of Berman's story weave together as well the biographies of emblematic figures of the international new left of the 1960s.[18] The power of morality that Berman's story told seemed to be confirmed by the terror attacks of 9/11 that led *Le Monde* to headline famously "*Nous sommes tous américains*." For a moment, left and right joined in what seemed a common cause in which justice was allied with the power of the state. In the case of the right, morality was simply the homage that vice pays to virtue, whereas many on the left were too self-satisfied by their new legitimacy (and the power it brought) to recognize that they were being played for a sucker. In the eyes of his critics, Berman belongs to the latter category. His book gives comfort that new twenty-first-century renegade: the "liberal hawk," a contemporary avatar of the postwar antifascist transformed into an unconditional Cold Warrior.

But to reduce a book to its "thesis" is to do violence to an exercise in political thought that is also an autobiography and the biography of a generation. Berman does express clear political choices, particularly with regard to the invasion of Iraq. But even if one disagrees with him, he presents nothing so crude as the unabashed boosterism found, for example, in the work of the former French ultra-leftist, Yves Roucaute, who with no sense of self-parody, titles his recent book *Le néo-conservatisme est un humanisme*.[19] Berman is less pretentious and not so self-assured; he certainly does not consider himself a neo-conservative. But the *Bildung* of the idealists he portrays does have its Hegelian overtones; their odyssey passes through a series of stages, each preserving lessons from the past while raising to a higher level their immediate intuition of the need to "resist" what they first experienced as "fascism" and then later came to recognize as "totalitarianism."[20] At the end of the voyage, Berman mourns the end of what another member of the generation, Dany Cohn-Bendit, called the “imaginary sixty-eighters International.”[21] But melancholy is not Berman’s response; he knows that generations pass, life goes on, and a new generation will, Berman is sure, find its own language to speak of “the tragedies that descend all too fatefully upon the people who struggle against tragedies.” The New Left he has described are “the risk-takers. [t]he resisters.” The author of this lapidary conclusion, like the generation he has portrayed, is on their side, not that of George W. Bush.

3 The Totalitarian Temptation

“Resistance” is an ethical maxim whose political translation is problematic. As with the generals, politicians often fight the last war, so too did the sixty-eighters, who were brought up on the legend of anti-fascism. They first translated their heritage into a paradoxical pacifism, combining an ethics of militant resistance with an ideal of a revolution that would eliminate the immorality of liberal, bourgeois capitalism. Why call them “idealists”? There was a faith that drew a straight line from resistance to revolution, leaving no time for reflection, no space for compromise, and no place for inconvenient realities. It is not surprising that some adopted an imperious logic identifying politics with war, passing effortlessly from word to deed, in this case: to homegrown terrorism.[22] And many of their comrades found it difficult not to sympathize silently or actively or to explain away what they refused to denounce as unjustified excesses, calling them simple accidents that did not invalidate the revolutionary essence of the left. Their anti-fascist parents had apologized for Stalin’s abuses as bumps on the rocky road to real communism, or (after 1956) distortions due to the cult of personality; the *résistants* of the new generation were prisoner to their own ideals (even more than to their ideology).

The identification of anti-fascism with anti-capitalism (or of fascism with capitalism) was never intellectually satisfying; it was political positioning, which is always problematic. If one did not equate economic exploitation with political domination, it was hard not to wonder about the repressive regime in the Soviet Union and its *glacis*. But even if you made that critical judgment, your faith still could be firmed up by the allure of Mao’s “cultural” revolution, or the Latin American Davids who were taking on the North American Goliath. The French, no doubt because they had been the most dogmatic (and least theoretical), were the first to fall victim to reality; after a moment of renewed dogmatism that blamed the "defeat" of May 1968 on its bourgeois anarchism, they suffered the "Solzhenitsyn Shock" when the Russian novelist's *Gulag Archipelago* was translated and given popular appeal by the writings of the so-called New Philosophers (among whom the best known today are André Glucksmann and Bernard-Henri Lévy) who pillaged shamelessly—without the slightest acknowledgment—the work of Lefort and Castoriadis.[23] But for the young French leftists, the negation of their old faith did not lead to despair; that negation was soon negated (and thus *aufgehoben*, or "sublated") as they learned to appreciate the resistance of the East European sixty-eighters, who were turning civil society against the state. They failed to see that, at least at first, this option was a revival of their old reflex: they had found in the East European dissident movements the idea that civil society can bring to its knees the power of the political state, which was simply another way of creating an *ersatz*-proletariat that could move History to its predefined end.

But these young leftists soon came to a more important realization: their "resistance" had a more serious, transnational enemy: a "totalitarianism" that was, moreover, flesh-of-their-flesh. Historical materialism's certainties, they began to understand, could justify a smothering paternalist dogmatism unwilling to tolerate difference. But the lesson was not easily accepted for a reason that in retrospect sounds childish: since the bourgeoisie defined its enemies as "totalitarian," the self-defined radical left could hardly accept as its enemy the enemy-of-their-bourgeois-enemy. And this militantly activist new left could not compete with the academic political scientists in formulating checklists of criteria to distinguish true enemies from merely apparent ones. Instead, as Berman puts it with just enough vagueness to capture the uncertainty of the participants themselves, they ultimately came "to judge by smell and feel" what should awaken their spirit of resistance. This was philosophically naïve while it fecklessly ignored historical conditions. "Resistance" can acquire a political force only when confronted by a totalitarian power; otherwise, it is just plain garden-variety liberalism—a good thing, to be sure, but not the political terrain on which a critical New Left could grow and redefine itself by building on immanent contradictions within existing conditions.

Berman's *éloge* to resistance praises sometimes opposition to dictatorship, sometimes the refusal of totalitarianism—and the difference makes a difference.[24] Rights are violated in both cases (they may also be violated in democracies). But totalitarianism's denial of individual rights is essential to its main—but of course unavowed—goal, which is to put an end to *all* of the effects of democracy, especially to the idea of political rights. This goal was shared by Stalinism and Nazism, both of which were born in reaction to the breakdown of the old hierarchical social and political order. But the totalitarian project can never be completely successful; if it were, it would choke off the energy of society and destroy its own capacity for renewal. More important, however, is the recognition that the totalitarian *temptation* remains present in existing democracies, which often find it hard to live with the demons unleashed by their own freedom. The existence of this *immanent threat* distinguishes totalitarianism from dictatorship. Detecting its presence or absence is the concern of a modern critical theory, just as classical critical theory was concerned with the presence or absence of an immanent force making possible the transcendence of capitalism. This distinction is what ultimately distinguishes political resistance from moral righteousness.

Once this logic of new left politics is distilled, it becomes possible *both* to understand *and* to criticize the politics of the "liberal hawk" that Paul Berman presents so skillfully. *If* Saddam's regime was indeed totalitarian—and Berman names many facts that point to such a genealogy, from the history of the foundation of the Baath party to the Fedayeen Saddam continuing to harass the invaders as they dashed toward Baghdad—then (critical!) support for the US project is *as* justified as was, for example, the leftist and liberal support of the Soviet Union against Hitler. Analogies, however, compare things that are similar in some ways but different in others; the difference is important and can mislead. The interrogation has to continue. Does the historical analogy justify the claim that "Islamo-fascism" is the new Enemy? Does it justify a further analogy between the elimination of this Islamic totalitarianism and the fall of the Soviet empire? If totalitarianism were only a violent reaction crushing emerging democratic energies, its defeat should permit those young flowers to bloom again, like young trees after the forest fire has passed over them. Berman rightly recalls that Iraq had a cosmopolitan middle class in the years before Saddam (although its survival today might be questioned, especially as the occupation has gone on, and on). But the USA wagered on the import of exiles who, it was clear even then, were not the kind of *résistants* whose story Berman wanted to tell in *Power and the Idealists*. In the language of a reformulated critical theory that I suggested a moment ago, the attempt to import democracy by force could not count on an internal resistance whose negation of the old order could provide a positive foundation for the creation of a new political regime.

4 The Right to Be Wrong

The right to be wrong is basic to any political democracy. But that right does not extend to morality—there are limits that cannot be violated. The "liberal hawks" are not morally wrong, but they took their moral wishes for political reality, becoming idealists in the pejorative sense of the term. My disagreement with their political choice is based on the fact that resistance is a moral stance (a "thou shalt not") which cannot be translated directly into political practice. To think politically about the new choices facing the twenty-first-century demands, first of all, that we understand those of the twentieth century. Berman's *Bildungsroman* is a vital contribution to that understanding. But: *tout comprendre n'est pas tout pardoner.* The failure of the liberal hawks points to the need to rethink the political implication of the critique of totalitarianism. The hawks offered a one-sided (moral) argument that could be abused by political opportunists in the Bush government. They confused political judgment, which is fallible, with a moral will that is always identical to itself. The moral will is therefore incapable of anything other than resistance. Its negation is absolute, folded in upon itself, jealously guarding its own purity.

The political problem posed by the inability to distinguish morality and politics has a philosophical foundation. In 1784, before the idealist search for an ontology in which subject and object, thought and being, politics and society would be reconciled, the author of the *Critique of Pure* Reason sought to integrate the causal determination of events in the phenomenal world with the existence of a noumenal (and thus unknowable) realm of freedom in a short essay on "The Idea of History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View." He noted the existence of what he called the "unsocial sociability" of humans, which leads them necessarily to create political and cultural institutions that result in a progress that no actor had consciously intended. Only the philosopher, *as spectator*, recognizes the sense or meaning created by the participating actors. This specification of the position of the philosopher is important. Kant is not Marx; he does not claim to know the direction of historical progress, or to give instructions on its realization. This limitation is implicit in Kant's reply to the question "What is Enlightenment?" His response was simple: it is liberation from "self-incurred tutelage." But this liberation is not at finally achieved state; we do not live, he points out, in an "Enlightened Age" but rather in an "age of Enlightenment." Kant refers to his times as an "age of criticism." Although the philosopher-as-spectator may come to know the deeper meaning of human action after the fact, the individual action itself retains its autonomy, even though it is caught up in the causal networks of the phenomenal world described by the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

When he turned to morality proper, Kant formulated a "categorial imperative" that binds the will while insuring its purity. But he did not stop there. He worried about what he referred to in a later essay as "The Old Proverb: That may be True in Theory but It is of no Practical Use." A proverb is of course an appeal to judgment; it is not founded on a priori principles of morality. Writing in 1793, as the Terror was on the agenda of the Jacobin moralists in France, Kant reaffirmed his enthusiasm for the revolution. He asserted that although the deposition of a tyrant does no injustice to that ruler (whose unjust rule has disqualified him from office), "it is in the highest degree illegitimate for the subjects to seek their rights in this way. If they fail … and are then subjected to severe punishment they cannot complain about injustice."[25] This claim needs to be read carefully and in context. The conflict between Kant's morality of the pure will and his political judgment is only apparent; in the one case, Kant is speaking from the standpoint of the actor; in the second, from that of the spectator. In other words, the politics of will must be distinguished from the politics of judgment. The former is based on an a priori pure reason that allows no exceptions; the latter starts from particular conditions and asks whether and how they manifest an "exemplary" universality analogous to the way a singular work of art incarnates a norm of beauty to which all must give their assent.[26]

Kant drew the political implications of his arguments in the essay "On Perpetual Peace." In that sometimes enigmatic essay of 1795, Kant first proposes a "transcendental principle" according to which "All actions relating to the right of other men are unjust if their maxim is not consistent with publicity." This commands the actor to take into account the rights and choices of a plurality of other actors, recognizing the existence of different wills. But, typically, Kant adds to the transcendental principle a critique. He points out that there are some actions that may become public without therefore being just, as in the case of the tyrant who is sufficiently strong that he need not conceal his plans. This critique leads Kant to propose an "affirmative and transcendental principle," which asserts that "All maxims which *stand in need* of publicity in order not to fail in their end agree with politics and right combined."[27] There is little that needs to be added to this lapidary synthesis of Kant's political vision which recognizes the autonomy of individual judgment. Its implications ring as true today as they did when the political implications of moralizing voluntarism were summed up in Robespierre's equally concise but more frightening phrase: "virtue, without which terror is fatal; terror without which virtue is impotent. Terror is nothing but prompt, severe, inflexible justice; it is therefore an emanation of virtue."[28] Robespierre was an idealist trying to face up to the paradoxes of power by adopting a moral stance. Kant was a critical theorist, who reminded his reader of the difference between real power and political ideals.

The critical distinction between the domains of will and judgment reflects the difference between morality and politics. Their identification creates a false totality. This difference recalls a problem to which Martin Jay refers at the end of his Introduction to *Marxism and Totality*. Although some see in Marxism a kind of "God-that-failed," Jay insisted that "the story is not over"; the "adventures" of the concept of totality have not been played out.[29] In his Introduction to *Permanent Exiles*, he insists that the quest for "a variety of non-transcendent grounds for critique" remains on the agenda, referring particularly to Jürgen Habermas, who would later formulate a "discourse theory of law and democracy" that, without abandoning the goals of Western Marxism and Critical Theory, takes important steps toward realizing the imperatives laid down by Kant.[30] But Martin Jay does not comment on the curious fact that, in the course of his development, Habermas never addressed himself to the problem of totalitarianism, which was so fundamental to the development of New Left politics. Why Habermas did not do so, and at what cost to his own thinking, is a question that deserves an essay of its own.[31] As for the author of *Marxism and Totality*, the title of his book and the intricate logic of its chapters warn against a temptation to which Paul Berman (and many critics of totalitarianism) succumbed: the creation of a false totality in which morality and politics are conflated. It is better to remain with Kant's distinction of an Enlightened Age from an Age of enlightenment that preserves the role of criticism and the possibility of error that is essential to democratic politics.

NOTES

1. Martin Jay, *Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a Concept from Lukács to Habermas* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1984). Unless otherwise indicated, citations in the next paragraphs are from pages 19 and 20.
2. Martin Jay, *Permanent Exiles. Essays on the Intellectual Migration from Germany to America* (New York, 1986), xiv.

3. Dick Howard and Karl E. Klare, eds., *The Unknown Dimension. European Marxism since Lenin* (New York, 1972). The book contained a chapter by Martin Jay on the Frankfurt School, excerpted from his the still classical book he published the following year, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute for Social Research, 1923–50* (Little, Brown: Boston, 1973).
4. I will return to this changed climate below.
5. Although that cover may in part explain why Martin Jay found here an "evident" disillusionment, a more telling illustration of my own personal evolution can be seen in the difference between the presentation of Rosa Luxemburg in the first chapter of *The Marxian Legacy*—which insists *equally* on her "richness" and her "inadequacies"—and the uncritical enthusiasm that I expressed in my 1971 Editor's Introduction to the *Selected Political Writings of Rosa Luxemburg* (New York, 1971). In that earlier account, I was trying to convince readers to take seriously her Marxism; in the later analysis, I wanted to show why even the best of Marxists could not escape a certain kind of historical dogmatism.
6. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, I had wanted a chapter on the political group the two had created, *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, and had met with both of them in Paris to try to arrange a contribution. They were encouraging, and the meetings became the basis of long friendship. They had overcome the divergences that led to earlier splits, and had co-authored (with Edgar Morin) the first major interpretation of May 1968, *La brèche*. But neither had the time to write the chapter, and the person they tried to convince to write it never turned in the promised essay.
7. I return to this question in Chap. 16, "From Anti-Communism to Anti-Totalitarianism," below.
8. This context is discussed in Chap. 16, "From Anti-Communism to Anti-Totalitarianism: The Radical Potential of Democracy," below.
9. Jay, *Marxism and Totality*, 383–384.
10. This is the last sentence of the Introduction to Ibid., 20. In the Introduction to *Permanent Exiles*, Martin Jay recalls that a critique of his work published in *Telos* cited an "uncharacteristically bold" remark of Horkheimer to the effect that Critical Theory "confronts history with that possibility which is always concretely visible within it" (xv). Would one, he asks skeptically, still say the same thing in the 1980s?
11. It fascinated me too for a time. I made an early attempt to come to grips with it in an essay called "Genetic Economics vs. Dialectical Materialism": in *Radical America* (Vol III, No. 4, August 1969), pp. 21–31.
12. My claim is not that Lefort and Castoriadis were read by all (or even any!) of the participants; rather, their critique of bureaucracy and more broadly of the totalitarian denial of liberty managed to capture a shared spirit that animated the events even when, as in the case of the West Germans, the

issues posed by totalitarianism were far distorted by their concern with the Nazi past and the "really existing socialism" in East Germany. In the case of the USA, it was the politics called "anti-anticommunism" that turned participants' attention away from the radical political implications of their own actions.

13. Translations of Marx's early works began to be available only in the mid- to late 1960s. As a student at the University of Texas, I bought my copies of *Capital* (and three volumes of Lenin) from the trunk of a still loyal communist who drove to Austin every few weeks to peddle the products of Progress Publishers in Moscow.
14. This claim refers, of course, not to the movements as a whole but to their intellectual and political leaders. Each of the European cases has its historical specificity, the French long enchained to the mythologized communist *résistance*, the Germans haunted by the Nazi past; significantly the first practical lessons were drawn in Eastern Europe with the Czechoslovak *Charter 77*, and more emphatically with the Polish *Solidarnosc´* trade union. In the interval, the hopes placed in the idea of a "Euro-Communism" theorized by the post-Franco Spanish left proved to be fleeting.
15. Some were more social democratic, others more radical. There were constant battles within Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) between the "Social Democratic" New York faction and the "Anarchists" in Texas and California. The problem of state or civil society was not unique to the USA. In spite of the massive support for the *Solidarnosc* trade union movement, the Polish government was able to impose a State of Siege in December 1981. While the social movement did, over time, reconstitute itself, that bitter experience taught an important lesson, which led its leaders to agree to negotiate with the old regime at the Round Table making possible a successful (and peaceful) transition out of communism. On this latter point, cf. the work of Andrew Arato which is discussed in "The New Left and the Search for the Political"Chap. 3 above.
16. C.f., Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace*, ed. and trans. Lewis White Beck (New York, 1957), Appendix I, "On the Disagreement between Morals and Politics in Relation to Perpetual Peace," [p. 121). I will return to Kant in my concluding remarks.
17. Paul Berman, *Power and the Idealists or*, *The Passion of Joschka Fischer and its Aftermath* (Brooklyn, 2005). A paperback edition was published by Norton in 2007. It should be noted that Berman's argument in this book is far more subtle than his oversimplified *Terror and Liberalism*, written in the immediate aftermath of September 11 (New York, 2003).
18. Many of these lives of the '68 generation were described in Berman's, *A Tale of Two Utopias*: *The Political Journal of the Generation of 1968* (New York, 2005). I will return to them in a moment.

19. Yves Roucaute, *Le néo-conservatisme est un humanisme* (Paris, PUF, 2005). A former student of Louis Althusser and Nicos Poulantzas, Roucaute who teaches at the University of Paris (Nanterre) has moved increasingly towards a radical right-wing neoliberalism. The title of his book, which alludes to Sartre's famous *Existentialism is a Humanism*, expresses more clearly than many of today's French anti-totalitarians a specific *political* orientation—in this case, very far to the right. Others who come from a similar political lineage are more nuanced, as is the case for André Glucksmann, who underlines the *moral* foundation of his interventions.
20. The last two scare quotation marks are mine; the first is cited from Berman. I use them to make clear that the recent rhetorical coinage of "islamo-fascism" differs from the twentieth-century totalitarianisms in an essential point: there are no homegrown militants who claim to be actualizing from within (i.e., "critically") values that have been betrayed by democratic societies. The lesson of the critique of totalitarianism is that democracies are haunted by an *antipolitical* temptation, which can take many forms. While religious fundamentalism is a form of antipolitics, so too is the belief in the self-curative virtues of the free market, as is what Kant calls a "moral despotism," whose purity stands above and outside of the messy world of politics. I will return to this point in the concluding section.
21. C.f., Daniel Cohn-Bendit, *We Loved the Revolution So Much* (1992).
22. Hannah Arendt warned against this danger already in *On Revolution* (New York, 1962). She returned to it in "Thoughts on Politics and Revolution," an interview from 1970, dealing specifically with the New Left, and reprinted in *Crises of the Republic* (New York, 1972). Arendt's arguments in this context put into question aspects of Martin Jay's critique of "The Political Existentialism of Hannah Arendt," in *Permanent Exiles*: *Essays on the Intellectual Migration from Europe to America* (New York, 1986). Cf. Chap. 9 below.
23. The most serious study of the implications of Solzhenitsyn was Lefort's *Un homme en trop* (Paris, 1976). It should be noted that the journal *Esprit*, which played an important role in disseminating the ideas of Lefort and Castoriadis, was a significant force in bringing together the East European dissidents with their Western counterparts. I discussed the background of *Esprit* and its contribution to these debates in *Telos*, no. 36 (1978), reprinted in *Defining the Political* (Minneapolis, MN, 1989), 135–149.
24. Berman fails to see the implications of what he describes as his "idealists'" recognition of the need to revise their vision of politics when the ultra-leftists of the Red Brigades or the Red Army Fraction tried to use violence in order to provoke the establishment to reveal its "totalitarian" or "fascist" essence.

25. This passage, as well as the following arguments, is found in the Second Appendix to *Perpetual Peace*, titled “On the Agreement between Politics and Morality under the Transcendental Concept of Public Right,” which is available in different translations.
26. I put the term “exemplary” in quotation marks because it is a fundamental concept in Kant’s *Critique of Judgment*, as I have explained in *From Marx to Kant*.
27. Kant’s italics.
28. The citation is from Robespierre’s speech, “Des principes de la morale politique,” February 1, 1794, in the collection *Les Grands Orateurs républicains*, *tome V*, *Éditions “Hemera*”: Monaco, 1949–50, p. 194.
29. These previously cited phrases are from Jay, op. cit., p. 20.
30. C.f., Martin Jay, *Permanent Exiles. Essays on the Intellectual Migration from Germany to America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. xv.
31. I have tried to do that in “Citizen Habermas,” Chap. 8 below.

CHAPTER 5

Toward a Democratic Manifesto

The Communist Manifesto combines two motifs that are often separated in Marx's work. On the one hand, Marx thought of himself as a critic; nearly everything that he wrote was titled, or subtitled, "a critique." On the other hand, he considered his work to be scientific; his opponents, from within or without the socialist orbit, were in his eyes utopians at best, ideologues at worst. Marx thought he could unite these two orientations in a philosophy conceived as a dialectical science. However, because it is an explicitly political document, the *Manifesto* shows the difficulties facing such a dialectical project and illustrates the philosophical origin of Marx's antipolitics. At the same time, these dialectical premises of the *Manifesto* explain why the antipolitical politics that the Marx prescribes are manifested also in various forms of contemporary politics. This shared antipolitical orientation, particularly after 1989, suggests the need to reevaluate the philosophical foundations and political implications of modern democracy. Democracy, not communism (or capitalism), is the "specter" still haunting our world.

At the time of the collapse of communism, I proposed that we found ourselves finally freed from "two-hundred years of error."[1] My suggestion was that the French revolution marked the advent of democracy as a political and philosophical *problem* posed by the new social relations that the revolutionary rupture with the Ancien Régime in 1789 made explicit. The institutionalization of the "rights of man" entailed the destruction of the traditional representation of a cosmos in which each individual had

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D. Howard, *Between Politics and Antipolitics*, Political Philosophy and Public Purpose, DOI 10.1057/978-1-349-94915-1_5

his and her place, in which the society was a structured and hierarchical organism, and where politics had no autonomous existence (which is why Marx's 1843 "Critique of Hegel's Theory of the State" could mock the old regime as a "democracy of unfreedom" based on a "zoology"). The French revolution inaugurated modern politics by creating the conditions of possibility of democracy. But democracy is not a solution; it is a problem that is inseparably philosophical and political.[2] After 1989, when democracy no longer stood as an unqualified good opposed to "communism," its problematic nature could again become manifest. That is why a Democratic Manifesto would differ from Marx's picture of the dialectical self-overcoming of capitalism. The challenge that must be faced is to preserve democracy as a political *problem* while avoiding the temptation to "realize" at long last the formal victories of 1789.

1 The Communist Manifesto as Philosophy: The Origin of Antipolitics

The *Communist Manifesto* claims to lay out and to justify the politics to be adopted by a revolutionary organization. Yet the major arguments in its first and most substantive part talk about capitalism. Marx's dialectical science explains why "communism" does not appear as an active agent or a motivating, utopian goal or even a teleological principle. Marx presents the revolutionary nature of capitalism—revolutionizing traditional society and constantly revolutionizing itself—as producing its own grave-diggers. The central points of Marx's presentation need not be rehearsed here. The same structure of immanent self-critique is developed in *Capital*, which is a "Critique of Political Economy," rather than "*A Handbook for the Communist Future*." But if Marx is describing a scientifically inevitable outcome, what is the famous "specter of communism" invoked in his prefatory remarks? How will it become flesh? There must be some agent whose intervention is neither arbitrary nor inevitable. That agent has to bring an element of critique to the objective scientific analysis. In so doing, it must draw political consequences from the philosophical analysis of capitalism's self-revolutionary nature.

The "communist" as actor enters in the second part of the *Manifesto*. He is said not to form "a separate party opposed to other working class parties," and "to have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole." And of course, communists are also said not to "set up any sectarian principles of their own." The communists are distinguished by the fact that they are internationalists (because they are concerned with universal rather than any particular interests). As a result, they represent "the interests of the movement as a whole." The ability to do so is not the result of "ideas or principles" but "merely express[es], in general terms, actual relations springing from an existing class struggle." The communists thus reflect the "actual relations" which encompass the universality of the "movement as a whole."

This is philosophy with a vengeance. And it will show itself to be politically dangerous. Marx's claim was reformulated in Lukács' *History and Class Consciousness* (1923). Writing after the Russian revolution failed to ignite a wave of revolution in the advanced capitalist countries, Lukács appeals to the Hegelian roots of Marx's theory. He introduces the concept of "ascribed class consciousness" which is said to define what the proletariat *ought* to be thinking and feeling if its consciousness were not alienated. Because this consciousness is only ascribed, not real, it follows that the task of the communist party is to substitute *its* knowledge of the necessity of revolution for the actual behavior of the working masses. Was this not what the Bolsheviks had boldly done in 1917 when they seized power? The danger was that this substitutionism could be used to legitimate Leninism and Stalinism. More generally, the communist party claims to know the "really real"; and this knowledge justifies its imposition of its vision on what Marx had called the "actual relations springing from the class struggle." If the really existing class struggle is not going in the direction the party's universal theory says it should, then the duty of the communist is to intervene to change that direction. The resulting problem is not just political (in the sense of who-does-what-to-whom). It concerns the very nature of politics, its relation to society, and to the individual citizen. It is hard not to think here of Plato's description of the philosopher-king as a "self-less servant" whose vision (in Greek: *theoria*) is needed to repair the damages wrought by untrammeled democracy!

The philosophical *hubris* of the communist is breath-taking. He and his party become a kind of Hegelian Secretary to the World Spirit. What is troubling is not the claim that theory can pierce beneath appearances to get to its true foundations. All theory makes such a claim. What is troubling is that the communist politics is based on a denial of itself as politics (or as a critical judgment, which could be debated and criticized). This amounts to a denial of responsibility for choices. There is no autonomous place for politics in this world-historical philosophy; its political goal is to transcend politics. That is why it represents the philosophical foundation of what I call antipolitics.

The foundation of Marxist antipolitics was already present in Marx's critique of the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen in Marx's 1843 essay "On the Jewish Question." The rights proclaimed by the revolution were consigned to the rubric "bourgeois," which was then identified with economic self-seeking. As a result, the political problems posed by the advent of the individual as a bearer of rights—rights that could be expanded and which could become the object of struggle because the rupture with the traditional hierarchically structured cosmos meant that they now had no transcendent foundation—were translated to the economic sphere. The result was paradoxical. By defining the economic sphere as "the anatomy of civil society," Marx introduced a materialist version of an ordered cosmos governed by an immovable principle: the process of production and of social reproduction. As a result, the autonomy of the political sphere that had been opened when the French revolutionary demand for rights challenged the classical vision of a hierarchically cosmos was denied.

From the standpoint of the history of political theory, this materialist vision is typical of what I have called 200 years of error. After all, it is capitalist (or bourgeois) society that for the first time in human history insists on the primacy of the economy and treats labor as the source of value. Marx's criticism of political rights neglects the fact that the capitalist bourgeoisie has never been democratic; it accepted new rights only as concessions to social movements. Indeed, bourgeois "politics" is nothing but a constant attempt to deny the autonomy of the political. The invisible hand invoked by classical liberal economics reflects an identical structure to Marx's antipolitics. The free market works in an unconscious and therefore neutral way to reproduce social relations that the planned society institutes consciously. Although in principle the results are different, the structure is identical. Does the difference truly make a difference? In both cases, politics is rejected, responsibility and judgment are subordinated to an impersonal and logical necessity that philosophy can understand but politics cannot change.

One wonders why Marx didn't notice this antipolitical implication of his political vision? An answer is suggested by the often-neglected third part of the *Communist Manifesto*. It reconstructs and denounces types of "utopian socialism" current at the time. Marx's dialectic is again put to work in order to show how the appearance and the progress that each represents are only stages leading to his own synthesis. Each is a particular and temporary manifestation of either the pole of critique or the pole of science; Marx's communism will put an end to this oscillation. The history of utopian socialism (in Part 3) thus culminates in the same philosophical unity that Marx claimed (in Part 1) as the actual culmination of the "history of class struggle." Theory and practice are again united—in theory. The difficulty is that, today, with the end of "two hundred years of error," it is no longer possible to hope that this theoretical unity will manifest itself in practice as well. The principles of a new Manifesto will be found in politics not in philosophy.

2 Some Principles for a New Political Manifesto

Although the first part of Marx's version of a *Communist Manifesto* presented the self-revolutionizing, globally corrosive and creatively self-destructive capitalist productive process and the forms of social relations that it at once produced and destroyed, that representation of the necessary course of world history was prefaced by the ringing affirmation that "a specter is haunting Europe." What was this specter? At first, it seems to be imaginary insofar as Marx points out that any opposition to the established order is denounced as "communistic." But then Marx adds that "All the powers of old Europe have entered into a holy alliance to exorcize this specter…" This implies that "Communism is already acknowledged…to be itself a power." The political consequence is that "Communists should openly… publish their views, their aims, their tendencies" In this way, the "specter" that was only imaginary will become a positive reality. In philosophical terms, what was a being-for-another becomes an autonomous being-for-itself. In practical terms, the specter will be incarnated by the communist. Although this account opens the space for political action, that space is immediately closed by the materialist dialectic by which capitalism is said to produce its own grave-diggers. "The revolution" of which the Marxists dreamed is the antithesis of politics, the denial of the autonomy of the political. The scientific account of its necessity leaves no room for autonomous agency; the communist does not assume responsibility for his politics.

My claim is that the "specter" that was haunting Europe when Marx wrote the *Communist* Manifesto was the "specter of democracy." What Marx described as the self-revolutionary nature of capitalism should be understood as the constant process of renewal and deepening of democratic demands that were made possible by the revolutionary demand for a politics of rights. Democracy is not an agent that moves history according to an immanent logic whose dialectic can be realized when the demands of all particular social interests are reconciled in a global unity. The rights that make democracy possible have no external guarantee or foundation; nor can their existence be justified by reason alone. Democracy is a paradoxical form of the political; its autonomy depends on political actors who accept responsibility for judgments that they make on the basis of a vision of rights that has to be renewed constantly because its only foundation is this very same action. This paradoxical circularity by which the democratic structure of the political makes possible the same actions that renew constantly its foundation differs from the dialectical unity that overcomes indetermination sought by Marx. All democracies are necessarily incomplete. The attempt to "realize" democracy was the step that misleads Marx.[3]

The paradoxical political structure of democracy has implications for the style in which a "Democratic Manifesto" would be written. Instead of a ruthless forward march, its defeats and disappointments would also be cataloged in the first part of a new political manifesto. These victories and defeats would not be blamed on external factors; their analysis would be self-critical; it would make clear the responsibility of citizens for their judgments and the right of their fellow citizens to demand that they legitimate their engagements.[4] The political critic who would replace Marx's "communist" in this new Manifesto would self-consciously assume that most philosophical of rights: the right to be wrong, which is the precondition for thinking. This right to be wrong is of course not an invitation to error nor a justification of it. It implies the need to be prudent rather than claiming that political judgments are based on rational truths or historical necessities. The engagement of the political critic in a democracy is paradoxical. To be a critic, it is necessary to stand outside of the social relations being criticized; but the criticism is also an intervention insofar as it produces self-awareness in the participants.[5] The democratic critic brings together Marx's critical insight into the dual nature of the commodity as use value to the subject and exchange value on the market with Weber's analysis of the antinomic structure of modern social rationality. For this reason, the critic cannot propose the vision of a unified society in which the particularity of politics and the reality of interests are forever negated. What, then, is the basis of the new Manifesto's democratic critique?

Corresponding inversely to the third part *of The Communist Manifesto*, the new Manifesto would reconstruct the history of 200 years of error as the devolution of antipolitics, in the form of free markets, planned economies, nationalist identity politics or social–democratic technocracies, legalistic codifications or appeals to forms of judicial intervention to overcome political impasses. This political analysis would not interpret these figures of antipolitics as reflecting an "infrastructure," be it the economic mode of production or another natural necessity (demography, ecology, or, at a different level, imperial ambitions). It could follow not only suggestions in Polanyi's *The Great Transformation* (concerning the embeddedness of political and economic categories in the thickness of lived experience) but also numerous hints in Marx's *Grundrisse* (suggesting that property or labor are not "natural" givens but have come into being through an historical process that cannot presuppose their pre-existence),[6] in order to show how the different forms of antipolitics are in reality the results of implicit political choices. The crucial point is that antipolitics can be the result of actions (or omissions) that do not fall into the domain functionally defined as "politics"; its results will nonetheless affect the relations of individuals to one another and to society as a whole.

In a more philosophical vein, this "third Part" of the new Manifesto would ask why the Greeks considered the economy (the *oikos*) to be insignificant for the realization of human freedom. Why did the Greeks relegate the economy to the domain of women and slaves, while modern capitalism privileges it as the domain of freedom? It would as whether a political critique of social injustice rather than the criticism of economic exploitation, is the foundation of democratic politics? At the same time, it would have to make clear that politics (and even democratic politics) does not alone suffice to avoid the fate of "two-hundred years of error." Democratic politics is not an end-in-itself; but neither is it a means to an external goal. The new Manifesto would join Tocqueville when he praises democracy "not for what it is, but for what it leads people to do [ce qu'elle fait faire]."[7] In this way, political critique is not restricted to the separate sphere that a purportedly objective political science identifies by its function. Rather, political critique is concerned with the never ending struggles to define the legitimacy of social relations themselves.

The new political Manifesto would reject Marx's goal of finally "realizing" the conquests inaugurated by the French revolution by adding a social revolution to the merely formal political rights won in 1789. Democracy is not a set of formal institutions that must acquire a "social" basis in order to be realized; that was the erroneous path that Marx chose in "On the Jewish Question." That path led to the creation of what the former Soviet Empire labeled "democratic republics." After 1989 such democratic republics, as well as dreams of self-managed direct democracy, have become simply another manifestation of the antipolitical attempt to avoid facing up to the challenge of modern democracy. Based on the protection of individual rights while seeking an ever richer realization of the common good, democracy poses problems because it is a horizon that can never be crossed but that cannot be eliminated. That is why democratic politics consists in maintaining rather than dissolving once and for all the democratic uncertainty by insuring its material bases. Only then can particular struggles against forms of injustice—which are not limited to the economic sphere—hope for success. From this perspective, capitalism is only another antipolitical form of politics; criticism of it is not based on the economic "chains" it imposes but on the responsible freedom it denies in its imperious quest for more while refusing to recognize limits.[8] Is such denunciation sufficient to delineate a politics?

Marx's political theory was based on an immanent philosophical–dialectical critique of capitalism. After the end of the totalitarian claim to realize a democratic republic, an immanent critique of democracy seems to be called for. But that critique cannot make the philosophical claim that Lukács attributed to Marx's theory of ascribed proletarian class-consciousness because the challenge of democracy is not based on the emergence of a new subject of world history. Citizens must assume responsibility for their political choices; and after 1989, that includes the choice *not* to seek to make a revolution.[9] It is often more comfortable to think that political choice depends on the recognition of external necessity; or to imagine that its justification will come in a future when social contradictions are overcome. It is more difficult to live with the uncertainty that characterizes democracy precisely because of the freedom that is its foundation. Tocqueville offered a lapidary formulation of the stakes when he wrote that "he who seeks freedom for anything but itself is meant to serve." It is perhaps not accidental that this phrase is found in Book III, chapter 3 of *The Old Regime and the Revolution*!

Returning to Marx's invocation of the "specter," the goal of a new manifesto like that of Marx's original version is to incite the critical self-consciousness that permits the actors in a democracy to become aware of the framework, in which their action must remain situated rather than succumb to utopian dreams of a new democratic Eden. In Hegelian terms, the in-itself would become for-itself. But contemporary democracy as the horizon of social life can be maintained only by self-conscious citizens. Although the new Manifesto like its model does claim to represent the potential consciousness needed to realize and to maintain the democracy that has become historically possible, it differs because it cannot be addressed to a collective subject (a sort of *ersatz*-proletariat); it can affect only individual citizens in their capacity as individuals. It is engaged; its challenge is to find a way to honor other engagements without dissolving them into a collectivity that smothers them.

Notes

1. C.f., "Rediscovering the Left," *Praxis International*, Vol. 10, Nos. 3–4, October 1990–January 1991, pp. 193–204.
2. Marx does not devote much time to democracy, in the *Manifesto* or elsewhere. The one time that he does seem to take it seriously, in his éloge of the Paris Commune, he says that its "true secret" lies first in the fact that it was a result of the class struggle and, second, that it is "the political form at last discovered" under which the economic emancipation of labor could be worked out. Marx's stress on the Commune as a "political form" suggests that he was not advocating a direct democracy as a *solution* to the *problem* of democracy, which remains to be "worked out." (Citations from "The Civil War in France," in Karl Marx, *Political Writings, Vol. 3* (New York, Penguin Books, 1974), p. 212.
3. Marx's descriptions of actual political action, particularly in the famous aphorisms that color, for example, his accounts in the *Eighteenth Brumaire*, are far less schematic than this philosophical vision of formal conditions that have to be given material reality. I have discussed these texts elsewhere, for example, in *The Specter of Democracy.*
4. There can be no appeal to a weaker form of historical logic, such as the social–democratic progression sketched by T.H. Marshall as the progress from civil rights to political rights to social rights. C.f., *Citizenship and Social Class* (London: Pluto Press, 1992).
5. C.f., the discussion of Kant's notion of the critical philosopher assuming the position of spectator in Chap. 4.
6. C.f., for example, *Grundrisse* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), pp. 485ff. For a general discussion, c.f., Claude Lefort, "Marx: From One Vision of History to Another," in *The Political Forms of Modern Society* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986).
7. Tocqueville is making a similar argument to the one that Kant suggested when he formulated what he called an "affirmative and transcendental principle" that asserts that "All maxims which *stand in need* of publicity in order not to fail in their end agree with politics and right combined." C.f. the

discussion in Chap. 4 above. The citation from Tocqueville is found in *De la démocratie en Amérique*, vol. 1, p. 254.

8. The "other" Manifesto often attributed to Marx—his "Critique of the Gotha Program" (1875)—is often seen as more directly political than the *Communist Manifesto* because of its tactical polemic with the followers of Lassalle. In fact, Marx often quotes himself from the *Manifesto*. However, one passage in Marx's critique of Lassalle's theory of an "iron law of wages" which is supposed to lead to revolutionary action points to the kind of political critique suggested here. "It is as if, among slaves who have finally got behind the secret of slavery and broken out in rebellion, one slave, still the prisoner of obsolete ideas, were to write in the program of the rebellion: Slavery must be abolished because the provisioning of slaves in the salve system cannot exceed a certain low maximum!" (cited in Karl Marx, *The First International and After. Political Writings: Volume 3* [New York: Penguin Books, 1992], p. 352.)
9. C.f., Andrew Arato's analysis of the self-limiting politics of the dissident movements in the period leading to 1989 in "The New Left and the Search for the Political," Chap. 3 above. It might be asked in the present context whether the former dissidents abandoned this insight once they came to power? That might explain some of the instability in those countries during the past decades.

PART II

Engaging with Predecessors

CHAPTER 6

Philosophy by Other Means. The Philosophical Origins of Sociology

The academic discipline that we call sociology was a late bloomer—as were most of the "disciplines" that we find in university curricula today. Max Weber didn't have a chair of sociology, nor did the young Emile Durkheim. The (slow and prolonged) legitimation of the study of the social as such was an event; it opened a new domain, transformed cultural blinders, and challenged tradition. The new discipline broke the monopoly of political philosophy, whose master-thinkers well encrusted both in the university but especially outside in the cultural establishment, did not suddenly see the light. But it became a "discipline," developing its own criteria of research, and defining the domain and limits of its reach. In its forward rush, inebriated by the rash of customs, traditions, and behaviors that its methods had legitimated, it suffered from that malady that affects many political projects: *pleonaxia*, the inability to recognize its own limits. Above all, those limits were not empirical; they were philosophical. Now, a century after the Fathers of the discipline, and at a time when the hopes for the new discipline that crested with the wave of students who had been inspired by the spirit of the New Left, it is time to reflect on the origins of sociology. They are, and should remain, philosophical.

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D. Howard, *Between Politics and Antipolitics*, Political Philosophy and Public Purpose, DOI 10.1057/978-1-349-94915-1_6

1 From Experience to Philosophy: A Personal Story

To philosophize is to question oneself. One tries to learn from diverse experiences, especially from one's own errors, how to reach firm ground. This gives sometimes the impression that thought seeks to discover a rational truth that is independent of the input of the individual. To attain such certainty would mean to live in a world without shadows or unknowns. This goal has paradoxical results in the world of political thought. Political philosophy in the wake of Plato has sought a theory of justice in which the individual who has escaped from the illusory world of the Cave stands freely in the high-noon of reason where the Sun casts no shadows. The paradox is that this kind of theory leads ultimately to an *antipolitics*. In a fully rational world, uncertainty and the possibility of error are banished; there is no room for choice and no one to take responsibility. As a result, such a theory is not only antipolitical; it is *antiphilosophical* because, in the last resort, to philosophize is to put into question the solidity of the given world, to seek the invisible beneath (or sometimes above) the visible, and to devote oneself to a questioning that, by its very nature, can never end.

The philosopher's self-questioning does not begin from pure reason; it is the product of a paradoxical type of experience that is at once personal even while it claims a more general validity. It is a naïve experience that permits learning precisely because it is condemned to face and to learn from self-contradiction. I will illustrate this kind of experience from my own biography. The story that I tell will also give a first illustration of what I mean by the two "anti's" and why I am almost instinctively allergic to signs of both antipolitics and antiphilosophy. My story began as a political voyage in the literal sense. It has matured and deepened as has my experience. After I tell this personal story, I will turn to the philosophical and political problems that led the German Max Weber and the Frenchman Émile Durkheim to formulate at the turn of the twentieth century the philosophical foundations of sociology. Weber gave primacy to the individual foundation of social reality, whereas Durkheim insisted that society was prior to the individual. A closer look, however, will reveal a set of paradoxes that suggest to return to some of the questions that troubled my self-understanding at the beginning of this story.

I was a young American who had been initiated politically in the Civil Rights movement when I came to Paris in 1966 to study philosophy—

which at that time and in that place seemed to be identical with Marxism. Civil rights were one thing; social revolution promised something more. At a less grand level, I wanted to free myself from what I took to be petit bourgeois egoism (and the fruits of American imperialism) in order to melt into world history. Sartre's star had begun to pale while that of Althusser was rising. Sartrean existentialism and the theory of alienation of the young Marx were overtaken by Althusser's theory of Marx's "epistemological rupture" with his youthful, Hegelian past; the task of radical philosophy was now defined as the exploration of the "new continent" opened up by the mature Marx in *Capital*. At the same time, the war in Vietnam and the world-wide protest against it, as well as rise of the Third World, seemed to herald the disappearance of the false consciousness and false confidence of an individualist and decadent bourgeoisie. The train of history was moving, and I wanted to get on.

This was my state of mind when I attended my first Parisian demonstration against the Vietnam War. That evening offered the kind of experience that demanded reflection. In effect, the speaker spoke with an assurance that made him seem to be philosophy incarnate; [1] it was as if he was unveiling the historical necessity of which the war and its particular stages marked the beginning, its development, and pointed to the inevitable end. Most of all, this discourse seemed to me to integrate my previously impotent frustration at that war into the forward march of humanity. Carried away by the flow of his speech, I didn't realize that he had concluded; and before I could express my approval by joining the applause, I was surprised to see that he was also applauding himself. This seemed to me at first to confirm the truth of his words; such a man could not be a sort of petit bourgeois individualist who wanted to show off his own importance or the existentialist who described an uncertain wager. His applause implied that the force and source of his words came from somewhere else, perhaps from our bearing witness together with the justice of the struggle of the Vietnamese, or—more likely in his eyes—from a History that imposes its imperatives on a present in which individuals are of little weight. This was the way that I had imagined my future role as the political activist after returning from France. But what does this say about the philosopher that I also wanted to become?

This experience called for reflection. The speaker, whose political affiliation I do not remember, took himself as the delegate of History; he represented a Truth that challenged his listeners to leave their alienated cocoon to take part in Society and its History. Why did he applaud himself? Looking back, it seems to me that he did not feel able to take personal responsibility for what he was asserting. This had political consequences. Because he did not present a *judgment* whose validity was open to debate he in effect discouraged the formation of our own judgment. We might accept his oratorical outline as the voice of History; but we were not offered the chance to make it our own. What was so easy to swallow at that moment was just as easily forgotten at another. We were an anonymous public whose rational approval he did not seek or need; we were supposed simply to be able to recognize the finally unveiled truth. His contribution was a caricature of the caricature of Hegel taking himself to be the secretary of Absolute Spirit. More dangerous, the speaker had become the General Secretary of some Communist Party, or at least one of the cogs in the great totalitarian regime, what Solzhenitsyn calls, in *The Gulag Archipelago*, (1973) its "organs." In the process, I who rejected the idea of the individual as the bearer of an arbitrary and antisocial egoism was defenseless against a stronger arbitrary power, that of Society as the expression of the Last Judgment of History.

I did not realize immediately my mistake. But experience is a good teacher for someone who learns how to question it. In Prague some months later I became friends with a group of students who were being persecuted by their government, which called itself communist. I asked them how came to be treated as "dissidents" since we seemed to share common values and, in my interpretation, that meant not only that I was anti-capitalist but that even before any experience of really existing communism I was in principle on the side of the enemy of my enemy. Experience put an end to such simple logic. My Czech friends explained that they had organized a demonstration against the Vietnam War. I didn't understand at first; after all, their government also opposed that war. True; but the problem was that *they* organized the demonstration, and that it did not have government authorization. I began to realize that the individualism that I wished to escape could be in some contexts the source of an authenticity and an autonomy that challenged an ossified society whose rulers claimed that their institutions insured the realization of a wholly socialized individual freed from alienation. The self-organization of a civil society represented a threat to the communist rulers… one that was blindingly evident with the fall of the Wall in 1989.

The experiences in Paris and Prague showed me the danger of treating *either* the individual *or* society as absolute standpoints from which it is possible to uncover the hidden logic that permits at once the realization of *both* the sociability of the individual and the individuality of society. That is the assumption that underlies the antipolitical temptation. I learned that the struggle for justice is made possible by the *indetermination* of social relations that necessitates *judgment* on the part of individuals who then must assume *responsibility* for their claims. Such judgments challenge both the rationality of the real and the reality of the rational, to speak the language of Hegel. I learned as well that who speaks of Hegel must speak of Marx, but also that who speaks of Marx must reflect on Hegel, an insight that was reinforced by my experiences in the next years with the student left in West Germany. The rulers in Prague might claim the authority of Marx, but the German philosopher was not the communist patron saint. His elective affinity with antipolitics was the result of philosophical assumptions whose roots lie in Hegel's Absolute Idealism. But there is another Marx, the self-critical thinker who tried to do philosophy by other means. He can be seen as the Grandfather of modern sociology whose two avatars are Durkheim and Weber. The Frenchman begins from the priority of society that he takes to be an empirical "social fact," whereas the German insists on the irreducibility of the individual as the foundation of society. The fact that both try not only to reply to Marx but also to take up anew the questions that challenged him suggests that sociology cannot free itself from its philosophical roots.

2 From Philosophy to Sociology

Weber's theory developed through a permanent debate with both Marx and with the modernity whose unquiet spirit, at once triumphal and self-destructive, had been brilliantly analyzed in the first part of *The Communist Manifesto*. Refusing to believe in the existence of the reified supra-individual subjects that Marx called social classes, Weber also refused a simple positivism that tries to deduce changes in social values from the socio-economic "mode of production" so dear to the orthodox Marxist leaders of the increasingly powerful German Social Democratic Party. Although he insisted that sociology had to be a science, its principle object was the sense or meaning attributed to social conditions. Starting from the individual and the meaning he attributed to his social relations, Weber used his "methodological individualism" to understand the origin and legitimacy of societies as different as ancient Judaism, Medieval Catholicism, and modern capitalism (as well as its difference of its earlier ancestor whose omnipresence he studied across the swath of world history). His sociological theory is related to philosophy by virtue of the fact that the individual is and must remain the foundation of an investigation whose aim is to understand social institutions that are more than simply individual. Its relation to Marx's enterprise stems from the fact that, although he wrote thousands of pages treating non-Western and pre-modern societies, ultimately Weber's goal was to understand the specificity of the modern West.

The small masterpiece titled *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904–1905) is not a sort of "idealist" reply to Marx's materialist account. Weber begins with a series of citations from the *Autobiography* of Benjamin Franklin. He sees in Franklin an ideal type of the historically singular modern individual. For example, this supposedly homespun American explains that his success in the New World has been based on a series of maxims, one of which is the imperative to think that "time is money." How could such an idea have emerged, asks Weber? What must such an individual think is the meaning of life, the signification of the world, and the nature of relations among men? Further, how could such presuppositions lead to types of behavior whose result is a society of men and women in which the imperatives of capitalist profit-making define all other social relations? Whereas orthodox Marxists assumed that material conditions determine individual and social behavior, Weber's sociological philosophy seeks to understand instead how material conditions acquire their meaning for individuals; only on that basis do these conditions favor one or another unique type of social behavior.

Weber's methodological individualism is thus philosophical; facts are analyzed only in terms of the meaning attributed to them by individuals. But this social science also attempts to understand historical change, and the political choices that bring it about or result from it. If change cannot be explained as the result of positive, material facts, then attention must turn to the changed meanings that signify an openness to potential change. In the case of the "spirit" of capitalism, what could be its origin? In what way does that origin differ from the "spirit" of ancient Judaism, Hinduism, or Confucianism? If such changes of meaning are not accidental, and for that reason beyond the scope of science, they must have their own meaningful origin. In order to avoid an infinite regression, and to remain within the framework of social history, Weber introduces the concept of *charisma* which describes the power of a leader (or rather, a prophet) who possesses this characteristic. Such a person carries an inspired mission that is expressed through his words and actions; and that mission is an absolute value, an end in itself that cannot compromise with the necessities of the existing world order. This charismatic leader is the high point of Weber's sociological individualism; but he represents also the fault line that runs through his work.[2]

It is important to bear in mind that the goal of Weber's methodological individualism is to explain the coherence and the solidarity of *society*. The charismatic leader carries a message whose meaning will lead his disciples to adopt a disciplined mode of life and forms of behavior that will ultimately bring about a radical transformation of the previously existing society. Weber has in mind examples such as Jesus, Mohammed, or Luther whose appearance cannot be explained by empirical or rational causality. The problem for the charismatically organized society arises when the disciples of the second generation can no longer draw the sense of their mission from the immediate presence of the charismatic prophet. This is the point at which bureaucratization or what Weber calls the "routinization" of charisma appears. In order to insure that the mission is maintained, the disciples have to develop a set of rules of behavior that codify the inspired words of the leader in the prose of the world. But as a result, the living meaning that shook the dead institutions inherited from the past loses its primary signification; routinization may codify the external behavior pattern for a time, but the seeds of its mortality have been planted. The progressive vision of historical development dear to orthodox Marxist is now replaced by a cyclical pattern that is condemned to repeat the oscillation between charismatic renewal and gradual but continual routinization until the emergence of a new charismatic leader.[3] The political translation of this difficulty is found in Weber's distinction between an "ethics of conviction" and an "ethics of responsibility." The former is based on a logic akin to that of charisma while the latter expresses the way routinization works to regulate behavioral expectations. Its philosophical expression has an unintended dialectical effect insofar as the routinized, and thereby socialized, charismatic message has become the dominant sense of social relations. Individuals now conform to these shared social meanings. The only way to save the individual from submersion in the anonymity of society appears to be the appeal to a new charismatic leader.[4] Although the individualist *method* remains at the basis of his argument, this dialectical paradox brings Weber's theory into the neighborhood of Durkheim. At the same time, it indicates that he does not absolutize his individualist premise, which might have led him to adopt an antipolitics, as did Marx.

The paradoxical priority of the social that appears first in Weber's sociology of religion and then in his broader theory of modern, socially differentiated society stands as the premise in Durkheim's attempt to formulate a new science of the social. A closer look at his sociology reveals a similar, and unexpected, dialectic that takes the inverse path, from the priority the collective "social fact" to the production of the modern autonomous individual. And analogously to the threat posed to social relations by routinization, Durkheim will diagnose the potentially mortal "anomie" that threatens social cohesion.

The philosophical intentions of Durkheim's sociology can be seen when the title of his first important work, *The Division of Labor in Society* (1893), is read as promising to demonstrate that the division of labor in a given society is determined by what he refers to as the "collective consciousness" of that society.[5] Although Durkheim often writes as if he were a positivist, looking at society from a standpoint external to it and delimiting social facts, the priority of the social in his argument implies also that society imposes on itself a type of division that, in the first instance, is the result of its more or less "segmentary" or "organic" composition. Segmentary societies impose on individuals a shared identity; in this way, they reduce the division of labor to a minimum, whereas organic societies produce the diversity typical modern individualism. In Weberian terms, these two extremes are ideal types; there exist of course many intermediary formations. What interests Durkheim is the way in which the traits and the behavior of the actual individual can only be understood on the basis of the pre-existing social structures.

The same theoretical structure is applied in Durkheim's study of *Suicide* (1897), which confirms the validity of the philosophical premise of his new science. The two traditional types of suicide are the "altruistic" self-sacrifice for a greater good, and the "egoistic" refusal to continue to live with life's trials. In modern times, their predominance has been replaced by "anomic" suicide which results from the fact that modern society is not able to impose valid system of norms on individual behavior. The normlessness that Durkheim calls anomie is paradoxical: society produces behavior that is individual but at the same time and for the same reason a-social. Society, it seems, thwarts its own self-reproduction. Durkheim emphasizes the centrality of this paradox in the actual life of the Republic, and the political threat that it represents, in the "Preface" to the second edition of *De la division social du travail* (1902). I will return in a moment to the political implications of the (unsatisfactory) remedy that he proposes. It suffices for now to see that he recognized the problem.

Durkheim intended his new science to participate in the life of the Republic in the way that a doctor seeks the source of the patient's symptoms. This method is seen in his intervention in the debates raised by the Dreyfus affair. Although personally a supporter of Dreyfus, Durkheim's brief essay on "Individualism and the Intellectuals" (1898) illustrates the political implications of his new science. The Anti-Dreyfusards denounced those who put into doubt the conviction of the Jewish captain as representatives of a new social category: the "intellectuals." By challenging the authority of the military court, these agitators were said to threaten the basic principles of society: authority, hierarchy, and the priority of the social good over the individual's self-interest. By putting reason above authority, making criticism both free and public, and insisting on the rights of the individual's self-interest rather than his duties, the intellectuals stood on the side of modern individualism and represented a threat to traditional forms of social cohesion. In a word, for the Anti-Dreyfusards, even if the conviction of Dreyfus was not legally justified, it was sociologically valid! Durkheim could not fail to take up the gauntlet; his reply was a defense both of the Dreyfusards and of his new science.

Durkheim's essay makes clear both the philosophical and the political status of sociology. He refuses to confuse modern individualism with the kind of self-centered egoism expressed in the social theory of Herbert Spencer. In his eyes, individualism had received its philosophical foundation in the work of Rousseau and Kant; today it has become "the religion of modern times." Indeed, continues Durkheim, it was no accident that Kantianism gave birth not only to Fichte's ethics, which was "already pregnant" with socialism; Kantianism was the impetus behind the philosophy of Hegel "of whom Marx was the disciple." As for Rousseau, his individualism found its translation during the French revolution where it gave rise to the great moment of "national concentration." Like any religion, explains the sociologist, this modern "religion of the individual" has its source not in the private individual but outside of him, in the society of which he is not only the product but also the producer and the foundation. In this way, the rights of man that irritate the anti-Dreyfusards are not based on the abstract or egoistic individual; rather society is expressing itself, its sociality, in this only apparently individualist principle.

If the "religion" of the modern individual is only a belief, its status in a Europe that was moving toward the outbreak of a conflict that would put an end to a century of progress needed to be more closely defined.

As a "religious" phenomenon, individualism is created by society; but the preservation of that society in turn depends on the maintenance of the individualism that is its expression. Is this a vicious circle? Durkheim tried to explain to a wider public the implications of his magnum opus, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912), in a short essay published in 1914, just before the outbreak of the Great War. Under the title "The Dualism of Human Nature" Durkheim asserts that sociology, which seeks to understand society, must at the same time explain the individual who in the last resort is the "elementary basis" of that society. The question of circularity reappears once again. In order to perdure, society is obliged to create a kind of individual who will contribute to the reproduction of that society. For example, modern society has to create a critical individual capable of acting autonomously. But that autonomy can threaten the norms that hold society together. How can this second circle be made productive? If the whole determines the part while the part, for its part, must reproduce that whole, there will always exist the possibility of a lag or a gap between the two moments. This is what leads to the appearance of the "dualism" that Durkheim tries to explain. The problem appears, for example, in the distinction between the body and the soul. The nature of the soul is produced by society but it must retain the capacity to put into question the legitimacy of the society that produced it. The same distinction reappears in the contrast of conceptual reason and immediate sensation, which are supposed to work together, each strengthening and refining the other while producing new knowledge, although they may in some conditions clash. The same structure is found in the distinction between moral ends and the egoistic and sensual temptations that evolve with the evolution of civilization. Such examples lead Durkheim to conclude that a total harmony of man with himself is made impossible by the sociological constitution of human being.[6]

Durkheim's hard-headed pessimism, expressed as the Great War was looming, resembles that of Weber at the war's end. Durkheim points to the dialectical process that arises from the fact that society is greater than the individual; this incites that individual constantly to go beyond his limits in a process that transcends utilitarian egoism to produce unintended social progress. The dialectic becomes paradoxical when Durkheim recognizes that this same progress of civilization will only reinforce the hold of society over the individual who, because of the "dualism" of human nature, will continue to resist. This diagnosis recalls Weber's 1919 Munich lectures on "The Vocation of the Scholar" and "The Vocation of the Politician." How can one explain this convergence of the two foundations of sociology in spite of their very different premises? The answer lies in the fact that both sociologists are seeking to do philosophy by other means. Their similarity results from their rejection of the classical (Platonic and antipolitical) goal of philosophy that sought to find an all-inclusive totality, a harmony without dissonance, and a progress that would go beyond all contradiction. Their pessimism opens them to thinking politically. Both confront once again the paradoxical relation of the individual and society.

3 Paths of Political Sociology

How can one explain the pessimism of the founders of sociology? Their work claims to be a science, and thus to be an analysis of the really existing world; and yet it wants to do philosophy by other means and thus refuses any non-critical positivism. It its Weberian variant, it asserts that the social world only reveals itself through a meaning conveyed by a message that transcends it and which that world by itself cannot explain. This meaning that holds society together seems to result from a decision that is unconditional and accountable to no one. This claim could lead to different political conclusions if the stress is placed on the necessity of social unity, on individual choice, or on popular sovereignty. For some readers of Weber, following the interpretation by Carl Schmitt, he anticipated the need for a "leader-democracy" (*Führerdemokratie*[7]); for others, following Karl Jaspers, he was the father of a liberal democracy that, alas, failed during the Weimar Republic; for still other, more radical readers, the locus of political decision lies in the *demos*, the people whose sovereignty is primary.[8] Each of these interpretations reproduces the slippage from the individual to the social or the social to the individual (or conflates them in the idea of popular sovereignty). But this time the slippage appears in the political sphere, which is not identical to the philosophical discussed in Part I, nor to the sociological that was the object of Part II. This needs explanation. The political emerges from the paradoxes that drive sociology from an individualist to a social foundation. Is the political the place where the dialectic overcomes opposition? If so, it would be identical to what I have called "philosophy by other means."

Returning to the problem of anomie in modern society, the philosophical dilemma was posed by the paradoxical idea of a modern religion of the individual. Like all religion for Durkheim, it is the ideal expression of the given social relations; but its "god" is no longer transcendent to the individuals who produce and reproduce modern society. Individualism and the individual are both creator and created. Whereas a transcendent "god" appears to be an unquestionable fact (like the Greeks' *physis* or the Christians' Divinity), this god of immanence can only appear as posited by men. As a result, modern society can never be certain of its norms and the laws that express them. This is what Durkheim calls anomie. It infects the life of society and expresses itself in that of the individual as a sense of drift, uncertainty, and the meaninglessness of "anomic suicide." Durkheim returns to its social expression in the "Preface" to the second edition to *De la division sociale du travail.* Curiously, after he has described the threat to social stability that accompanies modern anomic relations, the sociologist turns to history in a search for solutions. He analyzes the social role of guilds in ancient Rome, suggests reasons for their disappearance, and explains how they were reborn in the Middle Ages only to disappear in the century prior to the French revolution when something that Weber might call a rebirth of the guild "spirit" seemed to arise. This new accent suggests where to look for the place of the political in the new sociological science.

Durkheim's intention is signaled by the citation from Aristotle's *Politics* that he puts at the head of the "Preface." Taken from Book II, the passage is part of Aristotle's attack on Plato's unitary vision of the ideal City. Aristotle insists that "things from which a unity must come differ in kind." Equality exists, but it is based on an "ethical reciprocity" where citizens "cannot all rule at the same time, but each can rule for a year or some other period... just as all would be shoemakers and carpenters if they changed places." As a result, continues Aristotle, among those who are naturally equal "they rule and are ruled in turn, just as if they had become other people."[9] This reciprocal equality is not possible in the hierarchical world of Plato. Aristotle's argument, which Durkheim is endorsing, implies that it is only as equal members of the city—in modern terms: as citizens of a Republic—that political society emerges. In such conditions, differentiation can occur at the same time that the individual begins to acquire rights. The origin of these rights is political. But Durkheim differs from Aristotle; as a self-aware modern sociologist, he sees that what was a virtue for Aristotle (e.g., knowing how both to rule and to be ruled) can become the source of anomie in modern societies.

The political equality that Aristotle defended against Plato can become a threat to itself in conditions of anomie. The political republic loses its status when social relations can no longer be justified by appeal to universally valid laws; it has to furnish its own self-justification. But if society exists outside of a relation to the political, it is incapable of knowing itself as a particular society and therefore cannot act to cure social ills. Just as the "elementary forms of religious life" acquire their particular identity through the totem and the rituals associated with each, so the relation to the political provides a modern society with the symbols of its identity. To exist and to preserve itself, society must be able to represent itself; it must become aware of its "collective consciousness." Without this self-representation, society cannot be distinguished from its environment; it cannot decide what is essential to it and what is fortuitous; it is *anomic*. It follows that the concept of anomie does not refer only to the *individual* sentiment of the meaninglessness of life that produces the modern type of suicides analyzed by Durkheim. Anomie is the result, but also the expression, of the disappearance of political life in modern societies.

Durkheim never applied his theory of the "religion of the individual" to the analysis of the relation of state and society. This is perhaps surprising. It may explain why his proposed remedy for modern anomic society remained simply an historical construction.[10] The republican state claims to represent modern organic society in its universality in the same way that the "elementary" religious symbols represented society in the simple segmentary societies. But a modern society founded on the social division of labor, and characterized by individualism, could never be fully incarnated in the representation of the state. From the point of view of the individual, society differs from the state even though that state is assumed to be its representative. Anomie appears here in a different guise. It again produces a slippage. The priority of the social (as it is represented in and by the republican state) gives way to that of the individual. But the paradoxical result of the new priority is individual self-affirmation in the form of modern anomic suicide. The tragic pessimism implicit in this analysis contrasts with the optimism vividly expressed earlier by Durkheim's "Individualism and the Intellectuals."

In the last resort, Durkheim knew that his appeal to Aristotle's theory of the political could not be maintained in a modern society. The essay on the "dualism of human nature" dissolved that dualism into a kind of sociological ontology. Humanity is condemned to face the same slippages in different guises; each temporary solution will sooner or later produce a new form of dualism. This philosophical reduction of a sociological problem is in part the result of the fact that Durkheim never analyzed the function of *power* in the maintenance of social order. He was of course aware of social conflicts; but he refused to reduce them to more that surface phenomena. He tried to analyze them in terms of their relation to what he called the “moral” dimension, a notion whose relation to the political remained undefined.

This lacuna in Durkheim’s theory suggests the possibility of another inversion in the relation of Durkheim and Weber as founders of modern sociology. Although Weber insisted on the central place of conflict and the role of power in society, his methodological individualism insisted that the dimension of *meaning* is central to understanding the social results of individual action. The two claims were not incompatible in Weber’s theory. This is the point where his arguments could rejoin Durkheim’s analysis of modern anomie. The experience of individual and social meaninglessness analyzed by the Frenchman contrast with Weber’s attempt to link together German national self-affirmation with a liberalism that guarantees the place of the individual. Alas, there was no time to work out what might have been a fusion or even a debate between the perspectives; the Great War came, and the founders of the new social science chose, with more or less lucidity, the side of their nation.[11]

4 Back to the Beginning: Marx

A century later, the mixed results of the revolutions of 1989 call for a rethinking of the relation between the critique of totalitarianism and the nature of democracy. In democratic conditions, the question of power is posed differently than it was by Marx—who wanted it to disappear—or by Weber—who treated it as a perennial problem that could be controlled but not eliminated. For both of them, power was ultimately reduced to a positive fact (even though both of them know that it is also a product of social relations, which can change). Neither was concerned with the place and the role of power in a democracy. The contradictions of the democratic claim to have overcome conflict by realizing the full potential of society from within society itself suggest that for modern societies the locus of power must remain empty. That does not mean that power disappears; on the contrary, it means that attempts to incarnate social power will always be met with counter-claims and criticism. Democratic morality and manners lead to the rejection of any claim from philosophy or from sociology (or their avatars) to occupy the place of power. That remains the lesson of the critique of totalitarianism.

This structural feature of modern democracy helps to understand why the preceding analysis was driven from one pole to the other—from the individual to society and from society to the individual, from Durkheim to Weber, and back again. This was not a mistake; no social science could overcome the political indetermination that is essential to democracy. At the end of this learning process, it remains to return to the beginning. Was I wrong when, as a young student wanting to study in France, I wanted to learn from Marx both philosophy and politics? And what can be said about Marx at the end of the voyage?

One of Marx's most evocative images is that of a "specter" whose absent presence in *The Communist Manifesto* is said to announce the immanent coming of communism. Marx describes the great achievements of capitalism as much as its failures; and from their balance he draws the image of a "revolutionary" power that will triumph over previous modes of production. But this confidence doesn't let him forget the costs, the waste, and the irrationalities that accompany the forward march of revolution. Later in the *Manifesto*, Marx applies his dialectical logic to a different sphere, that of political action. The communist militant is said to be distinct from others who fight for justice insofar as he knows the future toward which this theater of spectral struggle points. This was the communist whom I heard in Paris. In his theory, those costs, waste, and irrationalities were necessary stages in history's self-realization. Marx himself was less dogmatic.[12]

I have constructed this somewhat speculative study of the two founders of sociological theory who each struggled in his own way to understand the paradoxes of modern capitalism in order to suggest how a follower of Marx after 1989 might seek to philosophize "with other means." Of course, as Marx said frequently in *Capital*, *de te fabula narrator*! The first step would be to recognize that the "specter" to be analyzed would not be a supposed reality hidden within the necessary and rational evolution of History. The challenge would be to analyze the specter of a democracy that, as Durkheim and Weber each glimpsed in his way, was the horizon of modern times. It would be necessary also to recognize that horizons can recede as well as they can advance; they point beyond themselves at the same time that they define limits. What would be seen from this perspective by an informed and self-critical Marxist? Not only benefitting from the advances of Durkheim's sociology but also seeing the possibility to begin the analysis from the methodological individualism of Weber, the project would reject a materialist determinism that neglects the question of the meaning of what is lived experience for the individual. From Weber, the critical post-Marxist would have learned that the liberal German nationalist was wrong to identify democracy with the threat of anarchism. From Durkheim, the French republican, he would have learned to decipher the existence of a "religion of democracy" whose political avatars remain to be studied. From both he would learn to recognize that the simple alternatives of a flat and formal liberalism and an existential decisionism are inadequate. Particularly dangerous is the confusion of a plebiscitary form of sovereignty with a democracy that knows itself and therefore knows its own limits. This means finally that a social democracy must be democratic in order to be truly social.

The seeds planted by the founders do not lead by themselves toward a renewal of political thought. I have structured this presentation in order to bring out the dialectical inversions and paradoxical cross-overs that exist within their own theories. These are the result of the fact that the two founders of sociology are—like Marx!—trying to do philosophy by other means. Philosophy and politics are at once necessary and yet insufficient to capture the experience of a capitalist modernity that questions them at the same time that they interrogate it. It would be tempting to conclude that philosophy in the last resort can be identified with the individual (as in Weber), whereas politics refers to the society (as with Durkheim). But that conclusion would simply return to the beginning of this voyage without integrating the wanderings and the errors that I described at the outset. Just as the relation of the individual to society, and of society to the individual, is constantly reversible because of the basic structure of modern democracy, so too the relation of philosophy to the political is caught up in an indetermination that does not permit either of them to be fixed and defined once and for all. It is for just that reason that, in the last analysis, Durkheim and Weber—just like Marx—had to learn to "philosophize with other means."

NOTES

1. At least this is how the speech seemed to me, who was not yet fluent either in French or in Marxism!
2. Weber's charismatic leader differs fundamentally from the Marxist militant insofar as the "mission" of the militant is supposed to be inscribed in the reality of world history, whereas the source of the mission of the charismatic leader lies in a world of individual values whose foundation lies outside of historical conditions.

3. There are of course changes within the "spirit" inaugurated by each of the great charismatic figures; these changes can be studied in terms of Weber's methodological individualism. It should be noted as well that Weber is no stranger to dialectical thinking. For example, routinization (or even bureaucratization) has a positive aspect insofar as the fixation of rules permits the further differentiation of the society. For example, as theology and canon law become distinct, and the latter gives rise to the emergence of secular law while the former opens new domains for philosophical reasoning. This process of the differentiation and autonomy of specific spheres of society is the basis of Weber's theory of modernization.
4. This hope for a renewal of charismatic leadership has led to interpretations of Weber by radical right-wing theorists such as Carl Schmitt. The twentieth century has had its seemingly charismatic leaders, alas on the right (Hitler or Mussolini) and the left (Stalin or Mao). I return to this issue in Part III below.
5. It should be noted that Durkheim's first major study had as a secondary goal to establish the new discipline of sociology in the French academic landscape, where it as yet was unrepresented. Moreover, French positivist thought in the tradition of August Comte was still dominant in French social thought. It was thus natural that he stress the (objective) division of labor in society rather than the (social) division of labor which, as will be seen, become important in his later work.
6. Once again, Durkheim insists that human beings are *sociologically* constituted. There is no naturally given distinction of body and soul, of reason and sensation, or of morality and egoism.
7. Schmitt (1888–1985) did indeed support the Hitler government, but many of his theoretical arguments were written before 1933 and others, more ambiguous, came after its defeat. An excellent overview, situating Schmitt in German political and philosophical debates, is found in Jan-Werner Müller, *A Dangerous Mind. Carl Schmitt in Post-War European Thought* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).
8. On this reading, Schmitt is a radical democrat who criticizes liberal limits on the expression of the popular will that are supposed to protect the people from itself!
9. C.f., *Politics* Book II, 1261, a 24 ff. (in the C.D.C. Reeve translation).
10. This is no doubt unfair, to the activities of both the citizen and the professor who created a school of co-workers and a journal to accompany and spread their work; and to the thinker who's publications on "moral education" and on "the evolution of pedagogy in France, as well as his study of "socialism" show his engagement. The most inclusive critical biography remains that of Steven Lukes, *Emile Durkheim. His Life and Work: A Historical and Critical Study* (New York: Penguin, 1973).

11. C.f. "The Great War and the Origins of Contemporary Ideology," Chap. 15, below. Durkheim, who died in 1917, lost his son and hoped for successor in the war, along with many of the already illustrious adherents to his school. While supporting the war, Weber wrote increasingly critical newspaper articles, questioning means to fight it (particularly unrestricted submarine warfare), and the refusal to recognize the political means to end the bloody conflict. After the war, Weber took part in the elaboration of the ill-fated constitution of the Weimar Republic and delivered the two famous lectures on the "Vocation" of the scientist and of the politician. He died in 1920 during the flu epidemic.
12. C.f. the most recent Marx biography, whose subtitle is telling: *Karl Marx. A Nineteenth Century Life* by Jonathan Sperber (New York: Liveright, 2013).

CHAPTER 7

André Gorz and the Philosophical Foundation of the Political

Although André Gorz (1923–2007) came to be known during recent decades as a leading proponent and innovators of left-wing ecological politics, he had been celebrated during the 1960s and 1970s as an innovative critical Marxist rethinking the politics of class in essays published in *Les Temps modernes* of which he was then the de facto political editor. I will try to show here that the basis of all of his political thought, then and as it evolved with the times and the circumstances, was philosophical. This philosophical foundation is not always evident to the casual reader who will be impressed by the sharp sociological distinctions and crisp use of economic data by a thinker who had earned his living for three decades as a journalist for a weekly magazine, *Le Nouvel Observateur*. As he explains in the presentation of a collection of his journalistic writings, his analyses of everyday life attempt to bring to light "the logic, the contradictions and the dead-ends of a system, but show also that which announces its transcendence."[1] This is exactly what Marx set as his own goal when he defined *Capital* as "a presentation [of the capitalist system] and through the presentation a critique of that system."[2] The unifying thread across all of Gorz's work is a philosophical theory of alienation and the reasons for overcoming it.

There are biographical grounds for this philosophical claim. The son of an Austrian Jew and his Catholic wife, Gorz was sent to school in Switzerland to avoid service in the Wehrmacht. He adopted the French language, digested its traditions, and remade himself into a French philosopher under the influence of Jean-Paul Sartre. The crucial period in

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D. Howard, *Between Politics and Antipolitics*, Political Philosophy and Public Purpose, DOI 10.1057/978-1-349-94915-1_7

his life was this early time in Switzerland, followed by years as a stateless resident in France surviving on odd jobs and translations while working late at night on the elaboration of what he considered to be the moral philosophy necessary to complete the existential ontology of Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*. That massive manuscript, *Fondements pour une morale* remained unpublished for 15 years. In the interval, Gorz published a streamlined version of his theory under the title, *The Traitor* (1957). Introduced by a magnificent preface from Sartre[3], the book is a phenomenological autobiography that was Gorz's self-affirmation as a philosopher. This philosophical intent is seen in the titles of the book's four component parts, which pass from "we" to "them" and on to "you (toi)" and finally to self-affirmation as "I". Two years later, he published a more political analysis of *La morale de l'histoire* (1959) in which he describes the dilemmas facing leftist politics after the Soviet intervention had crushed the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. Remaining a man of the left, he argued that the conditions of alienation that Marx had deciphered in his times remained actual even though industrialization had transformed their mode of appearance. As a result, the revolution that Marx had considered to be certain had become today nothing more than a hope. In the last resort, overcoming alienation could result only from an existential choice.

By the mid-1960s, when I first met him, Gorz was known as a leading theorist of radical trade unionism promoting and transforming the idea of "revolutionary reforms" that had been pioneered by radical Italian trade unionists and radical ex-communists who had been excluded from the party. As he developed it, this concept came to be associated with the New Left of the 1960s.[4] Although he wrote no more ontological-moral tomes, there is an underlying continuity in Gorz's political evolution. The Marx to whom he returns again and again is not the stagnant Stalinist of the communist party; he is the theorist of alienation, the critic of commodification, and the critical theorist of value; he is also a creative interpreter of Marx's *Grundrisse* which challenges the logic of capitalist productivism and which anticipated the ecological crisis more than a century before it began to be acute. He is a political existentialist who would agree with Sartre's famous claim in his 1961 introductory essay in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* that "Marxism is the unsurpassable philosophy of our time."[5] From this perspective, the stages in the evolution of Gorz's politics elaborated the philosophical thought formulated during his earliest years. He moved from the idea of revolutionary reforms through trade union interventions to the demand for self-management; he moved later from his "farewell" to the proletariat as the subject of revolution to support for the political demand for a right to a basic income for all. His early journalistic reports on the impending ecological crisis culminated in his combination of ecological analysis with the Marxian theory of alienation. What he called a phenomenological mode of thought also gave him a framework from which to explore the conditions of technologically changing, financially dominated global capitalism.

This existential phenomenology left a question that was constantly renewed and never resolved to my satisfaction during the 35 years that we exchanged often quite lengthy correspondence: what is the relation between the practical politics that Gorz proposed on the basis of his description of the present state of social relations and the existential philosophy that was for him the foundation of morality? This is a version of the old problem of the relation of theory to practice; in our exchanges, it often turned around the modern question of the relation of "the political" to "politics." It seemed to me that his analysis of the contradictions of capitalist reality left his reader with a dilemma that could be resolved only by a choice, a leap…or by a crash from which the system seemed always to resuscitate and stagger on, until the next crisis. And as the scar tissue of the last crisis healed, there would arrive in the mail a new book by Gorz, presenting a convincing explanation of the reasons that the scar was only a superficial sign of healing because capitalism remains a fundamentally self-contradictory mode of social reproduction. As a capstone, this renewed account would point to new forms and sources of discontent, rebellion, refusal… and even the first signs of a new leap by the system, or those foreshadowing a more radical crash.

Although the problem of the relation between theory and practice, morality and politics was constantly present in my discussions with Gorz during all of these years, I had never returned to his early philosophical writings. I only took the old volumes again from the shelf when I was contacted by two researchers—a French woman, Françoise Gollain, and a German, André Häger—who had found parts of my correspondence with Gorz in the Gorz's papers at the Institut de la mémoire contemporaine (IMEC). I was also encouraged to turn back to these themes after meeting the trustee of Gorz's papers, Christophe Fourel, and reading the impressive collection of essays that he edited, *André Gorz, Un penseur pour le XXIe siècle*.[6] This reading and rereading led me to see a dimension of Gorz's thinking that I wish I had been able to discuss with him. I will return to this new perspective in my conclusions since (as in any phenomenology) the end of a journey can only be understood after retracing the path that led to it.

1 The First Hints of a Charnel Dimension

The first clues that I found were in the *Letter to D…*, a short book published in 2006. It adopts the form of a phenomenological autobiography of a couple, the history of a shared adventure, a meditation on their being together, and not least, declaration of eternal love. This method of approach is identical to the one that is revealed when *The Traitor* describes the transformation of the Gorz as an object ("him") into a subject capable of speaking in the first person ("I"). But why did Gorz write this new book? What made him want to retrace his earlier path half a century after completing his analysis of it? The first readers of the *Letter to D…* could not have known that a year after its publication, on September 24, 2007, Gorz and his wife, Dorine, committed suicide together, unable to bear the thought that one of them might live on without the other.

At the cathartic turning point in the *Lettre à D…*, Gorz recounts how he was overcome by a terrible guilt when he was preparing a new edition of *The Traitor* in the winter of 2005. He realized that he had described the beginning of his lifelong love with his partner and accomplice as if it were merely a sort of existential "project" similar to his choice to remake himself as a Frenchman, a wager that had only a subjective and accidental foundation.[7] And yet, he explains, it was this literally and philosophically charnel love that truly had permitted him to say "I." I will come back to the reason for calling this love doubly "charnel" in the context of what Gorz means by "philosophy." Here he explains somewhat lamely his cavalier mistreatment of his relation to Dorine ("Kay" in the book) by the fact that he never reread his manuscripts, and only lightly perused page proofs because, as a man defined by his projects, he considered that what's done is done; and when it's well done, he adds, you're already embarked on the next project. Thus, he continues, he was already thinking about politics, about Marx and Lenin and revolution, and that perspective colored his vision of his own lived experience as something that had been, but no longer was, his present. To portray himself not just as a lover but as *in* love, seemed both too bourgeois and too banal for someone whose attention had turned to revolutionary politics. This may indeed have been Gorz's state of mind at the time; but it does not explain why he felt the need to return to it half a century later, and to apologize publicly. To understand why he wrote and published this slim volume, I returned to his philosophical beginnings.

For those who are not familiar with *The Traitor*, two points will suffice to set the stage. As mentioned, the book contains four chapters, whose titles describe the path through which the book's author, who is also its object, evolves as the story moves existentially from the nothingness of (the subject's) being to the being of (the author's) nothingness. The book describes how the initial project of the individual takes shape in a warm and yet smothering world of the "we" (nous) over which he has no control; how that individual tries and yet fails to affirm himself among "them" (eux) in the world, before he encounters, beyond the lifeworlds of familial Sameness and worldly Otherness, a beloved "thou" (tu) whose reciprocity permits the subject finally to affirm himself by saying "I" (je). The stages of this existential phenomenology begin from sometimes cruel, but always lucid, descriptions of the subject presented in the third person singular voice of an external observer looking an object (which is Gorz before he has become a subject for himself). The aim is to understand the moment at which the author comes to recognize that what "he," the observed object, was doing is nothing other than what "I," the first person singular, wished, or would have wished, to do. This movement between the third and the first person descriptions also characterizes the relation between the past (third person) and the present (first person).

Although same methodological approach is present in the *Letter*, the author is now speaking as a subject to another subject, a person to another person, a lover to the beloved. This distinction is important. At first glance, it appears that the switch between the third person and first person perspective is applied in Gorz's more sociological later works to analyze the opposition between the imperatives of the reproduction of the system as described by a disincarnated external observer (the third person) who is concerned with functional imperatives for the maintenance of order, and the (first person) liberty of the individual incarnated by the participants in the life-world in which their intentions and actions become alien and unrecognizable to them. He later saw this same distinction apparently applied to critical theory in Jürgen Habermas's *Theory of Communicative Action*. But he was frustrated by the thinness of Habermas's description of the life-world because it was based on a formal analysis of the conditions of linguistic communication. Gorz seemed to be looking for a more charnel account. Although he doesn't say it in so many words, a thicker theory would have to be founded on an intersubjectivity rather than the ultimately monological account in *The Traitor* where Gorz is both object and subject.

The relation between the philosophical and the sociological can be seen in Gorz's early political writings. When I first wrote about his work in *The Unknown Dimension*: *European Marxism since Lenin*, I stressed the way that he and Serge Mallet had insisted on the emergence of a "new working class" that had replaced the old industrial proletariat. This was the foundation of the "revolutionary reforms" that Gorz had anticipated in his 1964 book *Stratégie ouvrière et néo-capitalisme*, and elaborated in 1967 in *Le socialisme difficile*. I justified my reading in part by appeal to philosophical arguments from the 1959 theoretical essay, *La morale de l'histoire*, particularly the articulation of Marx's theory of alienation as a direct critique of Stalinism.[8] This theory was concretized by Gorz in the lapidary introductory paragraphs of the English translation of *Stratégie ouvrière* in 1967. He argued that revolutionary politics in modern capitalism can no longer be based on the *misery* of the working class; *new needs* have now become the potential root of revolt. The political translation of these new needs could not take the form of a "syncretic" politics that tries to impose an external unity on a diversity of separate struggles. It was necessary to develop a "synthetic" strategy based on the *immanent* potential of the new working class. It was not clear to me (nor I think to Gorz) how these "new needs" were rooted in an ineradicable—a charnel—life-world that the imperatives of the capitalist system could in principle never satisfy.

I was not surprised to learn that in 1970, the year of the publication of *The Unknown Dimension*, Gorz republished the central arguments of *Stratégie ouvrière* along with a crucial chapter from *Le Socialisme* difficile, under the title *Réforme et Révolution*.[9] For me, his use of the inclusive conjunction "and" rather than the exclusive "or" was telling. That is why I often repeated to student radicals the famous words of Maurice Thorez, head of the French Communist Party (PCF) in 1936: *il faut savoir terminer une grève*. Revolution is not a once-and-for-all revaluation of all values. That's the phraseology of frustrated philosophers. Although he would make this same point in different contexts, it is worth noting that Gorz himself was no more immune than any one else to the call to a revolutionary rupture with the past. For example, in April of 1970, as he came increasingly under the influence of Ivan Illich, Gorz published an editorial in *Les Temps modernes* titled "Détruire l'université." A few years earlier, he published in Havana a tribute to "comrade Che Guevara." These inconsistencies can be seen as one of the potential costs of Gorz's adherence to an existential phenomenology to which he reaffirmed his allegiance in 1984 in a long interview at the end of a three-day meeting organized by the German Trade Union Federation to discuss his work.[10] This reaffirmation of philosophical roots of his engagement at a meeting of trade unionists leads me back to its earlier formulation.

2 Realizing Philosophy

At the beginning of *The Traitor*, the author looks from his window as "Morel" and an editor emerge from a darkened doorway. Morel—who is Sartre—has proposed the publication of "the thing," a massive manuscript on which Gorz had labored for nine years. Gorz knows already, instinctively, that publication will be refused. Translating this instinct, which he interprets as the self-understanding of his nothingness, is the task Gorz sets for himself in *The Traitor*.[11] In it, he offers paths toward the existential theory of morality—more precisely, an account of existential "conversion"—that Sartre promised but never delivered as a supplement to *Being and Nothingness*. The challenge was to overcome the dualism that separated the dead materiality of Being, what Sartre called the in-itself (*en-soi*), from Nothingness that becomes the active negating and thus liberating praxis of the for-itself (*pour-soi*). When Sartre himself tried to resolve this problem two decades later, in his *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, his argument was formulated in ontological terms that remained abstract. For him, in a world dominated by scarcity, the social institutions that he calls the practico-inert are the expression of the alienation of the free praxis of the *pour-soi* (the "practico") whose reified inertness prevents individuals from freely cooperating to achieve shared goals. The escape from this reification of individual praxis demands a moment of "fusion" which, if it is more than a momentary surge of emotion, depends on the agency of the "totalizing Third," which is the political party (or perhaps its charismatic leader). As opposed to Sartre's ontological construct, Gorz presents a similar philosophical argument concretely with the aid of American sociologists such as David Riesman and C. Wright Mills. As a journalist, Gorz had to be aware of the social transformations going on around him. As a result, his theory of alienation went beyond the critique of alienated labor to analyze the way that alienation transformed the worker into a *consumer*.[12]

Gorz's account makes clear the antipolitical consequences of the role Sartre attributes to the external third party in creating the fused group. To maintain its unity, the party has to create a bureaucracy, with specialized functions, separation of the person from the task, and division of the public personage from the private person. This alienating politics was justified by communist apologists as a means to a glorious and foreordained end. But that is not the morality that Gorz sought. As he put it in italics in the concluding pages of *La morale de l'histoire*, "For us," socialism is not a value for members of a future socialist society; "for us," it is not identical to any given society; "for us," he insists again, it is the project of creating a human world and a human person that will overcome the reign of need and necessity; "for us," he repeats, its value is not found in what it will be when it has been created, precisely because that depends on *us*.[13] The "us" for whom Gorz speaks is the editorial voice, the author in the person of everyone, the voice of the sovereign; it is, in other words, the voice of the existential philosopher. This personal voice was as yet barely audible; it was drowned out by the collective phantasy of the Marxian proletariat that still haunted the historical imagination of the 1970s.

It was only after Gorz said "*adieu*" (which is not the same as an *au revoir*) to the proletariat that the voice of the philosopher became audible.[14] Although the "goodbyes" are the theme of the first two parts of this new book, there is still an echo of Marxism in the third section, "Beyond Socialism." Before that, Gorz had described the "Death and resurrection of the historical subject [as] the non-class of post-industrial proletarians." Appealing to Alain Touraine's theory of post-industrial society (and of course to his own reading of Marx), Gorz argues that members of this "non-class" are not defined by the quality of the work they do but by the routinized and indifferent abstract labor that they exchange for a wage. As a result, their self-understanding, and their sense of self, depends only on their subjectivity. The subjective freedom of members of this "non-class" represents "in principle" the negation of the imperatives of the capitalist system. This implicit negation is not just a refusal of capitalism or the projection of a utopian vision; it is what Hegel called a "determinant negation," a sublation (Aufhebung) that produces a higher synthesis that is based on an immanent critique, just as was Gorz's earlier quest to discover emerging "new needs." In the present historical circumstances, he now claims, those needs will be situated outside of the labor process and apart from the experience of the proletariat. Gorz's turn to the themes of ecology is inseparable from this renovated version of the critique of capitalism that does not reiterate a variant on the old socialist dream.[15]

3 Philosophical Foundations of the Political

The *Adieux* does not explain how the principle of subjectivity incarnated by the "non class" can become an active force for liberation. The existential question is how this "non-class" becomes an actor "for itself," a subject whose force of negation replaces a proletariat that has been transformed to a passive "thing in itself." Gorz suggests two possible evolutions. The first looks for the emergence of forms of freedom *outside* of the constraints of capitalist, bureaucratic, or systemic necessities. In the *Adieux*, for example, he talks of the way feminism affirms the values of intimacy. At another point he refers favorably to Ivan Illitch's "tools of conviviality." He insists that these are not merely private choices that have no consequences for society at large; they are in effect the negation of the logic of bureaucratic reproduction. Gorz continued to look for these incipient challenges to the reigning (dis)order in successive works over the decades, appealing in his last essay, in 2007, for example, to the "hacker ethic" and the "appropriation of technology" by South African townships or Brazilian favela communities. However rich his sociological insights, there are two problems with this first explanation of the way in which free subjectivity can negate the alienated rationality of post-industrial society. On the one hand, Gorz is aware that unmediated adhesion to a communal project can become a threat to subjective freedom when it takes, for example, the form of a tribalism or populism. On the other hand, it is unclear whether a tipping point exists, and if so where, when, and how the tipping becomes effective. Is it only an existential leap? Is the role of a charismatic leader determinant? Or is there a place for democratic politics?

The second path toward realization of the principle of subjective freedom is political. Gorz begins from Sartre's recognition that scarcity must be overcome before freedom can become a reality.[16] He points out that Marx had made the same assertion in his *Critique of the Gotha Program*; but he now interprets that claim as the philosophical expression of the opposition between freedom and necessity. Rather than hope for a collective social miracle brought about by technological progress, Gorz moves toward a political solution to the problem of what he calls a "dualist society" where the spheres of autonomy and heteronomy are distinguished and each is governed by its own imperatives. The sphere of heteronomy is subject to the imperatives of technical rationality while the sphere of autonomy is ruled by the free choice of moral values. The role of the political comes into play once it is seen that the borders of these two domains are not predefined nor are they water-right; each can and does affect the other. The way in which they affect one another defines the political, which is for that reason not a substantive, autonomous sphere of its own.[17] The moral imperatives of the free subject challenge the technical or functional necessities of systemic reproduction, whether in the choice of the means of production or in the regulations governing social relations. Should robots replace living labor? At what human cost are gains of productivity desirable? These are not "objective" questions; they must be understood as political choices.[18]

In this dualist framework, the morally free political actor confronts the fact of necessity. The replacement of the supposedly self-regulating market by the regulatory state transforms economic necessity into the rule of laws that are in principle valid for all citizens individually. Although the concern of the regulatory state is the reproduction of the capitalist economic system, and the administration of law appears to limit subjective freedom, Gorz insists that by protecting the rights of the individual, the universality of these laws makes possible the political struggle to define the sphere of necessity. "The political," he asserts in the *Adieux*, "is the specific place where society becomes conscious of its production as a process involving everyone, where it seeks to master the results and to control the constraints [of the process of production]." As a result, the goal of the political is "not the exercise of power. Its function, on the contrary, is to delimit, to orient and to codify the actions of power, to define its means and its goals, and to make sure that it does not go beyond the framework of its mission."[19] The idea that formal laws make possible substantive individual freedom might be interpreted within the framework of classical French republican theory. In that case, morality is simply a private matter, and there is no place for the kind of participatory democracy that Gorz favored. For that reason, his definition of the political has to be understood as focused on the emergence of moral values within the self-contradictory processes of capitalist social reproduction.

Gorz's warning against the confusion of the political with the exercise of power is reinforced in his account of the passage from the post-industrial subjective freedom described in *Adieux* to the social vision described in his 1983 essay, *Les chemins du paradis*. The irony in his title is aimed at the old French revolutionary (or Jacobin) vision of a seizure of power that is followed, in a distinct a second moment, by the application of that power to impose freedom on social relations. The result would put an end to the political by treating it as a means toward an end that lies beyond itself. The political itself would then have no inherent substantive moral foundation. That is why Gorz insists that the political must remain "the place where moral demands confront external necessities. That confrontation must continue for as long as, in Hegel's words, consciousness does not meet the world 'as a garden planted for it.' It is only the permanence and the openness of that confrontation that will be able to diminish to a maximum the sphere of necessity, and thus maximize the sphere of autonomy."[20] "Paradise" is not the result of the overcoming of scarcity. Necessity can be diminished and autonomy can be maximized by political choices.

While Gorz's critique of the inherited model of revolution is convincing, there is still too little flesh on the bones of his dualist theory of society. The concept of autonomy seems to be a social reformulation of the existentialist vision of an always possible affirmation of subjective freedom. The sphere of autonomy in the dualist theory of society must remain abstract and undefined if his theory of the political is to be maintained. This may be one reason that he was attracted by the debates focusing on the normative status of the subject opened by John Rawls' *Theory of Justice*, particularly as these issues were presented in Habermas's *Theory of Communicative Action*. In that interpretation, the "dualist society" takes the form of an opposition between the imperatives of the mechanics of the "system" and the "life world" in which the individual is embedded. This poses the question whether Habermas's life-world is identical to the sphere of autonomy in Gorz's political theory? Recalling Gorz's insistence that "paradise" is not an Hegelian garden of Eden in which opposition and scarcity have been overcome while reason has come to rule, this seems unlikely. On the other hand, if the normative status of the subject guarantees to it a right to have (certain) rights, how are the particular rights defined? For the normative theory, rights are defined by the rule of reason alone. In Gorz's vision, such rights cannot be separated from the charnel embrace of the subject and the world.

4 The Critique of Normativity

After the post-Marxist left moved from a politics based on the idea of worker self-management to a broader vision of autonomy as both the means and the ends of radical politics, a precondition for its realization was expressed by the demand for a right to a guaranteed revenue for all citizens. Such a right, it was claimed, would free the individual from the alienated and alienating system of wage labor and would thus make possible the autonomous creation of a rich social and personal freedom. The problem was how to justify this right? Was it demanded, or at least made possible, by the immanent need to reproduce the increasingly “immaterial” system?[21] In that case, it belonged to the sphere of systemic necessity rather than to the growing sphere of autonomy. Was it simply a means to the higher end of individual or societal autonomy? In that case it might be beneficial to individuals or to society but it was not a normative demand. Or was this right a normative, deontological claim based on the rules of reason. One of the leading participants in the debate was Philippe Van Parijs, who returned to the question in a celebratory essay on Gorz published after his death. Van Parijs recalls there his first encounters with Gorz, describing their agreements as well as their disagreements, and above all their friendship. He then expresses the pleasure he felt when they came to agree finally about the need for a *politics* built on the demand for a guaranteed revenue for all citizens. In this context he cites a letter in which Gorz explains that despite their practical political agreement, they disagreed on the philosophical principles that justify this politics:

> I agree with the conclusions, [but] I feel again the unease provoked by that Anglo-Saxon school of thought to which the supporters of the ‘basic income’ appeal. Why? Because the arguments remain at the level of a quasi-algebraic logic and because justice cannot be reduced to that level. Justice is also based on a sense of the normative that precedes all possible rationalization. One can move from the normative to a logical and juridical formalization but one cannot start from the latter in order to go in the opposite direction. In a word, what is missing is the untranslatable *lebensweltichen Interessen und Zusammenhänge* [the interests and relationships that exist in the life-world] that permit individuals to feel ‘at home’ in the social space where they live.[22]

This passage has to be read carefully. Norms whose foundation precedes formal rationalization can be given a rational form as rights protected by law, or as political institutions, for example. But legal rights or political choices that may be rationally justified as necessary for the reproduction of the system cannot by themselves insure the subjective assent of the participating individual citizenry. That is the practical dilemma that confronts proponents of a de-ontological, normative, and rights-based political theory. How can one be certain that what needs to be done (for systemic reasons) will in fact be done?

Gorz offers two solutions to the problem of why and how norms compel action. The first was contained in his definition of the political in the *Adieux*. His argument presupposed the existence of universal legal protections, and thus of individual rights, which insure the ability of citizens to defend themselves and their interests. This definition describes the political as it exists from the perspective of the (socio-economic) observer who analyzes the objective reproduction of the system. Gorz's second argument appeals to justice, a value that lies beyond (formal) rights because it is that which makes them legitimate for the participants. Justice in this version is rooted in the life-world of the individual and of the society. This distinction suggests that the sentence in which Gorz insists on justice in his letter to Van Parijs should read: "Justice is also based on a [lived] sense of the normative that precedes all possible [systemic] rationalization." In this way, the second argument complements the first, whose definition of the political remained at a systemic level.

Gorz's appeal here to the ideal of justice returns him to insights from his earlier work that have accompanied the evolution of his political theory. That is why I have insisted that Gorz was and remained a philosopher. Although he uses here the language of normative political theory and that of Habermasian critical theory, he is applying the same dialectical method used in *The Traitor* to show how and why the third person objectivating perspective (which he used so effectively in that first book) has to be supplemented by the first-person subjective evaluation of the life-world in which the participant feels "at home." Justice belongs to a pre-reflexive life-world; it is the *existential* experience that in the last instance becomes the determining factor in the passage from the principle of subjective freedom to its *realization* in the form of rights that are in turn maintained and challenged in the reproduction of the political process.[23] This pre-rational, subjective sensitivity to the demands of justice is neither innate nor is it unaffected by the world in which it appears.

This pre-reflexive existential life-world is the "morality" whose foundations Gorz sought during the years consecrated to "the thing," which was more than just the physical book because it had been the very life of its author. The practical form of this morality was expressed "*for us*" as the value of socialism in the concluding arguments of *La morale de l'histoire*. It was the practical motivation of the series of new publications following the *Chemins du paradis*. It was the "sense" of the modern *Métamorphoses du travail* (1988), as well as the "wealth of the possible" that Gorz contrasted to the *Misères du present* (1997). It animates once again his final essay, "La sortie du capitalisme a déjà commencé," published in 2007, which describes the systemic changes that "have begun," and concludes with the simple statement that "I am not saying that these radical transformations will realize *themselves*. I am saying only that, for the first time, *we can will* that they be realized."[24] Despite this consistent digging in the same place, and perhaps just because his account of the systemic imperatives that undermine modern capitalism is so lucid and convincing, it is not clear why Gorz is so sure that justice *will* be finally realized since the system alone cannot impose it. There must be some foundation in the experience of the modern life-world that explains this certainty.

5 Return to The Traitor

I am not certain that Gorz was ever able to explain completely the reasons for his optimism (if that is what it was! Perhaps it was just "existentialism"?). He doesn't say why he decided to republish *The Traitor* in 2005, after it had been out of print for decades. And his explanation for appending to it an essay titled "Le vieillissement," (Aging), which first appeared in two issues of *Les Temps modernes* in December 1961 and January 1962, seems to contradict his insistence that the pre-reflexive life-world is the source of a deep demand for justice. Gorz writes there that "the question that [this essay] explores intransigently is 'How do we enter this society without abandoning our possibilities and our desires?'" Forty years later, he insists that the question remains valid. But he doesn't say why. Surely, Gorz is not returning to the classical liberal political question of why an inherently free subject decides to enter a sort of social contract in which he exchanges certain natural liberties for social rights. The most plausible reading is that the distinction between system and life-world, like the distinction between the third-person perspective and the first-person standpoint that he used so effectively in *The Traitor* is artificial. That means that the moral demand for justice is not founded in pure subjectivity; it is, as I suggested at the outset, a charnel demand in the same way that Gorz's philosophy is charnel. He may have come to recognize this when he recoiled with horror at the unpardonable légerté with which he had treated the love of his life. Perhaps he saw too that his life was not his alone. The fact that he was so affected by this discovery seems to have leaped out at him like an aggression; it was as if *his* own life-world, his sense of self, and his values had been robbed of their foundations by the very author of *The Traitor*.

It would be an exaggeration to say that *Le vieillissement*, written by a new star on the Parisian horizon, presents a sort of moral conversion crisis similar to the one that gave rise to the *Letter to D*.... Gorz, who is usually a dispassionate author, describes in it his “shock” at the recognition that he has aged. Using the method he had employed in *The Traitor*, he describes himself in the third person, as an object to be studied; and then, at several crucial moments, he reverts to the first person to explain what he has understood. The result can be described briefly. Aging is not physiological; it is a social process. The child for itself has no age; it ages as it passes through the stages that lead to—or rather fabricate[25]—what society considers to be adulthood. One aspect of this adulthood is the loss of a kind of freedom that belonged to the young, who are seen by others as a bundle of possibilities. This freedom is now “situated” from without; it is limited and defined not just by the results of one’s action but because of the way the past seizes the present and delimits the course of the future. Although Sartre and Nizan had denounced the idea of youth as a bourgeois illusion, Gorz insists that even in a classless society there will be a conflict of generations as the old leave institutions and expectations into which the young are socialized in spite of themselves.

Gorz personalizes his thesis. He had just turned 36; he is now a recognized author with a steady job as a journalist. People look up to him; they expect him to behave in a certain way, to write critically about politics, and to be a figure in society. He is at once proud of his achievement, revolted by it, and resigned to it as the fate of “everyone.” He’s become “someone”; but to be someone is to have become a thing. Describing himself in the third person, he says that “he experienced this as a fall….” The formerly free youth whose possibilities were infinite because he was himself nothing now has responsibilities and a career. As a result, “you are no longer oppressed: you oppress yourself…you personalize your otherness.” Is there another choice than this reified subjectivity of the adult?[26] You could, he says, prefer yourself to the results of your action, to be an adventurer, a saint, or simply an aesthete living in the fullness of the now. That had been his own choice when he was young and working on “the thing.” Indeed, the long second chapter of the *Fondements* analyzes the price of such attempts by the subject to preserve its subjectivity. It shows that their cost is self-defeat, failure, and above all the inefficacity that ultimately destroys the validity of moral values, as the axiology of the final section of the tome demonstrates.

You cannot return to the infinite possibilities of youth, Gorz concludes; you’re caught in a web of your own making, which you restore every day even as you reproduce your life through a “dynamic conformity.” It is not clear, either, that you should wish to return to those infinite possibilities that were open to you only because you were nothing, a mere bundle of infinite (or indefinite) possibilities, and your action left no trace in the world. The price of your success is that "*you have to accept finitude*: you have to be here and not elsewhere, to do this and not something else, to be now and not never or always; you are only here, only this, only now— you have this life only."

This sober conclusion is puzzling, and a bit formulaic. Is it the expression of resignation? Perhaps. On the other hand, the inevitable dichotomy recalls Gorz's explanation of the way that the "dual society" that replaced the vision of socialism as the overcoming of opposition made possible a new vision of politics. In that context, the apparent resignation here does not signal the abandonment of the free subject or of its projects. It is the recognition of projects that are always situated, and that their value is determined by *judgments* that recognize the thickness of lived life. Gorz had made a similar point in the final paragraph of *The Traitor* when he wrote that "It is necessary to will that action goes beyond its intention [i.e., that it is alienated, becoming part of the system] because this is the price of its reality." But, he continued, it is necessary "to know the general situation into which the action will be incorporated, that is to say, the camp and the sense in which one wants to be engaged." In these conditions, he concludes, he is willing to be "betrayed" in the sense that his act has an effect on people whose values he shares which he could not have achieved on his own. This conclusion suggests that Gorz added his essay on aging to the new edition of *The Traitor* as a reaffirmation of his philosophy of engagement.

A final question that returns throughout Gorz's work remains open: what is the relation of the analyses of the constraints of systemic reproduction of society to the liberty of the subject who is "at home" in the life-world? And how does this more basic conflict affect the political dynamic set into motion by the contradictions of capitalist reproduction? Gorz was apparently trying to formulate an answer to these questions in the incomplete draft of a Preface to the new edition of *The Traitor*. His working title is significant: "We are less Old than we were Twenty-Years Ago."[27] Gorz returns to the reception of the essay on aging, which had led to invitations and discussions among the group around Sartre and especially Beauvoir (a social life that he evokes in the *Lettre à D*, as a kind of shared worldliness). He reaffirms his thesis in a lapidary phrase: "Every person struggles against an order that crushes him and [yet] to whose support and reinforcement he contributes." He recalls that the essay on aging was written at the time when hopes lay with "young peoples" in Algeria, Cuba, Brazil, and among proponents of liberation theology. What some call the immaturity of these "peoples," was in fact not backwardness but an opening; and for that reason "I was thus, like everyone at the time, a Third-Worldist, although for a short time."[28] That hope seems to have returned in a different guise in the draft preface. As argued in his last book, *L'immatériel. Conaissance, valeur et capital*, the capitalist form of industrialism is pushing toward its limits, producing a paradoxical type of adults who retain the openness of adolescents because they are unable to identify with their work alongside others who retain the potential of youth because the precariousness of their jobs leaves them open to new possibilities. Are they a new version that revolutionary "non-class" whose advent Gorz had signaled in the *Adieux*? Gorz doesn't say. He adds only an elliptic phrase. "I didn't predict that when I was 36 years old that after the age of 60 I would begin a second life with the companion with whom I was united forever."

This allusion points ahead to the *Letter to D*… It suggests that Gorz's moral philosophy is rooted in a vision of the life-world that is deeper and more complex—but also more intuitive and social—than he had realized. I have called it "charnel" because of its embodiment in the inevitable and irresolvable interchange between nature and human beings who are "naturally" free. Patrick Viveret's suggestive attempt to formulate systematically the lessons of the *Letter* in terms of what he calls the "emotional" elements inherent in and necessary for social change reflects a similar vision of the way in which an unarticulated intuitive relation to the life-world is a supplement to the transformative critique of the social system.[29] Another version of this intuition is found at the outset of the *Fondements*, when Gorz points out that his debt is not only to Sartre but also to Merleau-Ponty's theory of corporeity.[30] That is why his phenomenological analysis begins with chapters on nature and the body in nature. The same impulse returns in the crucial discussion of "axiology" in Part III[31], where "nature" brings a constant renewal of morality in the process through which the refusal of natural givenness implies the need to overcome the passivity of nature as a mere object for human action and understanding.

This intuitive, never wholly thematized anchorage in a pre-reflexive, charnel life-world was evident in Gorz's everyday life, particularly after he retired from the *Nouvel Obs* and moved to a small village in the countryside. Two examples, more charnel than theoretical, illustrate his sensitivity. I still remember his nearly visceral reaction, at a conference organized by the journal *Telos* in Buffalo, New York 40 years ago, to early American attempts to assimilate feminism and Marxism by means of the apparently Marxist demand for "wages for housework." This, he insisted, would destroy the personal and immediate intimacy of human bonds, putting a shadow over any vision of a just relation between the sexes. He would later develop the reason for this intuitive reaction in a demonstration of the systemic harm inflicted by the capitalist reification of "service" into an "industry" destructive of conditions for the creation of human relations capable of benefitting from the surplus that might be produced. My second example is more personal, and may be familiar to those who were fortunate to know him. Some 20 or 25 years ago, during a visit to to Gérard and Dorine at their home in Vosnon, Gorz took me for a ride to what I remember as a small forest. He walked me to a particular tree, which was very much alive despite the fact that its quite hollow core was surrounded by four pillars of a trunk that mounted to the sky. "Feel these pillars; you will sense the life that pulses upward," he commanded. Was it his imperative certainty or was there real sap flowing? It surely was charnel, alive. I don't know either whether the "civilized exit" from the "miseries of the present" will be found, but I'm sure it won't come naturally or on the basis of rationally alone. I know only that, like him, I want it to occur, and that André Gorz has helped me to understand better my own intuitions.

Notes

1. His earliest journalism was published in the weekly magazine, *L'Express*, which he left for political reasons to join the *Nouvel Observateur* in 1964, where he remained until he qualified for early retirement. Gorz's journalistic articles were published under the pseudonym, Michel Bosquet. He published two collections of his journalism: *Critique du capitalism quotidien* (1973) and *Écologie et politique* (1975). The citation is from the cover copy of the former volume.
2. Gorz's handwritten dedication in my copy of the *Critique du capitalisme quotidien* reads (in translation): "To Dick, this attempt to make the things themselves speak." This could be an allusion to the need to make the "petrified relations danse…" that serves as title of Chap. 2 above. More likely, Gorz is referring to a passage from Marx's letter to Lassalle (February 21, 1858); Marx mentions in the same letter that his work on the *Grundrisse*, the famous unpublished "first draft" of *Capital*, had been aided by a rereading of Hegel's *Logic*. Gorz often cited the *Grundrisse*, as did Herbert Marcuse in *One-Dimensional Man*. This was one reason that, in 1969, I wrote an essay "On Deforming Marx: The French translation of the *Grundrisse*" in *Science &*

Society, (Vol. 33, No. 3 (Summer-Fall, 1969), pp. 358–365). I clearly was not the only critic; a new French translation appeared in 1980!

3. Sartre's preface is entitled "Of Rats and Men." The book was well received, as was the preface. Its English translation (by Richard Howard) was published in 1959 by Simon & Schuster. After it had been out of print for many years, Verso reissued *The Traitor*, which remains available.
4. Our first encounter was not encouraging. I had written an essay on the American New Left, which I submitted to *Les Temps modernes*; I received a letter of acceptance from Claude Lanzmann, another editor of the journal. Shortly thereafter, in the summer of 1966, I arrived in Paris as a student and went eagerly looking for my article in bookstores, but to no avail. I later learned from Gorz that he had disagreed with my arguments and had refused to let the journal publish the article. I do not remember his reasons, but I do know that at that date I knew very little about Marx and Marxism, and not so much about politics either!

   The Italian influence on Gorz's politics can be seen especially in two essays reprinted in the *Critique du capitalisme quotidien*, *op. cit.*, "Au-dela du syndicat" (pp. 210–216) and "'L'occident est mur pour le communism' (*Il manifesto*)" (pp. 311–320).
5. In a letter to me dated August–September 1986, Gorz remarked that despite my criticisms of Marx, he was very prolific, and thus his writings contain lots of "loose ends," such that it is possible to use Marx against himself. "I derive great pleasure in doing this." (Françoise Gollain's essay reminded me of this passage [c.f. note 6 below].) The Sartre passage (in the 1960 edition of the *Critique de la raison dialectique*, p. 29) reads: "Il reste donc la philosophie de notre temps: il est indépassable parce que les circonstances qui l'ont engendré ne sont pas encore dépassés."
6. An expanded edition of this volume was published in 2012 (Paris: Éditions la Découverte). Françoise Gollain published *André Gorz, pour une pensée de l'écosocialisme* (Paris: Le passage clandestine, 2014); and André Häger will finish publishing his doctoral thesis on Gorz completed at the beginning of 2014. A biography of Gorz by Willy Gianinazzi is also underway. I should add that the IMEC does not have most of my correspondence; there is a nearly complete version of it in my archives, which are housed at the Library of the Stony Brook University, which also contains the letters of Gorz, often with handwritten supplementary reflections.
7. In a word, Gorz's "unforgiveable" sin was to have treated Dorine as a dependent object—a Scottish woman in Lausanne, often sick, with few friends, mastering poorly the language, who would be crushed were he not to choose to remain with her—while he remained the active subject. "Who was I, when I wrote those lines?" The *Lettre* restores their life together;

one could say that the "I" of the existentialist who wrote *The Traitor* shows itself as a "we."

8. Mallet, who was killed in an accident in 1973, was a much more direct political actor than was Gorz. For example, his break with the PCF did not take place in 1956, but, as he explained to me, it came only in reaction to the incapacity of the party to mount a *political* reaction to De Gaulle's return to power in 1958. C.f., my Preface to Serge Mallet, *Essays on the New Working Class*, edited by Dick Howard and Dean Savage (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1975), pp. 3–14.
9. I was surprised that the new material did not refer to the Soviet invasion that put an end to the Prague Spring, although it does criticize the politics of Leninism and those of the French CP. In the conclusion added to *Réforme et révolution* Gorz published an outline of the nature and functions of a new revolutionary party… which had been written in 1966. This became another aspect of our disagreements. In a letter from 2003, after I had sent him *The Specter of Democracy*, which returns to this theme, he stresses three points that we share: writing in 3 languages; the importance of the idea of immanent critique; and that we are determined to denounce antipolitics. But, after praising my critique of "really existing socialism" he adds that for his part, his major concern is the critique of neo-liberal antipolitics.
10. The interview, "L'homme est un être qui a à se faire ce qu'il est," was published in the original German in the *Gewerkschaftliche Monatshefte* in January 1984. Gorz sent me a copy, which is either lost or in my Archives. The French translation appeared in *Autogestions*, and is reprinted in *André Gorz. Un penseur pour le XXIe siècle*, Christophe Fourel, editor (La Découverte, 2012). At the outset of the interview, Gorz explains: "Je me vois comme un philosophe naufragé qui, à travers des essais en apparence politiques ou philosophiques, essaie de faire passer en contrebande des réflexions originellement philosophiques." (p. 250) It should be noted, in addition, that so far as I know, Gorz never reprinted "Détruire l'université" in collections of his work. Another similar inconsistency, with perhaps similar motivations, is seen in the brief temptation of Third Worldism expressed in the short letter "Au camarade Che Guevera," published in *la Casa de las Americas* in Havana in early 1968, and reprinted in Fourel, ed., *op. cit.*
11. As mentioned earlier, when he had become well known, Gorz published "the thing" under the title *Fondements pour une morale* (Paris: Galillée, 1977). In his new Introduction, he explains that much of the theory presented in *The Traitor* and in *La morale de l'histoire* had been elaborated in those previously unpublished pages. In a conversation he said that he was certain that Sartre had not read the entire manuscript. He had told Gorz to send it to Jean Hypolitte, the translator of Hegel's *Phénoménologie de l'Esprit*, who told him

that there was certainly material in the manuscript for an article (sic!) in a philosophy journal.

12. Gorz's use of these American sources should be compared with the origins in the research program developed by the Congress for Cultural Freedom. (C.f., "From Anti-Communism to Anti-Totalitarianism," Chap. 16, below). Gorz never suffered from the anxiety of influence that has affected too many leftists who fear to give credit to their opponents by treating with due seriousness their arguments.
13. One difference between Gorz's reading of Sartre and my own turns around the problem of the status and role of this Third party. He doesn't seem to object to its revolutionary role; what worries him are the alienated and bureaucratic consequences once the group has come to power. My critique of Sartre stressed more on the antipolitical logic by which the Sartrean dualism is only apparently overcome by the group in fusion. In other words, my critique is political whereas Gorz's stresses the personal and social costs of antipolitics. On Sartre, c.f., my discussion in *The Marxian Legacy* (2nd edition, London: Macmillan, 1988).
14. C.f., *Adieux au prolétariat. Au delà du socialisme* (Paris: Galilée, 1980).
15. This is clear in their two early volumes, *Écologie et politique* (1975) and *Écologie et liberté* (1977). For this reason, I will not devote here a separate discussion to Gorz's ecological theories (which cannot be separated from his political and philosophical concerns).
16. This theme, which becomes increasingly important for Gorz, was first clearly articulated in the volume that is a complement to the *Adieux*, *Les chemins du paradis* (1983), which announces the "revolution of free time" as creating "true wealth" on the basis of the advances of technology. However attractive this hope for salvation through technology, the criticism of Gorz by Daniel Mothé, a former member of the group "Socialisme ou Barbarie" should be noted. He argues in *L'utopie du temps libre* (Paris: Éditions Esprit, 1997), that this "utopia" can be only a "path to paradise" for those who have sufficient wealth to buy the contents of the time freed by the new social wealth. As a result, social divisions will be increased by the new technology without attacking the major problem of our time which is unemployment and precarity of life conditions.
17. This is another long-lasting theme of discussion in our correspondence. I referred to it above in the account of the phenomenology of *The Traitor*. In the present context, it refers to Habermas's actualization of a Weberian theory of modernity defined by the autonomization and differentiation of distinct spheres of life. The political, like the family or the legal system, becomes increasingly autonomous and therefore, it is implied, increasingly rational. The problem, as Gorz stresses, and Weber knew, is that this rationality remains formal.

18. What Gorz meant by "the political," and its relation to actual political choices, evolved with his work. In the essay that he dedicated to me, "L'écologie politique entre expertocratie et autolimitation" (in *Ecologica*: Paris: Galilée, 2008), he added a footnote referring to the Preface to the second edition of my *From Marx to Kant*, praised *The Marxian Legacy*, and noted that he "gave a related definition in the last chapter and the postface to *Adieux au prolétariat*." I will refer in a moment to the idea of judgment that was another theme of our exchanges.
19. The citations are from *Adieux*, *op. cit.*, pp. 166 and 167.
20. *Ibid.*, *p. 169.*
21. C.f. *L'immatériel. Connaissance*, *valeur et capital* (Paris: Galilée, 2003). Dedicated this time: "Grâce à Dorine, sans qui rien ne serait." His handwritten dedication in my copy calls the book an "Auseinandersetzung avec l'idée de Knowledge Society."
22. The letter, dated November 7, 1990, is cited in Philippe van Parijs, "De la sphère autonome à l'allocation universelle," reprinted in C. Fourel, *op. cit.*, *pp.* 163–177. My translation.
23. The fact that justice, and values more generally, are pre-reflexive does not mean that they exist in the temporal mode of a past that can guide the present. It is only in the third part of the *Fondements* that Gorz examines the practical-ethical values that concern the future praxis and projects of the *pour-soi*. But the passage among the three domains (or "attitudes") that structure the analysis is not linear; there is no need for a congruence between the "vital attitudes" that naturalize existence for example in the case of fanaticism, resignation, or the cult of force or worship of the race; the "aesthetic attitudes" that derealize the real in the behavior of the gambler, the adventurer, the poet, or the mystic; and the "moral conversion" through the kind of self-elucidation practiced in *Le Traître*. None of these "attitudes" suffices on its own; the lower cannot determine the higher, but the higher has no value if it is not realized.
24. My stress. The essay was originally published in *EcoRev*, nr. 28, automne 2007; it is reprinted in Gorz's posthumous collection, *Écologica* (Paris: Galilée, 2008), pp. 25–42.
25. Gorz suggests that he is "not at all certain that the contradiction between physiological age and social age can be eliminated in industrial societies" because these societies need 16 years to form people who can run their machines and administer their institutions. He adds in this context that "adolescence" is something that didn't exist in other societies.
26. In an aside, Gorz suggests that the only social category that escapes from this heteronomy is "those internal emigrés, impoverished students." (400) He doesn't develop this thought, which can be seen as another variant of his quest for a free subject capable of translating the principles of justice

into reality, a replacement for the proletariat or working class or the non-class of non-workers… It could be read as anticipating the revolts of May 1968. It would also provide one explanation of his *cri de coeur*: Destroy the University!

27. The draft manuscript is published in Christophe Fourel, *op. cit.*, pp. 268–274.
28. C.f., the two page testimony "Au comarade Che Guevera," in Fourel, *op. cit.*, pp. 246–47.
29. Patrick Viveret, "De Kay à Dorine, penser les enjeux émotionnels de la transformation sociale," in Christophe Fourel, *op. cit.*, pp. 39–58.
30. Gorz drops any reference to Merleau-Ponty after the latter's quarrel and rupture with Sartre, to whom Gorz remained unfailingly loyal. When his German interviewers suggest (in "L'homme est un être qui a à se faire ce qu'il est," op. cit.) that some people see the *Adieux* as also an adieu to Sartre, but gently modify the claim by saying that perhaps it is only a break with Sartre's "idea" of politics, Gorz reacts defensively. Of course they had disagreements, he says; in the 1950s concerning the global import of Algerian nationalism, and particularly after 1969 when Sartre became too sympathetic to the Maoists and their "typically populist, sectarian and dogmatic doctrine," which seemed to Gorz "a resurgence of Stalinism." But, he insists, Sartre never prevented him from publishing in *Les Temps modernes*; and indeed, because Sartre "was fundamentally antipolitical" political differences could not lead to the breaking off of friendships. (Fourel, *op. cit.*, p. 255)
31. C.f., *op. cit.*, pp. 550, 556, for example.

CHAPTER 8

Citizen Habermas

1 The "Short Political Writings" of the German Philosopher

The Preface to volume XII of Habermas's *Kleine Politische Schriften* ("Short Political Writings") announces that this will be probably (*voraussichtlich*) the last of the series.[1] Twelve, an even dozen, rounds out the collection of five decades of his interventions in German political and cultural life. It's true that Habermas has passed his 85th year, but he continues to be active, to travel and to engage with philosophical and political questions of the day. Be that as it may, Habermas took the occasion of this 12th volume to reflect on the status of his political interventions—essays and articles in journals, lectures before large publics as well as speeches on receiving prizes (or congratulating their recipients with pointed while elegant *laudatios*), as well as book reviews and interviews. The first four volumes of the series (I–IV), published in 1980, brought together contributions written already in the 1950s; those published in volume XII date from as recently as 2013. It's quite a span! The "shortness" of these broad and varied interventions by a philosopher known for his often prolix volumes subtracts nothing from their pertinence.

As I read this last volume in the series, *Im Sog der Technokratie* (2013) I recalled the pleasure with which I'd read the earlier collections. I went back to my bookshelves for a closer look. I found

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D. Howard, *Between Politics and Antipolitics*, Political Philosophy
and Public Purpose, DOI 10.1057/978-1-349-94915-1_8

references I had forgotten and echoes of debates that were of burning actuality (such as the dispute among German historians about the sense of the Nazi past). Other echoes have lost their immediate referent (the two Germanys were unified from above) but the way in which Habermas framed his intervention has gained pertinence (as in the essays on "Constitutional Patriotism—in General and in its Specificity"). There are too many intuitions, some more convincing than others, brought together within the monochromatic covers of the series (some red, some green, others purple, or orange) to take them up individually. Rather, I will use some of them, not necessarily the most profound ones, to give a sense of the way in which the philosopher is more than the Master whose philosophical works have been translated into so many languages.[2] The philosopher came of age as the German Federal Republic was being born. As with that republic, his own self-understanding as a citizen in a democratic republic had to incorporate its double past: that of the Holocaust, of course, but also the older positive legacy of the *Aufklärung* that had briefly taken form in the Weimar Republic. Habermas's interventions during the past five decades show that the path was not predetermined—neither his nor that of the German republic.

Habermas's Preface to the "probably" final volume of the "Small Political Writings" does not pretend to reveal the relation that might exist between his diverse political interventions and the grand theory that he has constantly enriched through synthetic works such as *The Theory of Communicative Action*, or *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*. The idea that a philosophical theory, whose claims are universal, could be somehow applied to the particular challenges of political life makes no sense. It may be more useful to recall that Habermas was a journalist before becoming a professional philosopher, and it is not surprising that the prose of the "Short Political Writings" is more easily digested than the sweeping vision of the synthetic major works. If Habermas insisted on publishing these interventions in a single series, it is worth reading them as he suggests, rather than reading them as the "praxis" that is the result of the more systematic theory that Habermas develops in his philosophical texts, as is often the case in the scholarly literature.[3] This way of proceeding leads me to suggest that the guiding insight, if not the philosophical foundation, of Habermas's political thought is the idea of a *republican democracy*—a notion to which I will return in the course of the text.

2 Difficult Relations with the Radical Left

Habermas reminds the reader that the first four volumes of the *Small Political* Writings were published in order to counter "insinuations… in the overheated university environment" of the times. He chose to publish them under a separate and distinct title in order to underline the distinction between the role of the professor dedicated to his theory and the intellectual engaged in his society. He admits that in the polemical political climate of the new Federal Republic, his critics did not always appreciate his intentions. That is why his distinction was not just methodological; it was also a doubly self-protective device. Many of those who criticized and continue to criticize his political positions—which is of course legitimate—attempt at the same time to disqualify his philosophical work.[4] This was true not only of his conservative critics but also of many former allies on the Left, whose criticisms are more important for understanding the implications of Habermas's political thought.

As a member of the second generation of the Frankfurt School, Habermas was a man of the Left moving between social critique and political reform. As the young author of two well-received books—*Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* (1962) and *Theorie und Praxis* (1963)—Habermas took over the chair of Max Horkheimer at the Institute for Social Research in 1964. In 1968, he proposed a philosophical synthesis, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, that reinterpreted the premises of Critical Theory. A year later, in 1969, he published a collection of his political essays (some co-authored with colleagues) under the title *Protestbewegung und Hochschulreform* (1969). His goal was to document the contributions of the student protest movements of the 1960s to the necessary reform of the German university, which had remained caught in conservative and mandarin traditions. But at the same time, Habermas criticized the increasingly radicalized left that, in the wake of the "events" of 1968 in France, wanted to go beyond reforms to realize a democracy that was not merely formal. His controversial speech at the national Congress of the SDS in Berlin in early June 1968 denounced what he called "the pseudo-revolution and its children." Going further, he warned against the danger of a "left-wing fascism."

These criticisms were taken badly by the left which saw in them not so much a critique as a betrayal by one of their own. Their attitude and goals are clear in a book that was published at the time as a pirate edition (a frequent practice in those years[5]). Titled *Arbeit*, *Erkenntnis*, *Fortschritt*, three concepts that expressed the radical intent of the far left, the volume brought together 450 pages of essays by the young Habermas written between 1954 and 1959.[6] Although the copyright is in Habermas' name, the brief and unsigned Introduction explains that these essays were no doubt not republished by their author because he was no longer the man of the left that he had once been. For him, "reflection on praxis has become… praxis itself." A bit later the Introduction criticizes Habermas for having abandoned social analysis in favor of psychoanalysis. What he should have done, his former comrades argued, was to abandon his abstract criticism of capitalism in favor of a true anti-imperialist praxis.[7]

I recall these early writings and the sentiment of betrayal felt by certain young leftists seeking a theory of praxis because their criticism is based on what I call an *antipolitical* vision that seeks to transcend the political framework of the young German republic. Truly radical praxis had to be immediate, just as true democracy was based on immediate participation by all. Habermas, on the other hand, recognized the danger of such a reduction of the political institutions of the republic to simple participatory democracy. But he insisted that his choice for republican institutions did not imply reconciliation with the existing conservative society; rather, it preserved the space for actions aiming at further liberation. This basic political insight was given a more theoretical foundation in the philosophical work that appeared in this same year, 1968—*Knowledge and Human Interest*—which distinguished between a scientific theory that seeks to grasp a world external to it; an hermeneutic reflection that seeks to understand the Other; and an analysis based on an emancipatory interest. Habermas's examples of this emancipatory motivation were critical sociology … and, *pace* his left critics, psychoanalysis! Each of these types of knowledge is for itself legitimate, but none can replace any of the others in a totalization that, analogous to the idea of radical democracy, leaves nothing outside itself. The task, rather, is to articulate the relation of the three types, and in so doing, to carve out the proper place of the political. In that way, the refusal of the totalizing antipolitics of the radical left could be given a positive form.

3 On the Political Foundations of the German Federal Republic

The "Short Political Writings" offer illustrations of Habermas's political thought without attempting to give a formal definition of the political. Two short speeches honoring the sociologist and liberal politician Ralf

Dahrendorf, delivered 20 years apart and reprinted in different volumes, give a sense of what is at issue. The two men differ from one another in both philosophical and political choices. Dahrendorf's theories are based on Karl Popper's insights and his politics are those of German liberalism (he was a member of the Free Democratic Party (FDP)). But both of them were born in the same year, 1929. That accidental date turns out to be an important marker in the emergence of Citizen Habermas.

In the first *laudatio*, Habermas praises the sociologist as *Der Erste*, ("the first") to explain to post-war Germans that because social conflict is inherent in society it is necessary to invent institutions that permit it to be expressed. Although Habermas rejects the recourse to market institutions adopted by the Liberal–Democrat, he expresses his admiration for the critical "passion" animating Dahrendorf's pathbreaking study, *Society and Democracy in Germany* (1965). His analysis, says Habermas, was "probably the most important essay for the formation of the mentality" of the young German republic that finally liberated itself from its authoritarian past.

Twenty years later, in Oxford, Habermas returns to that "passion" of Dahrendorf. The most recent work of the German sociologist, now a British Lord, drew from his reflections on his life's path the idea of a post-heroic ethics in the spirit of Erasmus. Habermas stresses a chapter in Dahrendorf's book that recalls a then popular novel by Ernst Glaeser called "Generation 1902." The novel describes the fate of those who were called "the unconditionals" whose love of absolute liberty led them in spite of themselves to become supporters of totalitarianism. While that generation of 1902, like the Germans born in 1929, came of age at the end of a terrible war and a defeat, they failed to reestablish the nation. On the other hand, the generation of 1929—that of Habermas and Dahrendorf—had known totalitarianism. For it the choice of reason over passion seemed self-evident. But if Dahrendorf had been, in effect, "the first" to recognize this, Habermas asks himself whether Dahrendorf could honestly affirm today that "happy is the nation that has no need for heroes"? The citation of this well-known phrase from Brecht's play "Galileo" suggests that Habermas's model of engagement is not so "Erasmian" as that of the now British Lord.

The ambiguity implied by Habermas's question disappeared from the subtitle to the version of this speech published by the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. The editors knew that their subtitle applied also to Habermas: "he lives, thinks and writes on the basis of the experience of a generation for which it was impossible not to take a position concerning the rupture of

1945." That imperative explains the tone as well as the themes of many of the interventions in the 12 volumes of the "Short Political Writings." As Habermas's own Preface to the twelfth volume points out that "one finds in these writings significant traits of the history of the mentality of the Federal Republic during the past fifty years." Thanks to the German tradition of the "feuilleton," Habermas's interventions had an influence on the evolution of this mentality.

Two more incidental illustrations help to set the stage. In his speech on receiving the Prize of the *Land* of Nordrhein-Westphalen in 2006, Habermas shows that he is at once embedded in the evolution of the German republic while remaining critical of its incompleteness. He recalls the dilemmas of the German left during his youth before taking up the contemporary debate on immigration.[8] At the time that he and his wife were studying in Bonn (1951–54), people didn't know about the "Nazi past" of some of their professors. That was no doubt the result of the political sensibility of the times, when ideological debate was in its infancy because concern with tradition and unity dominated over partisan divisions that could threaten the newly established West Germany. Thus, for example, Habermas recalls that his prize is given by two *Länder*, Nordrhein and Westphalen, whose unification was imposed after the war by the Four Powers that governed the defeated nation. Those Four Powers, he recalls, ruled from a castle in Petersburg, looking down on Bonn from the other side of the Rhein, whose shadow Habermas recalls from the time of his studies. It was these same rulers that, in 1948, accepted the autonomy of the new Federal Republic; and now, in this same castle, Habermas is receiving his prize. These four short paragraphs set the political stage where the partisan question of immigration can be debated, as Habermas goes on to do in his acceptance speech. Rather than follow him here, since the issue will return later in his 1995 Paulskirche speech, I will offer one final illustration that shows how the stage setting I have offered thus far is more than just window dressing.

This final anecdote adds depth to the framework offered by what I have called the political. A recent biography of Habermas defines him as part of the generation of "the 58ers" (as opposed to the generation of 1968). While Matthew Specter's distinction is useful, Habermas's own insistence on a broader generational experience avoids the temptation to reduce political thought to political experience.[9] What is striking is that the generation of 1929 includes persons as different as a right-wing politician like Helmut Kohl, a conservative political philosopher like Hermann Lübbe, the more mercurial mandarin Wilhelm Hennis, and the left-wing historians

Hans and Wolfgang Mommsen. In order to understand the unity of that generation, one has to recall the distinction between the particular politics chosen by different persons (*la politique*) and the political (*le politique*) which defines the framework within which these particular choices take place. That is why, for example, Habermas accepts Dahrendorf's description of him as "a grandson of Adenauer", part of what the sociologist calls ironically "the posthumous Adenauer Left." That ascription refers above all to the Chancellor's opening to Western values, however partial. Of course, Habermas adds, he was critical of the particular politics of the conservative Chancellor, who didn't get rid of the remnants of Nazism.[10]

4 Relations to Critical Theory…and Its Practice

If the allusion to the now forgotten forced unification of the two West German *Länder* seems anecdotal, it poses a question that is far more weighty. Habermas never offered an analysis of that other Germany born in the wake of the post-war that considered itself to be a "democratic republic." Although he had visited East Berlin as a private citizen, as opposed to some of his Western colleagues he was not invited to lecture at any East German university before the summer of 1988. Indeed, although he wished to participate in the International Hegel Conference in Moscow in 1978, he was refused an entry visa. While it is impossible to read the minds of the censors, these facts suggest that his criticism of Soviet politics had some impact, perhaps precisely because they were seen as coming from a man of the Left. But the severely anti-fascist philosopher who never let down his guard against the return of the demons of the past did not take the further step to investigate what I consider to be *the* philosophical and political question of the twentieth century: the phenomenon of totalitarianism, which is not just a temporary aberration but an accompaniment of political modernity.[11] It is not enough to suggest that belonging to that "generation '29'" immunized him against the totalitarian temptation. Even if that were true in his case, others were not so blessed—including his former allies in the student movement who succumbed to the temptation of radicalization without limits in the "leaden years" of the 1970s. To treat them as "left-wing fascists" was a denunciation, but what was needed was a critical analysis—what the Frankfurt School called an "immanent critique."

The question of totalitarianism returns in a different guise in the volume titled *Eine Art Schadensabwicklung* (volume VII, 1987). The essays in this collection are largely concerned with what was called the "Historians Dispute." Ever sensitive to threats to the new republican culture, Habermas attacked the theses of the revisionist historians whose leader was Ernst Nolte. Their claim was that Nazi fascism was only a response to the threat of Bolshevik totalitarianism, which implied that Nazism was a lesser evil, if not a case of legitimate self-defense. That interpretation whose inspiration came from Carl Schmitt hides the fact that Nazi totalitarianism was the deliberate choice of an *antipolitics.* Habermas contests not only the facts that supposedly justify the revisionist thesis; he seeks above all to uncover the political theory that underlies the argument. Beyond the deflecting of German guilt (to which the title of volume VII refers) the revisionists supported a restoration of that conservative German culture from which the post-war German republican democracy had laboriously freed itself. With support from the conservative government of Helmut Kohl, these revisionists wanted to create two new museums of German history because "who controls the past determines the future." The counterattacks by Habermas in the national press, supported by others including the historians Hans and Wolfgang Mommsen (born in 1930), not only prevented the worst but also helped awaken the conscience of a public that would have to confront directly the legacy of the past when the Wall fell in 1989. The issues raised in this "dispute of the historians" return not surprisingly in the interventions collected in 1995 in volume VIII under the title *The Normality of the Berlin Republic.*[12]

To understand the stakes at issue, the relation of Critical Theory to the political needs to be considered. The *Short Political Writings* offer a suggestive illustration. In a short celebratory speech, Habermas recalls his decision to leave Frankfurt to present his Habilitation in Marburg under the sponsorship of Wolfgang Abendroth. Habermas's differences with Max Horkheimer, who found him too much a leftist, are well known. Abendroth's politics are less familiar today. He had been an activist during the Nazi regime; after the war, he resigned a professorship in East Germany to protest Stalinism. A man of firm principle, he was expelled from the Socialist Democratic Party (SPD) in the early 1960s for protesting the party's explicit abandonment of Marxism at its 1959 Bad Godesberg convention. Shortly thereafter, the Constitutional Court declared that the former German communist party (the KPD) was an illegal organization. It was not surprising that Abendroth supported the new communist party (the DKP) which replaced it in the late 1960s (after Habermas had completed his Habilitation). In this context, Habermas decision to go to Marburg had a political significance.

Habermas's speech at Abendroth's centenary does not mention directly his itinerary; as often, Habermas situates his experience in Marburg in a broader intellectual context. He describes Abendroth as the heir to Hermann Heller, the great social-democratic jurist of the Weimar period and the most acute and persistent critic of the Nazi jurist Carl Schmitt. Habermas does not go into the details of Heller's arguments in the context of his speech since his public knew quite well their import.[13] As is often the case in the *Short Political Writings*, the anecdotes are telling. He recalls the noxious political context of the times, to which Abendroth's equanimity in the face of vicious attacks contrasted favorably. Nonetheless, continues Habermas, during dinners that he shared with the family he realized that "little Elisabeth," Abendroth's daughter, suffered from attacks while at school or the playground. Indeed, as Abendroth admitted later, he had "under-estimated" the price to be paid for his principled positions. Yet, concludes Habermas, "the simple existence of this anti- anticommunist" is a reason to celebrate his memory today.[14] Making this point in 2006, Habermas may have been thinking of his own arguments in favor of civil disobedience as a contribution to the maintenance of democracy.[15] But the critical theorist does not explain the dialectic by which the "anti" (i.e., the negation) of the anti-communism that was a de facto support for the existing regime could become the foundation of a positive vision of the political that could animate the emergence of a new left.

This problem suggests the need to return to the Critical Theory of the original Frankfurt School. Working within the Hegelian–Marxist tradition, the founders sought to bring together sociological analysis with philosophical reflection to open the path toward overcoming the alienated present by liberating its latent potentiality. This is a negation, but it is rational and positive insofar opens to a freedom that can emerge from the normative fractures within social relations. The autonomy that results is the concrete truth that had been concealed by the ideology carried by a frozen tradition that doesn't realize that it, too, has come into being and that for just that reason can be overcome. To take a well-known example, when the young Marx criticizes religion as the "opium of the people," he adds that the people do not adopt it only to console themselves for their misery (i.e., as a sort of ideology). Religion is *also* a protest against the oppression suffered in this world. It therefore does not suffice to denounce or deny religion; rather, the conditions that give rise to religion must be negated to produce positive results. In this sense, the critique of religion opens toward a rational utopia that transcends alienation.

If this schema appeared convincing in the nineteenth century, conditions have become more complicated since Marx's day. That was contention of the masters of the Frankfurt School, Adorno and Horkheimer, in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944). The Enlightenment that classical rationality was supposed to liberate through its dialectical critique had destroyed its own foundation. The modern rational subject affirms its autonomy by accommodating the forces of a capitalist system that subsumes all aspects of life under the logic of market rationality. As critique is democratized it exhausts itself; the optimistic spirit of negation is replaced by a dogged pessimism, and even conservatism, that came to characterize the late Horkheimer. This was the climate that Habermas had escaped by going to Marburg. In Horkheimer's eyes, the young assistant was too far to the left. Although Adorno resisted his colleague's wish to fire him, Horkheimer's refusal to support his Habilitation made it necessary for Habermas to go elsewhere.

As already mentioned, Habermas had made a first attempt at renewing the spirit of Critical Theory in *Knowledge and Human Interests* (1968) in which he developed the idea of distinct types of theory of which the most radical was based on a vision of emancipation. This was one reason that Habermas took the opportunity to create (with Carl Friedrich von Weizecker) an autonomous institute at Starnberg to work together with a team of younger colleagues to give concrete and empirical content to this philosophical project. The first result was *Legitimation Problems of Late Capitalism* (1973). Over the next decade, under the influence of the "linguistic turn" in analytic philosophy, he developed the premises of a new Critical Theory in the *Theory of Communicative Action* (TCA) (1981). In the place of the Marxism that had been at the basis of the first Critical Theory, Habermas developed Max Weber's theory of modernity through the application of Mead's pragmatism and Durkheim's functionalism.[16] The second volume of the TCA concludes with a chapter that proposes to define "the tasks of a critical theory of society." The *Small Political Writings* bear traces of this larger philosophical project.

During the next decade, after he had returned to university teaching at Frankfurt, Habermas proposed a new formulation of Critical Theory in *Between Facts and Norms. Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy* (1992). The problematic relation of the universal principles of republican law to the active participation of democratic citizens had been a challenge to which the history of the restored German institutions had sought to reply. Developing insights from his analysis of communicative action[17], Habermas reformulates the difficulty. He distinguishes (a) the systemic imperatives to which social facts are in part subordinate from (b) the norms by which members of the society justify their acceptance of the system. Put differently, the objective demands needed for the reproduction of a social system must be distinguished from the perspective of the life-world of the participants in that system.[18] Positive law (which is factual) is considered legitimate insofar as its elaboration does not violate the constitutional norms freely accepted by those who are subject to the law. In a democracy, these norms are "procedural"; they are the republican constitutional framework that can only be the result of a free debate. In this way, Habermas proposes a foundation that permits immanent criticism of violations of autonomy, whatever their source.[19] The Critical Theory offered in *Between Facts and Norms* is a thus a complement to the political interventions collected in the *Small Political Writings* that sought to establish and to defend a republican democracy.

It is too soon to leave the *Small Political Writings*. Habermas had returned from Starnberg to the University of Frankfurt in 1983, at a time when the need for a *practical* renewal of Critical Theory was felt strongly in Germany. The Green party entered parliament for the first time in that year, but Helmut Kohl's conservatives still led the new coalition government. Protests against the stationing of US-Pershing and Cruise missiles in Germany awoke on the left the nightmare of German militarism under the guise of the Cold War. Habermas did not address directly the unease of the moment in his first course at the university, which was the basis of the book he published the next year as *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (1984). But he was aware that the public, and particularly his students, was waiting to hear from him. He addressed these expectations in prefatory remarks to his first lecture course. Significantly, this introduction was not included in the published philosophical work; it was published in the *Small Political Writings*, where it rightly belonged, as we will see in a moment.[20]

5 THE RETURN TO FRANKFORT

Habermas begins his political introduction to the lectures with the warning that "I do not intend to follow the tradition of a school." But he immediately affirms his debt to Adorno, saying that his first initiative at the university will be to organize an international conference to celebrate the 80th anniversary of Adorno's birth. After this acknowledgment of his debt, he explains that the reason that he does not follow literally the Frankfurt tradition is because that version of Critical Theory was born from specific experiences, those of fascism and Stalinism. What is more, adds Habermas, it was born "before the incomprehensible Holocaust" (a point to which he returns in a major speech after German unification, as we will see).

The need for a renewal (rather than the abandonment) of Critical Theory is explained by the idea of a "living tradition." While it is true that a tradition lives only insofar as its founding intentions are confirmed in the light of new experiences, these intentions are not merely subjective.[21] Thus, returning to *this* university, and to *this* academic public, he hopes to rediscover the free and open debate that corresponds to the tradition of that young university which owed its origin to the support "above all of Jewish merchants and bankers." Uniquely in its time, the internal governance of the Frankfurt University explicitly forbade the exclusion of a person on the basis of race or religion. The uniqueness of these conditions in the academic culture of the times is illustrated by the case of Georg Simmel, the great sociologist who only got an academic chair in 1914 (in Strasburg, where he died in 1919). The same singularity is seen, unfortunately, in the fact that the greatest number of professors forced into emigration in 1933 also came from Frankfurt.

Why, then, did Habermas chose to devote his first course in Frankfurt to the question of "the philosophical discourse of modernity"? The choice was partly due to the new popularity of a certain "French" discourse built—in a way that was not always well understood in Germany—on Heidegger's thought.[22] And it was due partly to public expectations awakened by the Frankfurt School heritage. How could Habermas satisfy the philosophers on the one hand, and the public on the other? From the outset, he insists that no one should expect practical guidance from his lectures. German social science and philosophy had emerged from the war as they had entered it: conservative and authoritarian. It took years of theoretical and political criticism before they slowly opened to the spirit of the Enlightenment in the 1960s. That Enlightenment was above all critical; it did not preach the Good Word.

Although it is not possible to continue Critical Theory as it was, insists Habermas, its spirit cannot be abandoned because the old demons will reappear alongside the challenges of the new conditions. One has to avoid the comforting temptation of a return to what Habermas calls the "post-modern." He uses that term because the new mode is in his eyes a return to the "provincial tradition" of the pre-war university that appeared for a moment—as in his student days in Bonn—to endure after its end. With hindsight, Habermas's title appears ill-chosen. In the context of his lectures, he is referring to a reaction to the critical spirit of modernity which had finally taken hold in Germany. From this point of view, he seems to have had a presentiment of the return of past demons that would arise a few years later in the "dispute of the historians", "under the leadership of Ernst Nolte, a disciple of Heidegger."

Habermas warns against a second temptation, this time on the part of a certain "left" that claims to favor a radical democracy. In particular, he criticizes the ambiguous reactivation of "Nietzschean" motifs combined with Carl Schmitt's definition of the political as an existential choice that cannot have a rational foundation. Habermas does not stress here the political implications of Schmitt's choices during or after the war; his concern is the basic irrationality of Schmitt's definition of the political. As a remedy, Habermas's revised Critical Theory proposes a reconstruction of the history of modernity since the end of the eighteenth century based on his reading of the German *Aufklärung* in order to show how our own modernity emerges from the crossing and confrontation of theses and counter-theses. In that way he tries to show the immanent fault lines from which the demons emerge, how they are constituted, and how, in the last resort, to avoid their traps.

It is not important here to reconstruct the often debatable analyses of these lectures. Noteworthy is that in the conclusion of his introductory remarks, Habermas recalls the famous distinction between politics and science stressed by Max Weber (and repeated frequently in these *Small Political Writings*). But he does so here in order to reject the thesis drawn by some readers who insist that Weber is proposing a kind of axiological neutrality or value-freedom. Habermas of course agrees that a professor should not impose his own values *ex cathedra*. As he had stressed in explaining his return to Frankfurt, the university must be a place of free debate. But debate implies that a plurality of opinions exists, that differences are legitimate, and that arguments for their support must be produced and be open to challenge.

6 THE FOUNDATION OF THE "BERLIN REPUBLIC"

The other symbolic center of political culture in Frankfurt is the Paulskirche where in the heady days of 1848 the first German parliament voted for a republican constitution. A century later, reconstructed after the bombing and secularized, that church served the new republic as a public space to honor its values. It is there that the German book trade awards its annual Peace Prize to a national or international personage. In 2001, the prize was awarded to Habermas in a ceremony before a 1000 spectators including the president of the republic, the prime minister, and other dignitaries. The speech that Habermas delivered, under the title "Believing and Knowing" (Glauben und Wissen) is not reprinted in the *Small Political*

Writings.[23] This title recalls an essay by the young Hegel, but the fact that it was delivered a month after the events of September 11, 2001 in the USA suggests themes that are more political concerns behind it as well. For example, Habermas warns his listeners against the temptation to label all Muslims as fundamentalists, but he points also to the danger of a sort of secular crusade that has no place for faith. Habermas had already begun to take a serious interest in theological questions; they apparently are the theme of a major work still in progress. [24] For the moment, we remain with Habermas's political thought, and the republican democratic theory of the political that is its implicit foundation.

This implicit foundation was made more explicit in 1995 when Habermas addressed the public in the Paulskirche on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the surrender of the Nazi regime that marked the end of the war. How was one to talk about such an event, he asked? The year 1945 was a brutal defeat that, retrospectively and in reality, was also a liberation. How can one legitimate a liberation imposed by outside force?

In retrospect, says Habermas, the history of the Federal Republic, with its debates, confrontations, resistances, and critical demands was an apprenticeship (*Bildungsprozess*) that ultimately legitimated the foreign liberation by the establishment of a republican constitutional state that came to be willed by its citizens. This process was facilitated in the West by the geopolitical dependency within NATO imposed by the Allies, but it depended ultimately on the citizens' learning from their own experience the value of the ideals of humanism and the Enlightenment.

If the interventions collected in the *Small Political Writings* testify to Habermas's contribution to this process, the philosopher now speaking to a large public in the Paulskirche adds an element. It was necessary to free oneself from the mental blockages that prevented Germans from recognizing the unimaginable rupture in a civilized society that was the Holocaust. It was only after Auschwitz and through Auschwitz that Germans were able to understand the value of human rights and democracy. In other words, he concludes this first part of his speech, "no one can be excluded from the political community and the integrity of everyone in his otherness is worthy of equal consideration." It is no accident that this sentence recalls Habermas's praise of the internal governance of the Frankfurt University.[25]

What can be said of the liberation/unification of 1989? The process seems to Habermas in 1995 still debatable; and the results are contestable. From the point of view of a certain left, including Habermas (although he does not refer directly to himself or to his writings), unification came from above; it was imposed by a deal between governments without social input from the citizens of the Federal Republic of Germany; and it was at least in part contrary to the wishes of activists in the former German Democratic Republic. As a result, the legitimacy of the new unified state was questionable. From the side of the conservative nationalists, this led to the temptation to interpret unification as heralding the return of those old and honored German mandarin traditions that the post-war conservatives had tried to restore. The 50 years of the Federal Republic appear to be simply a now closed parenthesis. Now a revisionist right can try to reactivate Carl Schmitt's above-mentioned idea of an "international civil war" that supposedly began in 1917 with the Bolshevik Revolution and the Nazi reaction to it to claim that the conflict had finally ended. From this perspective, the finally unified Germany would find itself on the good side of history; the parenthesis of the Federal Republic's republican democracy and its openly conflictual culture is closed, the nation is again one and united as historical continuity is reestablished.

These attempts to reestablish a conservative hegemony in the unified Germany neglect the fact that the state is weakened in a globalized world in which its ability to satisfy social needs is limited. There is a danger that a new nationalism may emerge, perhaps even the return of an imperial mission that threatens the successful implantation of democracy and liberal rights that were validated by the history of the Federal Republic after 1945. It was these successes, argues Habermas, that permitted the struggles for the creation of a social state where reforms of education, family, justice, and the protection of private life—including even the still incomplete but real integration of immigrants (to which he had referred in his 2006 speech on receiving the prize from Nordrhein-Westphalen). Those democratic and social reforms permitted by the now established republican institutions, argues Habermas, will limit the potential harm that could arise from identitary nationalism. In other words, there was not an absolute break in 1945 followed by a new and immaculate departure. It was the creation of republican institutions that permitted the slow development, against resistances, and in the face of returns toward the past, that permitted the emergence of a democratic culture. But if it is true that the political framework that permitted those advances is threatened by globalization, the critical dialectic reminds Habermas that it would be wrong to neglect the fact that globalization opens also a new terrain that this democratic culture must make its own.[26]

In effect, the globalized world opens toward ambiguous, but dialectical, possibilities. On the one hand, there emerge multiple networks that open new wealth to individuals and to society. On the other hand, the loss of state autonomy affects the liberty of its citizens, limiting their access to the potential new wealth. In the neo-liberal world, the citizen becomes a simple participant in the market where he seeks his own advantage. The upshot is a dialectic that recalls the first Frankfurt School while taking into account the new social and political conditions. But the critical sociologist goes further than his more philosophical predecessors. The present situation is darkened by the emergence of an "underclass" that does not benefit from the victories of social state that was made possible by the republican institutions and their democratic results. That class of outsiders creates social tensions that could produce blind and destructive revolts. It creates ghettos, and with them comes the moral erosion of society expressed by a new kind of reactionary whose claims are at once defensive and aggressive. The carrier of this new threat is the middle classes themselves, whose votes delegitimate the democratic rule of law. Although this was written two decades ago, the threat Habermas described remains actual!

What can Critical Theory propose in these conditions? Habermas returns to the theme of his earlier Paulskirche presentation. Above all it is necessary to defend (and to understand) the results of 1945, whose true importance appears only from the perspective of the challenges of 1989. Above all, it is necessary to defend the republic, that is, the framework that defines the political. The threat comes first from the ideological pretentions of the conservative right. Its appeal to "the self-consciousness of the nation" and its demand for a return to the "normality" of the national state would, however, only replace one dilemma by another. If 1989 is a crucial date in German history, concludes Habermas, it stands only as an illustration of what should *not* be done. The year 1989 will only become a happy date when the errors of the unification process will have been put into perspective by the lessons of 1945. *That*, in effect, is the lesson that cuts across all of the *Small Political Writings*. But Habermas doesn't rest on his laurels. The speech at the Paulskirche does not conclude with self-satisfaction.

The transfer of the capital of Germany from Bonn to Berlin which was voted by the parliament in 1994 was supposed to symbolize the finally realized unification of the nation.[27] But the "Berlin republic" will be less autonomous than the former "Bonn republic" because paradoxically it will no longer be able to subordinate itself to the Western alliance in order to tame its inner demons not only on the right but also, implicitly, on the left. It will have to learn to act as a partner in the European Union, and it will no longer be able to take pride in its Deutschmark in order to hide its national ambitions. It is now in Strasburg and in Brussels that it will have to affirm its role as an equal partner. Freed from the obligations imposed by Cold War alliances, it will be able to propose for itself longer term goals that will give new and positive significance to the globalized world. It will have to understand that the networks that seemed to limit the sovereignty of the traditional national state also open up dialectically to an infinity of new opportunities. These openings can now be exploited, concludes Habermas, because the mental blockages imposed by neo-liberal as well as traditional national and nationalist ideology have been overcome. That, finally, is the perspective opened by the imposed unification of 1989. It remains for Germans to assume this new situation, just as they had learned to benefit from the paradoxical liberation of 1945, which also was imposed from outside.

7 A New Phase Opens

The reader of the more recent volumes of the *Short Political Writings* will see that Habermas continues and enlarges the task described in the 1995 Paulskirche speech. As he predicted, there have been reversals that have to be fought; problems such as immigration or the emergence of an underclass that he predicted have become more acute; and yet the citizen philosopher continues to explore the networks that have opened. It would be vain and fastidious to try to enter into the details of a thinker who remained an active participant in political life during the two decades that followed the 1995 speech. I have alluded to some of the new directions, concerning the place of both religion and belief, the European Union, and the new geopolitical role of a united Germany now well established in the “Berlin Republic.”

I have concluded this presentation with the suggestive analogy of 1945 and 1989. It is tempting to think that the analogy could be updated so that 1989 becomes the starting point and the model of success while the future constitution of a united Europe represents the open question for the future. The analogy suggests that the challenge of creating a republican democracy in Europe will be the measure of the success of German unification. Just as the challenges of 1989 cast light on the successes in the years after 1945, so the challenges of European democracy will be the (future) measure by which to evaluate the unification.

I do not want to conclude with speculation. As I said at the outset, I have tried to describe here the path of the citizen behind the philosopher. This path helps to clarify also the understanding of the philosophical works of the heir to the Frankfurt School whose interventions continue to provide nourishment to contemporary debates.

NOTES

1. All of these volumes have been published by Suhrkamp Verlag. I will refer to their German titles, publication dates, and volume number in the series. Since the texts are usually brief, I will not indicate page numbers when quoting. All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated. As indicated above, I reject that kind of reductionism.
2. I wrote this essay originally in French because most of these "small" works have not been translated there. More have been published in English by Polity Press, but they are grouped by topic, which supposes that these political interventions are the expression of a systematic theory.
3. As Roman Schmitt suggested to me, Kant too separated his more popular writings (published in the *Berliner Monatsschrift* from the heavy lifting needed to work through the more technical accounts of his three *Critiques*).
4. Admittedly, the classic distinction is difficult to maintain. For example, in volume X, *Der gespaltene Westen* (2004), the reader encounters 80 dense pages devoted to "constitutionalism and international law" which form part of his discussion of "the Kantian project and the divided West." Similarly, in volume XI, *Ach, Europa* (2008), the philosopher devotes some 60 pages to the analysis of the relation between empirical research and normative theory under the generic title, "Does Democracy still have an Epistemic Dimension"? In addition, the distinction often disappears in interviews, where questions and answers come together and mutually deepen one another. I will return to this question when I treat below the presuppositions of Critical Theory.
5. I have a number of these in my shelves; for example, a pirate edition of the nine volumes of the Frankfurt School's pre-war journal, the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, as well as a copy of the *Dialektik der Aufklärung* by Adorno and Horkheimer whose republication had been refused by the authors. At another level, I find Wilhelm Reich's short-lived journal, *Sex-Pol, Zeitschrift für Politische Psychologie und Sexualökonomie* (1934), and—in a more practical vein—a shirt-pocket-sized edition of Reich's 1932 pamphlet, *Der Sexuelle Kampf der Jugend*.
6. It was published in Amsterdam by the Verlag de Munter, Schwarze Reihe Nr. 10, n.d.
7. Other criticisms from the disappointed left were less categorical, as is evident in a collection published in 1968 which indicates its desire for dialogue by republishing his critical text, "Die Schein-Revolution und ihre

Kinder." C.f., *Die Linke antwortet Jürgen Habermas* (Frankfurt am Main: Europaïsche Verlagsanstalt, 1968). Another criticism from the same period shows that the Marxist–Stalinist orthodoxy that dominated East German communism maintained a certain legitimacy with the left of the times. C.f., *Die "Frankfurter Schule" im Lichte des Marxismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Marxistische Taschenbucher, 1970). The essays in that volume were first presented at a meeting organized by an institute financed by the East Germans to celebrate the centenary of Lenin's birth.

8. The title of his speech promises an analysis of the politics of immigration, an issue that is crucial to a nation that had celebrated its racial homogeneity not so long ago. The passages that I will cite here set the stage for his concrete arguments which, for the present concern, are not important. C.f., "Europe and its Immigrants" in volume XI, *Ach, Europa* (2008).
9. C.f., Matthew G. Specter, *Habermas, An Intellectual Biography* (Cambridge University Press, 2010). I do not think that one can reduce Habermas's thought to a response to the political questions of his time, as Specter tends to do. Specter's thesis is set out clearly in his first chapter, "The Making of a 58er. Habermas's Search for a Method." He rejects those interpretations that portray Habermas as passing from "radicalism to resignation," stressing the fundamental breakthrough that came with Habermas's theory of the public sphere (1962). Specter's book is most useful for its discussion of the constitutional and institutional history of the young Federal Republic.Another extremely valuable study is A. Dirk Moses, *German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,2007) which situates Habermas within the intellectual context of his times.
10. C.f., "Die Hypotheken der Adenauerschen Restauration" reprinted in volume VIII, *Die Normalität einer Berliner Republik* (1995).
11. It is significant that Habermas did not reprint in the "Short Political Writings" the long interview that he did with Adam Michnik and Adam Krzeminski whose translation was published in *Die Zeit* (December 17, 1993) under the title "Mehr Demut, weiniger Illusionen." This is where he mentions his first visit to the GDR in 1988. Michnik, one of the leaders of the "Solidarnosc" movement criticizes Habermas for not having thought through the problem of "Stalinism." Habermas replies that he had criticized Stalinist politics, but Michnik insists on the theoretical question. When Habermas points to his participation in the critical tradition of "Western Marxism," Michnik refuses to abandon his questioning: "give me names," he replies. The invocation of Gramsci doesn't satisfy the Polish critic. Habermas finally admits that he never tried to theorize totalitarianism (even though he often cites the work of Hannah Arendt). In the end, it becomes clear that it is the Holocaust, more than Nazism, that for Habermas is the original sin from which the German republic must purify itself. I will return to this point below.

12. C.f., above all "Was bedeutet 'Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit' heute" (i.e., after 1989). From another point of view, c.f. the sober, more "scientific" testimony of the professor at the Enquete-Kommision of the federal parliament, which was supposed to be a neutral political space outside the rough-and-tumble of politics.
13. Habermas criticizes Schmitt frequently and vehemently. In the present context, he is referring to the constitutional debates in the 1950s that opposed Abendroth to Ernst Forsthoff, a Schmitt disciple, concerning the constitutional legitimacy of the social state, whose welfare provisions the right-wing jurist denounced as "socialist" because they were social. More broadly, Habermas denounces the irrationalist foundation of Schmitt's theory of the political, a temptation that had affected certain leftists during Weimar (most famously Walter Benjamin). C.f., for example, "Die Schrecken der Autonomie. Carl Schmitt auf Englisch), in *Eine Art Schadensabwicklung*, *op. cit.* C.f., also, in the context of the debate concerning German reunification, "Carl Schmitt in der politischen Geistesgeschichte der Bundesrepublik," in *Die Normalität einer Berliner Republik*, *op. cit.*
14. The speech is reprinted under the title "Der Hermann Heller der frühen Bundesrepublik. Wolfgang Abendroth zum 100. Geburtstag," in *Ach, Europa* (volume XI, 2008). In a later text, cited by Müller-Doohm in *Jürgen Habermas. Eine Biographie* (2014), Habermas writes that "the intellectual leaders of the old regime…—with a few exceptions—had come through the de-nazification with no troubles. They felt assured against criticism and saw no reason for self-criticism. Personal and intellectual [geistigen] continuities were preserved from daylight by a repressive anti-communism… The anti-anticommunism that we opposed to the troubling elements of the Adenauer period were met by the other side with the accusation of 'totalitarian' thought."
15. C.f., especially, "Ziviler Ungehorsam—Testfall für den demokratischen Rechtsstaat" in *Die Neue Unübersichtlichkeit* (volume V, 1985).
16. Habermas does not restrict himself to reformulations of the classics. The *Small Political Writings* contain portraits, reviews, and discussions of contemporary figures. C.f., for example, the essays on Dewey, Rorty, and Brandom that are brought together under the heading of "American Pragmatism and German Philosophy: Three reviews," in *Zeit der Übergänge* (volume IX, 2001), as well as the two essays on Rorty in *Ach, Europa*, *op. cit.* Note also that Habermas has published his more strictly theoretical essays on these contemporaries in a separate series under the title *Nachmetaphysiches Denken* (Frankfurt, 1988). The recently published second volume of that series (2012) treats issues that arise in Habermas's later work on law and his more recent essays on religion.

17. The suggestion that a theory of modern law must go hand in hand with an understanding of democracy can be seen as a theoretical formulation of the basic insights of republican democracy that are at work in the political writings. This is not the place to look more closely at its relation to the earlier sociological account in *Legitimation Crisis* (1973).
18. C.f., the discussion of these issues by André Gorz in Chap. 7.
19. This is the context in which civil disobedience finds its place in a democracy. I have described in some detail Habermas's *philosophical* contribution from the perspective of Hegelian Marxism in "Law and Political Culture," which appeared in the double issue of the *Cordozo Law Review* (volume 17, Nrs. 4–5, March 1996, pp. 1391–1429). In his reply to his critics, Habermas found that I made too much of his theory as philosophical. In a later essay, I returned to the text in a more political context in "Habermas's Reorientation of Critical Theory Toward Democratic Theory" published in *The Specter of Democracy*, *op. cit*., 2002).
20. C.f., "Bemerkungen zu Beginn einer Vorlesung" in *Die Neue Unübersichtlichkeit*, *op. cit*., (1985). Habermas insists once again here that the claims of a philosophical theory, which are universal, cannot be applied simply or immediately to political conditions, which are always particular.
21. Habermas returns to this argument in the interview "Critical Theory and the University of Frankfurt," in *Eine Art Schadensabwicklung* (volume VI, 1987). He insists that "a research tradition remains alive only when its founding intentions show their validity in the light of new experience."
22. Although Derrida is frequently criticized in Habermas's text (particularly in an excursus on the difference between philosophy and literature), the two thinkers came to respect one another as time went on. Habermas published to celebrations of Derrida in *Ach*, *Europa*, *op. cit*. (volume XI, 2008): "How to reply to the ethical question: Derrida and Religion," and "The lucidity of Derrida. A final salute."
23. It was published as a special edition of prize essays. The major theses of the speech are summarized by Peter Gordon, "What Hope Remains," in *The New Republic*, December 14, 2011: http://www.newrepublic.com/article/books-and-arts/magazine/98567/jurgen-habermas-religion-philosophy.
24. Habermas's dialogue with then Cardinal Ratzinger, later Pope Benedict, was published separately as *The Dialectics of Secularization*: *On Reason and Religion*. The political themes are taken up in the interview "A Discussion on God and the World," in *Zeit der Übergänge*, *op. cit*. (volume IX, 2001).
25. The stress on the role of the Holocaust marks a difference with the first generation of the Frankfurt school, whose "living experience" had been marked by the experience of Nazi totalitarianism.
26. Habermas adds here that the absence of a similar republican culture prevents the European Union from giving itself a constitution. He admits that

this perspective could seem utopian, but he adds that the globalization of the world pushes nations in this direction. In the period after this speech of 1995, Habermas has attempted to describe and define the empirical and normative conditions of the possibility—and the concrete forms—that such a constitution could adopt. Some of his developing analyses are found in volumes X, XI, and XII of the *Small Political Writings*. I neglect them here since the book in which Habermas has most recently tried to synthesize his vision, *Zur Verfassung Europas* (2011) is deliberately not included in these *Small Political Writings* but bears the simple subtitle: *Ein Essay*, which suggests that his attempt at a new direction is still a work in progress.

27. Habermas was writing at the moment when the, hotly debated, transfer of the capital was voted. The fear of many on the left was that the symbolism of a transfer from the provincial ambiance of the old capital in Bonn to the old imperial capital of Berlin, whose location is closer to Moscow than to Paris, could mean the renewal of the nationalist right-wing tradition. The fact that the title of volume VIII speaks of the "normality" of the Berlin republic suggests that Habermas is more optimistic than at the time of the Paulskirche speech.

CHAPTER 9

Keeping the Republic: Reading Arendt's on Revolution After the Fall of the Berlin Wall

Democracy won the Cold War by default. The Berlin Wall seemed simply to collapse, its authority dissolved, its legitimacy faded, its power shriveled. There was no revolutionary act; the conflicts of the past just faded away, almost before anyone was aware that they had gone.[1] The once-dominant ruling communist parties and still more their ideologies were discredited seemingly over night. But a revolution without revolutionaries left a political space without participants. As a result, triumphant democracy has become a threat to itself. It acts before it thinks. Alone on the political stage, it runs the classical risk of *pleonaxia*, overreaching. From the other side, so to speak, the Bush administration's attempt to impose democracy world-wide threatened to destroy its foundations at home by its so-called "Patriot Act," and the creation of the extra-territorial camp at Guantanamo. But many of the critics of what they saw as another round of "imperialist" adventurism fail to take seriously the very real evils that the American crusade seeks to eradicate. The democratic warriors have a valid point when they oppose tyrants like Saddam Hussein, but they cannot claim that their leftist critics are therefore anti-democratic. If democracy "won" the Cold War, what does its victory mean? These questions provide the background for a rereading of Hannah Arendt's *On Revolution*, a book that tried to understand the uniqueness of the American form of democracy, the kind of revolution that was at its origin, and the spirit which it bequeathed to contemporary Americans.

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D. Howard, *Between Politics and Antipolitics*, Political Philosophy and Public Purpose, DOI 10.1057/978-1-349-94915-1_9

The 1962 Introduction to *On Revolution*, written at the height of the Cold War, when John F. Kennedy had campaigned on the basis of a supposed "missile gap" with the Soviet Union, calls attention to the unique relation of war and revolution in the years after World War II. Because war has become impossible in the nuclear age, "those who still put their faith in power politics in the traditional sense…and, therefore, in war" will have mastered what is now an "obsolete trade." The only remaining justification for war, she adds knowingly, is a revolution that claims to defend "the cause of freedom." But like war, such a revolution would make use of violence, which is the "anti-political" province of technicians, whose use threatens the freedom that it professes to defend. This dilemma had been seen already in the seventeenth century—which, as Arendt notes, had seen its share of violence. Philosophers invented the fiction of a pre-political "state of nature" in order to show that the political realm—which is the locus of freedom—does not emerge simply from the fact of people living together. The political is *created*; it has an origin that separates it from pre-political life just as the modern notion of revolution claims to inaugurate a rupture with what preceded it. But this act involves a paradox. The need to break with the past in order to found the new means that the new order has itself no proper legitimacy; its only foundation is the violent revolutionary "crime" that destroyed the old order. This was the rock against which the revolutionary hopes have crashed again and again, in theory more often than in practice, it should be noted.

Jonathan Schell's Introduction to the 2006 re-edition of *On Revolution* makes a provocative proposal that avoids the oft-repeated cliché opposing a bad French revolution to a good American democratic politics. He begins from Arendt's account of the role of the workers' councils in the 1956 revolution in Hungary, which she had published as an "epilogue" to the 1958 re-edition of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. He suggests that she never republished this essay in subsequent versions of the book because it reflected a transition from the bleak pessimism of her account of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* toward the optimism later articulated in *On Revolution*. Schell goes on to defend the contemporary relevance of that new vision, pointing to "the wave of democratic revolutions" that he claims was inspired by the echoes of 1956 (rather than by the more constitutionalist Greek, Portuguese, and Spanish transitions of the 1970s). From this perspective, the Hungarian experience represents the first expression of a subterranean fissure that began to resurface with Polish *Solidarnosc*, passing then to the overthrow of military dictatorship in Argentina and Brazil and moving on to the Philippines and South Korea, before returning to the former Soviet Union and South Africa to culminate (provisionally) with the fall of Milosevic in Serbia, the Georgian Rose Revolution and the Orange Revolution in Ukraine. Schell argues that “most” of these cases looked to the American revolution rather than to the French model. They “aimed at establishing conditions of freedom rather than solving social questions.” Further, “[a]ll were largely nonviolent” and “most interesting and important, they repeatedly vindicated Arendt's new conception of power and its relationship to violence.”[2] As a result of this chain of “opposition to regimes as disparate as the military rule of southern Europe, the right-wing dictatorships of South America, and the apartheid regimes of South Africa,” Schell argues that “Arendt was right” to claim that the “signers of the Mayflower Compact had discovered the very ‘grammar’ and ‘syntax’ of any action whatsoever.”[3]

A historian might challenge this sweeping generalization, whose author may be said to take his wishes for reality, but its theoretical claim is typically Arendtian: wide-ranging and deeply philosophical. Jonathan Schell cites a lapidary remark in which Arendt makes clear the reach of her theoretical claims. One cannot say, she asserts, that totalitarianism is the problem and workers' councils are the solution. Rather than an either/or, Arendt suggests that both totalitarianism and the councils are a response to “the age's problems.”[4] The philosophical reader will recall here that Arendt was a student of Heidegger, and remained a devoted friend of Karl Jaspers. The problems of the age are philosophical before they are material or even institutional.

Jonathan Schell, however, goes on to reduce Arendt's philosophical argument to what he calls a practical and contemporary “debate” that asks whether “the wave of Arendtian democratization [has] run its course.”[5] What rightly worries him as a citizen is the current American policy of “democratizing other countries by armed force.”[6] While it is true that, in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt claimed that imperialism is one of the problems to which totalitarianism is a “fantastical attempted solution,” it would be a leap to think that the same logic explained her opposition to the American war in Vietnam, as if she thought that America was on its way to totalitarianism. Jonathan Schell's hope that the “wave of democratic revolutions” could foreshadow a more general reversal of relations between small and great powers[7] forgets that Arendt rejected the idea of the simple replacement of a bad condition (totalitarianism) by a good alternative (workers' councils). Her concern with “the age's problems” was both philosophical and political. Although Jonathan Schell is no doubt correct in worrying that "the United States, in pursuit of its war on terror, is losing track of its founding ideals," he doesn't explain what these are, and how they could or should continue to manifest themselves two centuries after the foundation.[8]

1 Human Rights and "America's Ideals"

Jonathan Schell's "wave of democratic revolutions" has coincided with what some have called a "revolution of human rights." The reason that actions of a growing but still small number of dissidents within the former Soviet bloc acquired a political weight was not simply the formal juridical framework provided by the so-called "Third Basket" of the Helsinki Accords of 1975 (which the Soviets thought of as a victory for their *realpolitik* insofar as the treaty affirmed the so-called "Brezhnev Doctrine" that it had invoked to justify crushing the Prague Spring in 1968). Hannah Arendt's essay on "Civil Disobedience," written at the height of the protests against the American war in Vietnam, suggests a more political explanation of how and why the assertion of individual rights could have such a revolutionary impact in the former Soviet empire.[9] She first clears away the usual interpretation according to which the civil disobedient is not a criminal because he acts in the light of day and because he accepts the consequences of his act, as in the paradigmatic cases of Thoreau or Gandhi. She points instead to the political implication of the fact that protesting publicly means that the disobedient is appealing to others, even if the motive for the action may lie deep in the privacy of individual conscience. Action that seeks to speak to others presupposes the existence of a basis for mutual understanding that, when awakened, can result in collective action that is more than the sum of its parts. While Arendt's insight explains in part Jonathan Schell's "wave of democratic revolutions" and more broadly the emergence of an autonomous civil society, the success of the dissidents depended also on the fact that the weakened authority of the rulers made them incapable of crushing violently the new public sphere before its influence could spread. This interplay between thought and event, authority and action, moral conviction and public appeal produced an indissoluble, and political, movement. Better still: it offered a new definition of the political within the framework of an antipolitical society.

In East Central Europe, the civil disobedience in which Arendt recognized a renewal of the particular "spirit of American law"[10] took the form of a demand for "human rights" that acquired a power that transcended national boundaries. Although it appealed to international law (e.g., the Helsinki Accords), it cannot be reduced solely to a legal matter in which particular violations of universally accepted lawfulness were condemned. The action of the dissidents became unavoidably political at the same time that the Soviet bloc—and what remained of its ideology—lost its legitimacy. The result was not the triumph of good over evil, reason over force, or justice over injustice. The fall of a totalitarian regime does not put an end to politics; it opens the way for a redefinition of the political. After the Fall of the Berlin Wall, leftist hopes for a Third Way that would save the "good" aspects of communism were unfulfilled because they did not accept the political challenge of the new conditions but wished only to make better the old regime. Human rights had been put on the political agenda; but Jonathan Schell asks rightly whether such rights can be redeemed at the point of a bayonet?[11] Arendt had rejected the imposition of democracy by force. But no new political theory emerged after 1989 to explain why some pleas for international intervention in the name of human rights are audible (Bosnia, Kosovo), others fall on deaf ears (Rwanda) or still others mobilized international protests but only weak commitments (Darfur, Myanmar). A partial explanation is suggested in Arendt's essay on "Civil Disobedience" when she points out that liberal individualism's appeal to rights ignores their *political* foundation. It is necessary but not sufficient to punish violations of rights; any intervention must also establish a political framework within which the preservation of human rights no longer depends on outside support but becomes, rather, the spirit that animates civil society. As with the civil disobedients, any intervention must appeal to the public sphere.

2 The Politics of Civil Disobedience

The political significance of Arendt's essay, which was published two decades before the revolutions of 1989, is not limited to analogies between the American war in Vietnam (which was her referent) and the dilemma facing opponents of the Iraq invasion. The spirit animating her text recalls Benjamin Franklin's famous reply when a bystander called out to the departing delegates to the Philadelphia Convention: What have you made? "A republic, if you can keep it," was Franklin's lapidary answer. With this, he anticipated two major themes in American history: the difficulty of maintaining a republic, and the fact that there can be no passive observers in the political life of a republic.

Civil disobedience, insists Arendt, becomes necessary only when the challenge to the authority of government results in "a constitutional crisis of the first order."[12] What constitutes a crisis of authority is *both* the government's overreaching its constitutional powers *and* a popular refusal "to recognize the *consensus universalis*" which founds the tacit agreement holding together the plural threads of the political republic. Arendt had denounced the excess of government elsewhere[13]; here she stresses the weakening of those voluntary associations whose foundational role in a democracy had been already underlined by Tocqueville in *Democracy in America* more than a century earlier. Civil disobedience is only "the latest form of voluntary association;" it is a mode of action "in tune with the oldest traditions of the country."[14] Those traditions are at the basis of a shared moral consensus; and as such, they are not merely private or subjective but profoundly public and political. While the law obviously cannot provide a legitimate place for the violation of the law, Arendt argued that the fact that the actions of the disobedients were changing majority opinion "to an astounding degree" confirmed that their actions expressed the "spirit" of American law. But how could the spirit become letter? The Supreme Court had refused to intervene in the conduct of the Vietnam War on the grounds that such a "political question" belonged to the two other branches of government. This left Arendt only one option: to propose a constitutional amendment transcending the merely liberal (i.e., private) guarantees offered by the First Amendment in order to actualize the practical republican politics of civil disobedience whose spirit she had described.[15] How this would work in practice was not clear; but Arendt insisted that her proposal did express that public spirit that was fundamental to the preservation of the republic.

The reader of *On Revolution* will recognize that Arendt's proposed constitutional revision as a reformulation of Jefferson's proposal of a participatory democratic "ward system" in order to preserve the spirit of "public happiness" experienced in the American revolution.[16] Although she insisted that civil disobedience is "for the most part" an American tradition, Arendt added that its necessity stems from a danger imposed by a government that, because it refuses to admit its own limits, "has changed voluntary association into civil disobedience and transformed dissent into resistance…[This threat] prevails at present—and, indeed, has prevailed for some time—in large parts of the world"[17] Her argument is at once ontological, historical, and based on political theory. The philosopher of *The Human Condition* stresses the ontological human ability to make promises; the political thinker of *On Revolution* recalls historical experience dating from the Mayflower Compact and practiced in the New England townships; the political theorist underlines the Lockean idea that society is bound together by compacts even before it then creates a government. These assumptions are the primary justification of civil disobedience because they imply that it is the government that violates the compact; and it is the covenanted society (not an individual disobedient but rather the collective political power of individuals acting together) that must reassert itself in the face of this abuse. This elegant argument is, however, only normative; its republican premise sacrifices the dynamic element of democracy—which was not, after all the concern of Locke, who was a liberal individualist rather than a political republican.

Nonetheless, the similarities of the Vietnam and Iraq experiences do need to be considered against the backdrop of the revolutionary changes in East Central Europe. Arendt's list of misdeeds by the Vietnam-era US government ring familiar: an illegal and immoral war accompanied by executive overreach, chronic deception of the public, restrictions on first amendment freedoms, and a government that forgets that the translation of the slogan *e pluribus unam* that figures on every dollar bill is not *union sacrée*.[18] But why did the kind of disobedient action that she supported not appear among the opponents of the Iraq invasion? At one point, Arendt seems to suggest that the American commitment to liberal pluralism had become a commitment that replaces the indeterminacy inherent in political action by the need for ideological certainty that depoliticizes debate.[19] But elsewhere, after admitting, a bit reluctantly, that not everyone needs to participate in, or even be concerned with public affairs, she hopes that a self-selection process that draws out a "true political elite in a country" will produce "a new concept of the state. A council-state"[20] And her hope for a renewal of the political spirit only apparently fades in her last public presentation, "Home to Roost," (1975) when she describes a series of disasters in foreign and domestic politics culminating in a "swift decline in political power…[that] is almost unprecedented."[21] The institutions of liberty that have sustained the American spirit may, after surviving "longer than any comparable glories in history," be exhausted.[22] Refusing to appeal to philosophical truths[23], she will not abandon the spirit of republican freedom. "[W]hile we now slowly emerge from under the rubble of the events of the past few years," she concludes, "let us not forget these years of aberration lest we become wholly unworthy of the glorious beginnings 200 years ago. When the facts come home to roost, let us try at least to make them welcome. Let us try not to escape into some utopias—images, theories, or sheer follies. It was the greatness of this Republic to give due account for the sake of freedom to the best in men *and to the worst*."[24] I have italicized this last phrase for reasons that will become clear in my conclusion. Democracies can and will err; criticism is essential to their preservation.

Although she tried to avoid the traps of ontology and its historicist correlate that offer only an "escape from politics into history,"[25] stressing always the diversity and plurality of "the human condition," there is something troubling about Arendt's constant return to the "spirit" of the American founding. The "facts" on which she laid such great importance in her political essays play a subsidiary role in *On Revolution*. As a result, it is difficult to know why and how the Americans have, or have not, met Franklin's challenge—"a republic if you can keep it"? Have they, as she at times suggests, fallen victim to the pragmatic or ideological antipolitics of the politicians? Have they, as she often fears, adopted the French revolutionaries' concern with the social question, prizing economic equality above political liberty? Or is there, as I want to suggest, something about the very nature of democracy—which is not identical with republicanism, as she conceives it—that constantly threatens it from within even as—for the same reason—it reinforces the power of both a democratic polity *and* of its individual citizens? A closer look at the dynamic history from which Arendt distilled her idea of the Americans' revolutionary "spirit" can help to explain why her problems cast light on our own, and why ours in turn bring out the power of her understanding of the autonomy of the political. The "age's problems" on which she laid such stress are not defined by a specific historical conjuncture; they belong to an epoch whose decisive characteristic is that it has repeatedly faced the challenge of maintaining a *republican* democracy that is constantly threatened by its own antipolitical tendencies.

3 Rethinking the American Revolution

Arendt's stress on the uniquely human ability to covenant, to make promises, and to exchange opinions among a plurality of participants in public life, is based on deep-rooted premises that underlie what she called "the human condition." Rather than describe the world from the perspective of a monadic subject, she insists that plurality, publicity, and action with others institute a dynamic through which humans come together to create a type of power that is distinct from the brute force of dumb nature or the antipolitical violence of war. This human potential can create the singular events that are the matter for political thought. In the American case, Arendt suggests that an originary moment, the Mayflower Compact, defines the "condition" from which a "spirit" emerged that, in its turn, reappeared in the New England townships, then in the Revolution, then again in the nineteenth-century forms of associative life described by Tocqueville, and once more in the twentieth-century political action of the civil disobedients. I like this vision. But I am not sure how it helps to understand the specific political achievements of the American revolution or, more generally, the way that historical experience in turn can illuminate the contemporary political problems of "the age."

Arendt neglects a fundamental event in her list of historical moments when the American "spirit" manifested itself: the "revolution of 1800," which brought the republicans of Thomas Jefferson to power.[26] Although its contemporaries called this transfer of power from one party to its bitter rival a "revolution," our contemporaries have overlooked its radical implications, no doubt because the concept of "revolution" has been identified with social change effected by violent means. *On Revolution* offers the conceptual tools to understand this central event. She argues that "the great and, in the long run, perhaps the greatest American innovation in politics as such was the consistent abolition of sovereignty *within* the body politic of the republic, the insight that in the realm of human affairs sovereignty and tyranny are the same."[27] The refusal to incarnate sovereignty "within the body politic of the republic" marks the emerging political self-awareness that came to fruition in the wake of the decisive election of 1800. To understand the stakes, Arendt's distinction of the social goals of the French revolution from the political ends sought by the Americans can be reformulated. The French were seeking to create a *democratic republic* in which sovereignty would be (in principle) incarnated in the equality of the members of the *demos* whereas the Americans created (in fact) a *republican democracy* in which the republican constitution created the political framework which insured the freedom of plural interests and institutions to compete, to cooperate or to ignore one another.[28] As Arendt suggests, the refusal to incarnate sovereignty can be seen as a guiding thread in the American experience.

The revolution passed through three phases before its initial impetus was realized with the rejection of the classical unitary theory of sovereignty in favor of a republican–democratic practice. The first period, from 1763 to

1776, posed the challenge of colonial sovereignty. After the British victory in the Seven Years' War, the colonists no longer needed the protection of the mother country; but Britain needed to reorganize relations among the parts of its enlarged empire and to pay the debts it had incurred in the process. This led to a series of measures that, from the point of view of the colonists, seemed an infringement on their rights and liberties. Often summed up in the lapidary phrase, "No taxation without representation," the stream of pamphlets produced during these years began with attempts at conciliation before being drawn, inexorably it seems, to articulate what Tom Paine expressed in 1776 as simply "Common Sense."[29] In retrospect, one theoretical argument brought the conflict to a head, making the rupture seem inevitable. John Dickinson, in his *Letters From a Farmer in Pennsylvania*, pointed out that the local self-government demanded by the colonists would create an *imperium in imperio*, which was a contradiction in political terms. This logical argument carried practical weight because of the experiences of self-management, such as the refusal of the Stamp Act or the non-importation boycotts proved that political legitimation from Britain was not needed for the Americans to run their own lives. In practice and in theory, the revolutionary spirit of republican self-government had emerged. This was, however, but a first step; the new spirit had still to find an institutional incarnation.

The self-understanding won in the first period first had to be defended once independence was proclaimed. The war began poorly; in the bitter winter of 1776, at Valley Forge, General Washington ordered that Tom Paine's new pamphlet, *The American Crisis*, be read to the troops. "These are the times that try men's souls," wrote Paine, as he denounced "[t]he summer soldier and the sunshine patriot" It is worth underlining here that political events don't just happen; individuals participate when they exercise their judgment, which is neither theoretical nor abstract. Finally, the army held; French help began to arrive. It remained for the Americans to give themselves the institutions for self-government.

As in the first phase, theoretical reflection joined practical experience. The theory was condensed in the efforts of John Adams, whom Arendt invokes frequently. Adams' insistence that government must be a "representation in miniature" of the people posed a problem. For circumstantial reasons,[30] the state of Pennsylvania had instituted a form of radical democracy; its constitution provided for frequent elections, a weak executive, periodic review of all laws by a "council of censors" among other popular measures. This direct democracy proved to be a recipe for instability; it stood as a warning when peace was finally made (in 1783). The sovereignty that had been won in battle could not be maintained in the face of economic problems made worse by inter-state rivalries that blocked the functioning of the loosely knit confederal government. The conception of sovereign self-rule for which they fought needed to be modified if the thirteen newly independent states were to remain a "United States."[31] Adams' vision of representation had to be modified.

A new stage in American political thought and practice was reached with the creation of the new national constitution in 1787, and also with its popular ratification. As Arendt recognized, the letter of institutions has to be structured in such a way that the spirit that presided at its origin could be maintained (or renewed if necessary). The new understanding that emerged in this third phase is presented in the *Federalist Papers*, which were at once a political act (affecting the ratification process) and a theoretical self-reflection (that retains its actuality). In the present context, two crucial arguments, and their relation, must be properly understood. The first is *Federalist 10*, which defends the possibility of an enlarged republic by insisting that its safety and vitality will be guaranteed by the presence of competing and plural factions. The second is elaborated in *Federalist 51*, which insists that this safety and vitality are guaranteed by the checks-and-balances among the branches of the new government. In the context of the debate over sovereignty, the two claims are saying one and the same thing: *Federalist 10* explains that "the" sovereign people as such does not exist, while *Federalist 51* draws the conclusion that any branch of government that claims to incarnate the *vox populi* is exceeding the power accorded it by the constitution.[32] However, because the constitution provides *both* checks *and* balances, the power of a democratic people will always produce the dynamic that was present already in the first phase of the revolution. It seeks to realize democratic self-government at the same time that the separation of powers prevents its complete achievement. The inherent paradox of the American republic is that it appeals to popular sovereignty at the same time that it makes its complete incarnation impossible. The result reinforces each of the competing political institutions that each in its own way seek to realize democracy.

This historical dynamic reached a temporary resolution with the "revolution of 1800." After a bitter campaign foreshadowed by the repressive Alien and Sedition laws (1798) and heated by reciprocal accusations of "monarchism" and "Jacobinism" by partisans and opponents of the French revolution, Jefferson assumed the presidency *and* Adams returned quietly home to Massachusetts. In a significant passage of his inaugural Address, Jefferson drew the conclusion that "every difference of opinion is not a difference of principle. We have called by different names brethren of the same principle. We are all Republicans, we are all Federalists."[33] This claim did not imply that party differences would—or could, or should—be abolished (although the temptation noted by Arendt to replace *e pluribus unam* by a *union sacrée* would appear from time to time).[34] There was a further implication to be drawn from the "revolution of 1800." Jefferson refers to the unity that binds together the republic as based on "principle." The nature of that principle was made explicit by the Supreme Court's decision in *Marbury v. Madison* (1803). The ruling suggests that although Jefferson's republicans were now the majority, their power remained limited; it is the *principles* of the constitution that constitute the always present but never fully realized, or realizable, sovereignty of the people. It is the constitution that guarantees that the people are *one* at the same time that its division of powers assures that the momentary expression of that unity is realized only by the constant production of difference, debate, and deliberation. The "revolution of 1800" was thus an *event that is more than an event*; it confirms the experience of and reflection on the American revolution and can be taken as the expression of that "spirit" invoked by Arendt.

This interpretation of the foundation of American democracy in terms of the problem of sovereignty can be developed further. As a "principle," sovereignty is symbolic; but there is an always present temptation to seek its realization. Because it depends on particular judgments rather than on a unitary sovereign will, the momentary expression of popular sovereignty is always open to negotiation; it can never be incarnated once-and-for-all, yet it is the constant presence without which neither a polity nor the individuals who compose it can subsist. More concretely, the history of American democracy can be interpreted as the constant competition among institutions that claim to represent the will of the sovereign. The actors in the resulting dynamic process are not only the legislative, executive, and judicial branches (and the federal states); new players can emerge, as in the case of the non-violent power of political disobedients. Perhaps, too, social groups will claim political power on the basis of their expertise, their specialized interests, or their shared moral values (or their ethnic or gendered identity). While one or another institution may dominate for a time, as long as the "principle" remains—as long as sovereignty remains symbolic—others will arise to contest the legitimacy of the temporary monopoly. Rather than a direct democracy in which the unitary sovereign will of society is incarnated in its political institutions—the form that I have called a "democratic republic"—the Americans created a "republican democracy" whose institutional structure encourages individuals to actively judge among choices available and to participate together in the self-determination that is needed to "keep" the republic they have inherited.

4 Conclusion: The Age's Problems and Our Own

At the beginning of this rereading of Arendt, provoked by Jonathan Schell, I asked why we have seen no serious civil disobedience in the USA in the wake of the Iraq disaster. One answer is suggested by the way in which a kind of thoughtless liberalism, thoughtlessly radicalized by neo-conservatives, became the scarcely contested common sense of the post-1989 era. This ideology was nicely dissected by in a brief essay by Orlando Patterson.[35] Under the title "God's Gift?" Patterson points out that Americans generally, and the ideologues of the Bush government in particular, assume that everyone longs for a personal kind of freedom whose realization demands only that oppression be lifted. "Once President Bush was beguiled by this argument he began to sound like a late-blooming schoolboy who had just discovered John Locke, the 17th century founder of liberalism." For example, in his second inaugural address, Mr. Bush declared "complete confidence in the eventual triumph of freedom… because freedom is the permanent hope of mankind, the hunger in dark places, the longing of the soul." Thus, as the president told an Arab–American audience, "No matter what your faith, freedom is God's gift to every person in every nation." He drew the implications in yet another speech laying out the neo-conservative agenda: "We believe that freedom can advance and change lives in the greater Middle East."

It would not be unfaithful to Arendt to suggest that this thoughtlessness—this inability to understand that politics is based on plurality and that it is the result of action and judgment by the participants—is what she called "the age's problem." The problem is not the specific goals of those who govern us; the problem is their and our political naiveté (which goes together with a vengeful moralism) that forgets the interconnectedness of thought and event, authority and action, politics and possibility. The result is an *anti-political politics* that dares not admit to itself that it is living as if it enjoyed an eternal present. This is the same thoughtlessness that left Americans so unprepared once the Wall had fallen. As if by reflex, only a decade later, they felt the need for a new totalitarian enemy: Saddam Hussein and his Ba'ath regime.

But the thoughtless liberal—and his neo-conservative first-cousin—has a co-conspirator: the "liberal hawk," who thinks too much.[36] Formerly, or perhaps still, on the left side of the spectrum, this antipolitical species recycled its anti-totalitarianism to jump on the bandwagon of the campaign for human rights. Having defied both the orthodox left and the pragmatic peddlers of *Realpolitik*, these political moralists were proud not to be deceived by the bromides of soft-hearted American liberalism; they were certain that they could maintain their independence (and thus their influence) while supporting critically the unilateral war of the neo-conservatives.[37] They were wrong; and they cannot blame Bush, or Rumsfeld, or criticize faulty execution of their plans any more than fellow-traveling leftists could blame the "cult of personality," material conditions, or "the bureaucracy" for the failures of the Soviet Union. However, it would be wrong to throw out the human rights baby with the liberal bath water. While the "liberal hawks" do not have the answer to what Arendt called "the age's challenges," they do at least challenge the thoughtless liberals. They too are seeking to renew the ideals that found democracy, despite their mistaken choice of allies.

There is a final, crucial lesson to be drawn today from Arendt's attempt to think the most extreme expression of antipolitics. The extreme casts light on the everyday; and it points again to the actuality of Benjamin Franklin's elliptic assertion: "A republic, if you can keep it." The politics of human rights—as a *politics*, not as simply the protection of private freedoms—is fundamental to a republican democracy. It is an error to think that the "democracy" that triumphed in 1989 was the solution to the "age's problems." The quarter century that followed those events makes clear—yet again—that democracy is a dangerous game that can easily lose its way when democrats forget how to *think*, and when they fail to recognize the paradoxical fact that it is necessary to institute limits on a political process that is, by its democratic nature unlimited. Just before she insisted that the "greatest American innovation" was the abolition of sovereignty, Arendt reminded her reader of Montesquieu's "famous insight that even virtue stands in need of limitation and that even an excess of reason is undesirable"[38] If too little democracy is certainly a default, the attempt to realize it once-and-for all (by force, if needed) can prove to be a more grievous threat to democracy itself.

Notes

1. This assertion is not in the least meant to deny the importance of the courage of the dissident movements in the process by which the Wall was weakened until it crumbled. There was no revolution in the Jacobin–Leninist sense of the seizure of political power to effectuate social change. Nor were the dissident revolutionaries in the sense that the hoped for that kind of revolution. C.f., also Chap. 14, "What is a Revolution? Reflections on the Significance of 1989/1991," where I explain why the "conflicts of the past…faded away."
2. C.f., Jonathan Schell, Introduction to Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2006), p. xxii. From this perspective, the transitions of 1989 were indeed revolutions; their model was the American experience. As will be seen below, this claim can be maintained only by concentrating on the activity of the dissidents as a form of civil disobedience.
3. *Ibid.*, p. xxvi.
4. *Ibid*, p. xviii
5. *Ibid*, p. xxvi.
6. *Ibid*, p. xxvii.
7. *Ibid.*, p. xxviii (for these last citations).
8. *Ibid.*, p. xxvii.
9. My reading of Arendt's argument is influenced by the seminal essay by Claude Lefort, "Droits de l'homme et politique," in *L'invention démocratique* (Paris: Fayard, 1981); English translation in *The Political Forms of Modern Society* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986). In order to appreciate the coincidence (and the difference) of their independently developed arguments, c.f., also Lefort's essays on Arendt and my discussion in *The Specter of Democracy*. C.f. also, "Claude Lefort: A Political Biography," Chap. 12, below.
10. "Civil Disobedience," in Hannah Arendt, *Crises of the Republic* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972), p. 85.
11. Many reform communists whom I knew during the period of the *Wende* in the former GDR had believed that the Party had been misled by its leadership; some of them even met with the chief of the secret police (the STASI) in the hope that his intervention could constrain the encrusted bureaucrats to abandon power to their more enlightened peers!
12. 'Civil Disobedience," *op. cit.*, p. 89.
13. C.f., for example, her reflections on the Pentagon Papers, "Lying in Politics," which is reprinted as the first essay in the volume *Crises of the Republic* which contains also her "Civil Disobedience."
14. *Ibid.*, p. 96.

15. "The establishment of civil disobedience among our political institutions might be the best possible remedy for this ultimate failure of judicial review." *Ibid.*, p. 101. The argument developed here is foreshadowed at pages 83f.
16. Arendt was far from being a constitutional engineer. She was concerned to maintain the participatory and public status of politics. For example, writing about the May '68 movement in "Thoughts on Politics and Revolution" (1970), she suggested that "[t]his generation discovered what the eighteenth century had called public happiness." As she then weighted the chances for success, her bitter-sweet opinion was: "[v]ery slight, if at all. And yet perhaps after all—in the wake of the next revolution." (in *Crises of the Republic*: New York: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, 1972), pp. 203, 233.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 102.
18. "Civil Disobedience," *op. cit.*, p. 94.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
20. In "Thoughts on Politics and Revolution," p. 233.
21. Hannah Arendt, "Home to Roost," *Responsibility and*, *Judgment*, p. 259 (New York: Schocken Books, 2003).
22. Ibid., p. 260.
23. "If it is in the nature of appearances to hide "deeper" causes, it is in the nature of speculation about such hidden causes to hide and to make us forget the stark, naked brutality of facts, of things as they are." "Home to Roost," in *Responsibility and Judgment*,p. 261 (New York: Schocken Books, 2003) (also for previous citation).
24. *Ibid.*, p. 275. The italics are mine, D.H.
25. "The Concept of History," in *Between Past and Future* (New York: The Viking Press, 1954), p. 83. Arendt's essay returns repeatedly to the conflict between a theory of politics and a theory of history. She begins the essay's section on "History and Politics": "[A]t the beginning of the modern age everything pointed to an elevation of political action and political life, and the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, so rich in new political philosophies, were still quite unaware of any special emphasis on history as such. Their concern, on the contrary, was to get rid of the past rather than to rehabilitate the historical process" (pp.75–76). She goes on to argue that "History in its modern version… though it failed to save politics itself from the old disgrace, though the single deeds and acts constituting the realm of politics, properly speaking, were left in limbo, it has at least bestowed upon the record of past events that shape in earthly immortality to which the modern age necessarily aspired, but which its acting men no longer dared to claim from posterity." See also her remarks on Hegel's philosophy of history: "Hegel's transformation of metaphysics into a philosophy of history was preceded by an attempt to get rid of metaphysics for the sake of a philosophy of politics" (p.76).

26. This was the name given it by its contemporaries, and repeated by Jefferson himself in 1819. Curiously, historians have neglected its implication. To my knowledge, there exists a single book on the topic, *The American Revolution of 1800* by Daniel Sisson (New York: Knopf, 1974). A collection of essays, *The Revolution of 1800: Democracy, Race, and the New Republic*, edited by James P.P. Horn, Jan Ellen Lewis, and Peter S. Onuf (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002) does not pay sufficient attention to its theoretical implications.
27. *On Revolution.*, *op. cit.*, p. 144. My stress, D.H.
28. In more theoretical terms, the basis of the republican democracy is judgment, which accepts the existence of a plurality of perspectives, whereas the democratic republic is founded on will, which is unitary. I will return to this point at the end of this historical argument.
29. Paine's best-selling pamphlet appeared in early 1776; for his part, Jefferson denied any originality in his Declaration, which he saw as expressing a shared sense of the colonists.
30. Pennsylvania was a proprietary colony ruled by the Penn family. Those leaders who, in the other colonies, had directed the struggle with Britain had been attempting to give it greater independence by making it a crown colony. As a result, when independence came, they were discredited. An artisan class replaced them in the crucial period of constitution-making.
31. The passage from the Articles of Confederation to the Constitution of 1787—as well as the different institutional forms adopted in Massachusetts and Pennsylvania—should not be interpreted in terms of economic interests. Arendt offers a stinging rebuke to those who follow Charles Beard's *Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (1913). Their insistence on tactics of "unmasking" and denunciations of "hypocrisy" belongs to French-style historiography. C.f., *On Revolution*, *op. cit.*, p. 89.
32. A third argument, that of *Federalist 63*, could be added to reaffirm the point being made here while raising also the question of representative democracy. That argument concerns the legitimacy of a Senate in a society which has no constituted aristocracy. The justification offered in *Federalist 63*, which freely admits that American democracy is not direct but representative, depends also on the symbolic nature of the sovereignty that is to be represented by that upper branch of the legislature. For details, c.f., *Aux origines de la pensée politique américaine*, *op. cit.*
33. Thomas Jefferson, "First Inaugural Address," in *Writings* (New York: The Library of America, 1984), p. 493.
34. In fact, with the term of the third of the great republican presidents, James Monroe (1816–1824), America entered what was called The Era of Good Feeling, during which party competition had disappeared at the national

level. The indirect result was the so-called "Corrupt Bargain" by which John Quincy Adams became president. The reaction was not long in coming in the form of the populism that brought Andrew Jackson to power in 1828.

35. Harvard sociologist Patterson, the author of *Freedom in the Making of Western Culture*, published this article as a guest op-ed in the *New York Times*, December 19, 2006. It is ironic that the first wave of neo-conservatives (those of the 1980s) denounced the same naiveté, as Peter Beinart noted in *The New Republic* (January 1–15, 2007). Beinart quotes Jeane Kirkpatrick's famous 1979 essay, "Dictatorships and Double Standards" : "[N]o idea holds greater sway in the mind of educated Americans than the belief that it is possible to democratize governments, anytime, anywhere, under any circumstances. This notion is belied by an enormous body of evidence" Beinart's point is that the critics of the Bush adventurism are returning to the older "reality-based" position. It is noteworthy that these publications appeared at a time when the Iraq adventure had been thoroughly discredited.
36. The liberal hawk is a modern version of the Marxist militant whom Arendt's friend, Harold Rosenberg, defined as "an intellectual who doesn't think." C.f., "The Heroes of Marxist Science," in Rosenberg's *The Tradition of the New* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), p. 184. Since he knows the necessary *telos* of history, he has only to fit the particular events into that pattern (neglecting the distinction between subsumptive and reflective judgment that would be important for Arendt's later work. An example of this style of thought is found in "The Anti-Totalitarian Left between Morality and Politics," chap. 16, below. C.f. also the discussion in Chap. 4 above.
37. Did they still remember Lenin's ironic dictum (in "Left-Wing Communism: an Infantile Disorder"): critical support is analogous to the rope offered to the hanged man?
38. *On Revolution*, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

PART III

Engaging with Philosophy

CHAPTER 10

The Actuality of the History of Political Thought

1 THE PARADOXES OF ANTIPOLITICS

Although Aristotle's definition of man as a "political animal" has been repeated again and again during the two and a half millennia since the demise of Athenian democracy, most of us most of the time are quite happy to let others take responsibility for governing while we get on with our everyday lives. We may have opinions about how the government should govern, and we may have certain expectations about the kind of persons to whom we trust this responsibility. But these are personal, subjective, and only expressed publicly (if at all) in a very general and impersonal way on election days. Indeed, more often than not we vote against the other candidate rather than for our own. One result is that politics has become a profession much like any other, with its specialized training, criteria of excellence and consumers to satisfy. Those of us who follow the goings-on within the political class tend to judge its practitioners in the same way that we evaluate the professional athletes or entertainers competing for popular admiration. We are aesthetes, concerned first and foremost with what interests us and only then, perhaps, with what affects our interests, and only incidentally with the supposed general interest.

Perhaps the ancients were political animals; we moderns seem to have become antipolitical beings. Yet, like them, we call our political institutions "democratic" and are proud of what we call our democratic way of life. The fact that we criticize our politicians for poll-guided responses to problems, as if personal moral "character" is a better guide than the

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D. Howard, *Between Politics and Antipolitics*, Political Philosophy and Public Purpose, DOI 10.1057/978-1-349-94915-1_10

popular will, suggests that we doubt the wisdom of the people whose sovereignty we ritually affirm. Whether this passage from ancient political to modern antipolitical democracy represents progress is questionable. But the clock cannot be turned backward; what I call antipolitics has become the modern replacement for politics. Its implications need to be analyzed and the historical process by which it emerged needs to be evaluated. The paradox expressed by the concept suggests that *antipolitics is nonetheless a kind of politics.* This paradox needs to be explained.

After the Fall of the Wall in 1989, followed by the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, democracy seemed to be the only legitimate form of politics. Yet, a quarter of a century later, doubt and skepticism have replaced the optimism that accompanied the unexpected end of the Cold War. "Democracy," it now seems, was victorious by default. In the former Communist bloc, every step forward has been accompanied by two steps backward, as nationalism serves to compensate for the loss of the low-level but real economic security of the old order. Free elections there, as elsewhere, are now fruitful terrain either for populist demagogues peddling nostalgia while blaming the West (meaning the USA, if not its so-called "Jewish Lobby") for their difficulties, or by technocrats convinced of the impartial justice imposed by the free market when it combines with the virtues of what Weber called the Protestant ethic. As in the twentieth century, when democracy gained its authority by contrast to its enemies (fascism and communism), in our twenty-first century, it shines only with a light reflected by such new threats as fundamentalism, terrorism, and economic globalization. The supporters of democracy today value it more for what it is not than for the vision of a shared future that it offers. But if its attractiveness depends only on the negation of its enemies, democracy could well disappear in our new century. It is careless today to herald democracy's uncontested triumph. It would not be the first universally admired political system to disappear because its citizens took for granted its benefits without accepting the obligations it imposes.[1]

The messianic hopes with which George W. Bush led America into a futile, frustrating, costly adventure in the Middle East have been dashed. Mr. Bush may still believe, as he declared in his second inaugural speech, with "complete confidence in the eventual triumph of freedom…because freedom is the permanent hope of mankind, the hunger in dark places, the longing of the soul." But that faith is the rhetorical expression of a metaphysics, or a theology; it is not political thought. It does not follow from this criticism that the world would have been a better place if the Middle East had been left to fester under the despotic rule of self-perpetuating elites (of whom Saddam was only one of the worst). The problem is that democracy is not a formal set of institutions that can be imported, let alone imposed on a nation. That way of thinking is antipolitical. In the same way, the expectation that, once the old order was overthrown, the people would begin to govern themselves freely, is another illustration of the antipolitical assumptions that have come to dominate our political thought. This example illustrates again the paradox of antipolitics. Popular support in the USA for the invasion of Iraq—insofar as it was not simply an emotional reaction to September 11 2001, or to the false claims about Iraqi weapons of mass destruction—illustrates the fact that antipolitics is still a politics. But *its goal is the elimination of politics.* As such, antipolitics is a self-contradictory project condemned to failure, but capable of inflicting serious damage on those who suffer its effects.

There are many varieties of antipolitics. In the twentieth century, antipolitics appeared in the phenomena of fascism, communism, *and* unrestrained free-market capitalism. These forms of antipolitics criticized really existing democracy while claiming that they would bring the true realization of democracy. They claim that their success will insure the reign of peace and harmony; that their political battles are a war to end all wars; and that their rule will reconcile society and the state. As with the misguided war in Iraq, these movements must not be caricatured as if they were the result of malevolent intentions or the fruits of ideological self-illusion. Fascism challenged the formal and bureaucratic, divisive and weak-willed new democracies that emerged from the carnage of World War I in the name of the will of a pure and united nation.[2] In the place of the self-alienated individualism of bourgeois society, the fascists proposed to restore a pre-existing substratum of national homogeneity, heroic virtue, and ethnic destiny. Communism, for its part, denounced the exploitation of the working class that was hidden beneath the formal democratic equality of rights; the proletarian revolution would overcome class division, ushering in a unified society, replacing the anarchy of competitive capitalism by rational planning. For their part, proponents of pure capitalism criticize the use of democratic elections to support welfare state interventions into the workings of the free market; in their capitalist utopia, economics replaces politics because the collective wisdom of the market is greater than the knowledge of any single, private individual or any social class. None of these criticisms was completely wrong; but each is based on antipolitics.

Each of these twentieth-century movements produced undeniably political results. The faults of the newly democratic societies that they criticized were often real. In particular, they were reacting to the social divisions introduced by the multitude of particular interests that gained equal voice in the new democratic institutions. They objected to the egoistic individualism that they claimed was unleashed by democracy; they denounced its secular civilization for promoting a relativism that left no room for universal values; and they blamed it for the domination of opinion over truth, emotion over science, and competition over community. But the remedies they prescribed would have eliminated the possibility of political action since a homogeneous nation, or a completely planned proletarian society, or a thoroughly market-regulated economy would have no need to seek popular legitimation for its decisions, no reason to deliberate before pronouncing judgment, and no means by which its rules and regulations could be contested or modified. In this sense, each was an *antipolitical politics*. When fascism or communism did seize power, it became clear that this source of its strength is also the root of its weakness: because its unitary goals led it to overreach, taking responsibility for the entirety of social and even personal relations, it was powerless in the face of the unexpected; responsible for everything, there was nothing to which it could appeal for support. Although each of these antipolitical regimes had external enemies, they collapsed ultimately under their own weight, undermined by the very monopoly that they had maintained. By comparison, it was the failure of capitalism to realize its antipolitical goals that explains its continued existence. For the same reason, capitalism and democracy are often seen to be two inseparable sides of the same coin.

The early years of the twenty-first century have witnessed the emergence of new forms of antipolitics in the figures of fundamentalism, terrorism, and the critique of globalization. As with their twentieth-century ancestors, each justifies itself as both a critique of and proposes a remedy for the immanent failings of democracy. However, what makes these new forms of antipolitics different is that they are a response to the antipolitical nature of the established Western democracies that are incapable of reflecting on the implications of their own political projects. Such antipolitical democracies are unable to recognize that religious fundamentalism might reflect a legitimate attempt to reassert human dignity in the face of the moral relativism produced by a privatized individualism that can find no grounds to condemn sexual license and consumerist hedonism. Complacent democrats fail to ask themselves whether terrorism might be also a reply to the refusal of their own political culture to recognize any values foreign to its own, while those of their citizens who gravitate toward this extreme antipolitics claim that theirs is a legitimate response by a minority subjected to the refusal to recognize their right to be different. Similarly, self-sure democrats do not see that an economic world without borders in which cash value has become the only value is not the inevitable result of the freedom that they identify with private liberty. What they praise as the globalization of prosperity appears to others as the expression of economic imperialism.

Tout comprendre n'est pas tout pardoner: Twenty-first-century antipolitics is no more acceptable than were its predecessors. Indeed, it could become still more dangerous. The strength of twentieth-century democratic capitalism that defeated the antipolitical threats was not its economic productivity or its private wealth; its success was based on the fact that its roots lay deep in the soil of the Western democratic system. Western political thought was self-critical; today's antipolitical democracy is not capable of putting itself, and its values, into question. That is why the twenty-first-century antipolitical movements are a more dangerous threat than their forerunners.

If democracy is to survive the continued assaults of the new antipolitics of the twenty-first century, it will have to rediscover its historical foundations. If it remains simply a negative antipolitics, it might well imitate its twentieth-century antipolitical predecessors (communism, fascism, and free-market capitalism), collapsing from within rather than destruction by the alternatives offered (or imposed) by its political enemies. The foundation for such a reconsideration of the nature of modern democracy was present already in the challenge of twentieth-century antipolitics; it has been renewed by the uncertainties of our new century. The antipolitical temptation that privileges the values of unity over diversity, rationality over opinion, universality over particularity, community over competition, the sacred over the secular, stability over innovation, and tradition over novelty, has to be understood as an *internal* challenge rather than an *external* threat. Because these values are *immanent*, they are a warning against the complacency of antipolitical democrats who think that democracy can be achieved once-and-for-all, forgetting that there is no democracy without democrats. The challenge posed by antipolitics prevents the self-satisfied illusion that democratic political decisions are, or ought to be, identical with the will of society, reminding the citizen that there must always exist a tension between the two equally important levels on which individuals in a democracy live their lives. Democratic political power is legitimate only when it can be, and is, contested by the society that it claims to govern.[3]

2 DEFINING THE POLITICAL

I have been talking about politics without defining the term because at one level we all know intuitively what it means. But if antipolitics is itself a form of politics, as the above examples suggest, "politics" cannot be understood simply as the action of governments or of those seeking to control them. The identification of politics with the activity of politicians in their competition for power would be tautological. At the other extreme, it would be a crude simplification to reduce politics to Lenin's famous definition *kto kogo* ("who whom," i.e., who does what to whom). Power is certainly involved in politics; but power is not identical with force, which is imposed on citizens without their consent. This distinction suggests that power should be defined as *legitimate force*. It is a type of *authority* to which members of a society implicitly or explicitly consent. The source of legitimate power or authority will differ in different societies; it may be secular or sacred, rational or customary, institutional or charismatic; its foundation may be strength, knowledge, or wealth, each of which will in turn be defined differently in different historical contexts. It follows that "politics" entails the creation of the *meaningful discourse* and shared values through which force acquires legitimate authority. The history of political thought is the story of the search for legitimacy and the clash among the forms of legitimacy.

This conception of politics does not neglect the material stakes in the quest for power; but it avoids the skeptical reduction of politics to competing interests. For example, in the case of twentieth-century capitalism, the denunciation of the reality of exploitation hidden or ignored by the ideological identification of freedom with "free" markets opened the way for a critical a social demand for change. But supporters of the existing political order rejected the claims of trade unions as "antipolitical," denouncing them as socialist, utopian, or anarchist. Yet the workers' demands led to the creation of the welfare state, which was a *political* creation that prevented *democratic* capitalist society from adopting the antipolitical form of a pure market economy. In this way, market capitalist antipolitics was kept in its proper place; its critical function *within* a democratic society was recognized, since markets can (but do not always) exert a regulatory function in a democratic society. The always present danger is that the market becomes an *external* challenge to democracy itself. This tension between politics and antipolitics is in part the result of a battle of ideas; but the material conditions that created a powerful social movement cannot be neglected. While a deeper analysis of this historical moment is not necessary here, it is useful to remember that material interest cannot be divorced from political analysis by claiming that it is simply a form of antipolitics, the mere expression of particular concerns at the expense of the good of the whole. The paradox to be borne in mind is, once again, that antipolitics can give rise to political results.

If politics and antipolitics compete with one another, supplement each other, and are sometimes inverted expressions of one another, this is due to the fact that both are attempts to establish legitimate political authority. Politics exists in every society; without it, men and women who co-exist in a given space and time would be no different than a queue of passengers waiting for a bus, or consumers bustling around a shopping mall searching for the best bargains.[4] Just as the members of an athletic team are joined together by a common goal or "team spirit" that transcends their particular and private concerns while giving to each a new and shared identity, so too are the citizens of a society joined together by a shared framework of meaning and values that unites them in spite of their private differences. People may belong to many such social organizations, each of which is defined by the goals that it seeks. Political organization is the highest of these institutions because it organizes the relations among all the other, less inclusive groups, establishing a hierarchy of values that can always, in principle, be challenged and which will be changed if it loses its ability to unify (becoming an antipolitics) or if the excluded come to recognize their own capacity to create new types of unity (becoming a politics).

The shared framework of meaning and values that unites the members of a society can be defined as "the political." The political delineates the distinction between the licit and the illicit, the just and the unjust, the knowable and the unknown. It defines both the grammar and the syntax that organize the social interactions among members of a given society. Just as there are some things that cannot be said, some expressions that cannot be understood, and even some sounds that cannot become words, so too in any society, there are things that cannot be done, actions in which no one will join, and projects that no one could imagine. If the symbolic universe of a given people is defined by its religious beliefs, this will produce types of behavior that—to the outside observer—will be incomprehensible, foolhardy, or irrational; but for the same reason, the believers will be incapable of understanding the "anti-religious" objections of the critical observer. Such a dialogue of the deaf cannot continue indefinitely if the religious and the secular are to inhabit a common political world.

A well-known example that changed the course of political history can be introduced briefly here in order to concretize the way in which the political provides a framework within which politics and antipolitics compete. For long centuries of Western history, the political was defined by religious belief. That same belief, however, became an antipolitical force that gave rise to a new definition of the political when the Protestant Reformation challenged the Catholic emphasis on external forms of worship. The Protestants denied that the Catholic sacramental practices were the proper realization of a truely divine will; but the subjective faith combined with Biblical literalism and the belief in an inscrutable divine grace on which their new religion was based prepared the ground for the emergence of a secular individualism that became the new defining principle of political life. The Protestant challenge to the reigning Catholic religion was a form of antipolitics that became the basis for a new but still religiously founded politics. In turn, this new understanding of the political came to be confronted by a new, secular individualism that challenged the religious beliefs on which it was founded; this too was a conflict between the existing form of the political and a new antipolitics. What is striking in this example is the fact that the antipolitical challenge develops within the existing political forms—Protestantism is still based in monotheistic Christianity, yet secular individualism builds from the Protestant stress on the direct relation of the believer to his God. Despite the schematic nature of this illustration, it describes a structure that has been repeated constantly in political history. The reason for this recurrence lies in the fact that while the political defines the type of politics that can be undertaken in a given society—in this case, an action based on a transcendent religious belief—*politics is a constant attempt to define or to reshape, to reconfigure or to reform the political.* It may conserve the existing understanding of the political but it may also, and perhaps unintentionally, inaugurate a new vision, as did the Reformation.[5]

This unique role of the political can be illustrated by comparing this philosophical understanding of the political with the type of analysis offered by political science. The scientist looks at his object of study from outside, as if he were using a telescope or a microscope to study something that is unaffected by his regard. Differences among individuals and groups exist in every society; some of these qualities are natural, others are cultural. Differences of economic wealth, social status, political power can be described; ethnicity, gender, religion, or education are then charted and correlated. In the case of politics, the difficulty is to determine which of these differences makes a difference *from the standpoint of the participants.*

Which one could lead a person to complain about the injustice of her lot to and to expect others to understand and act on the grievance? Why are some social differences considered licit? When are forms of inequality treated as the accidental result of unknowable factors? This is where the philosophical reflection on the nature of the political becomes important insofar as it defines the licit, the just, and the knowable, as well as their opposites. Philosophical reflection establishes the shared background against which differences become salient. The idea that the strongest, or the richest, or the most virtuous—or the people as a whole—should rule reflects *a political choice*. For example, the unthinking application of the economic theory of "rational choice" to all aspects of behavior in contemporary society reflects a political decision about how to understand and organize the social and private worlds of the citizenry. This political dimension is hidden by the scientific illusion that a neutral observer is merely defining the facts as they exist. By underlining the dimension of choice that is involved, political thought makes clear that "the political" is not a framework of institutions imposed on a society from above or beyond its boundaries; that is why democracy is the most comprehensive definition of the political: its legitimacy depends on the assent of the participants.

3 Politics and the Political: Some Historical Examples

At this point, *the basic problem of all politics* can be defined. The political is distinct from the society that it structures; and yet its legitimacy, which distinguishes power from force, depends on its being perceived by the members of the society as the expression of their own will. That is why some kind of critical consent is fundamental to politics. But how can participants consent to be governed by a power that it stands apart from them as external to their own will? This is the point at which the theoretical distinction of politics and antipolitics acquires its practical importance. Politics places a value on the qualitative difference between the two levels; it realizes that it itself, as politics, can only exist because the political is distinct from other types of social relations. But politics recognizes also the need to earn the consent of the members of the society it governs; otherwise it has no hold on the participants. Politics can accept diversity, plurality, and particularity because it is the condition of the possibility of these relations; the political articulates the *symbolic* structures within which social life acquires its meaning. As opposed to this symbolic structure, antipolitics seeks to create real incorporations of homogeneity, unity, and universality among the members. A familiar paradox again emerges. Antipolitics correctly recognizes that a society founded on difference, plurality, and particularity is fundamentally competitive, conflictual, and self-critical; indeed, its very existence as a society seems threatened by this diversity. But the antipolitical cure that it proposes for this apparent distemper is too strong; it destroys the symptoms by eliminating the autonomy of the political that made politics possible. This kind of antipolitics would return humanity to a pre-political state of nature in which there would be no need for politics. The result would be literally anarchic: *an-arche*, without rule.

The challenge of politics is to preserve the distinction between the political and the society that it institutes while at the same time avoiding the complete separation of the two poles, which would also produce a form of antipolitics. The complete subordination of society to the political values that make it what it is would destroy the possibility of consent by the individual members while ruling out any possible change that might be needed in the face of new conditions. Conversely, the complete subordination of the political to actually existing social relations would freeze the imagination of the members, blinding them to the need to recognize the new and to face up to the diversity of its challenges. It is necessary to maintain the distinction between the poles of complete autonomy and complete subordination for the existence of different types of political regime. In each case, and for the same reason, the difference between the two spheres must not become absolute; the gap cannot become a chasm, the distinction an opposition, the relation a separation. In the case of a democracy, the challenge is to maintain this difference while unity is preserved. How, in a democratic society, do the many become one without abandoning their diversity? How can the freedom of the individual be protected while the equality of membership is maintained?

The distinction between the political and the society that it institutes becomes apparent in the practice of democratic politics. Democracy is a form of rule (*kratos*) by the people (*demos*). It appears that this rule by the people over itself eliminates the constitutive difference between the political and the social sphere where everyday politics is practiced. Self-rule implies autonomy, a concept that comes from the Greek terms *autos* (self) and *nomos* (law). But laws govern the relations among those subject to them; the concept of ruling thus needs to be explained.[6] It is based on the difference between the people governing themselves and the people as governed (by themselves). The citizen as elector or juror is acting as a ruler making decisions that will apply to himself and to his fellows as, for example, an economic actor, the participant in a lawsuit, or a family member. What is more, when the majority rules in a democracy, it might seem that the minority will necessarily feel unsatisfied by its decisions. In a well-functioning democracy, this minority (which is not a single, united opposition) does not refuse to accept the verdict of its peers; it sets about organizing itself to become the new majority.[7] The reason for this acceptance of a (temporary) minority is that all of the participants accept the symbolic political framework that makes possible democratic politics. This shared conception of the political also explains why citizens accept the authority of the elected rulers as long as their power depends on the consent of the governed.

This fundamental principle of a divided but unified democracy is not self-evident. The history of political thought illustrates the difficulty. One of the lessons taught by that history is that the source of the legitimation that distinguishes power and authority from sheer force has always been situated outside and external to the members of society; the principle of the political existed in the form of gods or God, nature or natural law, tradition or reason. Democracy's uniqueness lies in the fact that for it the source of legitimacy is immanent to the political. The result is paradoxical: the explicit and active consent of the governed here seems to eliminate the constitutive distinction of the political from the social. If this were the case, then democracy itself would become antipolitical. This paradox has once again to be explained.

The non-democratic forms that predominate in the history of political thought always preserved the difference between the social and the political while at the same time insuring their interdependence. God remains divine even though the secular world manifests the presence of the sacred; natural law is nowhere fully realized in the existing world which nonetheless strives to conform to it; and reason remains an ideal that is sought even though human finitude makes its full realization impossible. This difference is not fixed, permanent, or definitive; rather, the difference of the principle of the political from the society that reflects it makes possible a kind of criticism of the really existing society that does not put its basic structure into question. Political change becomes possible insofar as critics of society argue that the society does not conform to the principles on which it is based. But the reformers may meet resistance that also appeals to principle; and from their clash, a revised understanding of the political can emerge. If no agreement is possible, a split or a scission could occur. That is how the movement for reform of the Catholic Church became the Protestant Reformation, which was met in turn by a conservative Counter-Reformation.[8]

The paradoxical structure of democracy is unique; it arises from the immanence of the principle of consent to the institutions to which it consents. In this way, democracy challenges the classic principle of the difference between the political and the social. As a result, the principle of the political and the practice of social decision-making are identified. This is the point at which the structure of antipolitics becomes explicit insofar as the formal and the symbolic principle of consent are treated as implying the real imperative that every member of the society truly and actually consent at every moment to every decision by participating fully, equally, and completely in the political life of society. This demand is impossible and self-contradictory; the synthesis explodes. If each citizen must be consulted on every decision concerning all aspects of societal life, the result would be chaos and confusion; it would consecrate an anarchy that destroys the principle of political life. As Rousseau put it famously, "Were there a people of gods, their government would be democratic. So perfect a government (i.e. democracy) is not for men."[9] A people of gods, like the inhabitants of a perfectly just society would have no room for, and have no need of politics.

Although this paradoxical potentiality of democracy to become antipolitical appears to be unique to modernity, on closer reflection, it illustrates the possibility that any and all forms of political society can adopt antipolitics. The democratic figure of antipolitics demands that the formal and symbolic principle of consent that is imperative in all political societies be given real force by being actualized in social practice. For this reason, we might add, the young Marx was right to say that democracy is the generic form of the political.[10]

The paradoxical structure of the political suggests a new step in which the distinction between the transcendent source of political legitimation in pre-democratic societies can come to be experienced as a form of alienation, an unbridgeable separation from the symbolic ground of meaningful social relations. This new type of alienation leads to an attempt to transcend the difference, to overcome the distance, and to make real the governing principle of social relations. The resulting form of antipolitics is more difficult to recognize than in the case of classical democracy because it is not expressed in the explicit language of politics. The example of the Protestant Reformation again illustrates the difficulty. Luther's principles of *sola fides* and *sola scriptura* rejected the Catholic doctrinal stress on the sacramental role of the church because the sacraments incarnated only on the *external* practice of the faith. Luther's intention was not political; but the resulting redefinition of the political was seized upon by pious and impoverished peasants who took the reformer at his word and sought to live according to the Word, unleashing a rebellion that had to be suppressed in blood. The dilemma led Luther to recognize the need to create an autonomous church with its own defined doctrine and practices in order to contain the antipolitical eruption called the Peasant Wars.

The unity of the history of political thought is suggested by this illustration of the interplay of the political, politics, and antipolitics that becomes fully apparent when the advent of democracy reveals the basic structure of the political. The political can take many forms; looked at with a telescope, it changes only with surprising slowness; seen with a microscope, it is in constant movement. It is tempting, but misleading in a significant way, to try to interpret this historical conjuncture by means of the notion of a "paradigm" proposed by Thomas Kuhn in his influential analysis of *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1966). What Kuhn calls "normal science" works as an established paradigm that sets out the assumptions of the disciplines and the parameters for research. As the scientists continue to probe aspects of the paradigm of normal science, they encounter abnormalities, results that do not fit with the expectations or that even positively contradict them. At first, researchers will invent additional hypotheses in order to adapt the abnormalities to the existing paradigm. But exceptions continue to be discovered, unease grows within the community of investigators, until someone proposes a new paradigm that, as if everyone were waiting for the new theory that reorganizes the field, establishes itself as the new basis of normal science. Kuhn's understanding of "revolutionary" change is suggestive only from the external perspective of scientific objectivity. Political thought has always to take into account not only the historical facts that fall to its purview but also of the way in which these facts are experienced by the *participants* in the political world. That is why the antipolitical temptation has no analogue in the history of science (where there is no "anti-science"); its role in political thought cannot be reduced to the emergence of a mere anomaly.

The political defines the *symbolic* framework within which legitimate and competitive politics can be carried out in a given society. The oversimplification implied by Kuhn's supposedly objective and positively defined idea of a paradigm is misleading; "the" political cannot be reduced to one single, simple, and singular principle observed from outside; life is not so neat and tidy as the history of science. What counts as "legitimate politics" need adopt the methods that would be recognized by a political scientist. The political, the standpoint of critical self-reflection, defines the way in which the members of a society regulate their relations to one another (a process that includes understanding their debt to their ancestors as well as their responsibility to future generations). Religion is obviously a candidate for defining the political and determining the framework governing legitimate political action; but there are many others, beginning with the Greek quest to render justice to universal philosophical truths against a background of chaos, continuing in the Roman vision of a republic founded on the co-existence of manly virtue and legal equality, which was renewed during the rebirth of Italian urban life by Machiavelli. What is more, historical reflection suggests that the definition of the political need not concern only the public sphere; legitimate relations among citizens can be determined by shared private self-understanding that is itself a form of the political. Illustrations can be found in the Stoic philosophies that emerged after the demise of Athenian democracy, or in the early Christian religion of personal, charitable love, which is transformed within the institutional framework of the Roman Church. With the onset of modernity, the principle of individuality that stresses the primacy of subjective experience complicates further the picture. "The political" is constantly enriched and overlaid with strata of meaning; but the challenge is always to *define the political.*

The paradoxical interrelation and interdependence of politics and antipolitics returns within this symbolic framework that defines the political. A politics that simply reaffirms the validity of the existing form of the political will become reified, routinized, and bureaucratized; it will sooner or later be replaced by an antipolitics that offers a salutary incitement to redefine the political. In other words, conformist politics becomes antipolitical, while antipolitics comes to have a positive political value. Historical examples of this process are found, for example, in the case of the Greek Sophists who were the allies of Pericles at the time of Athens' glory who become the butt of Plato's critique. Similarly, the formal legalism of republican Rome provided an instrument for domination over the vast empire that it acquired; and later the simple humanity of Christianity became not only an institutional Church but the source of legitimacy for the Holy Roman Empire. Other illustrations of the same process can be seen in the privatized forms of antipolitics that took one form with the Stoics, another in monastic practices of Christianity, but then acquired a different political valence with the humanism of the Renaissance. Each of these moments began as a type of antipolitics, but their *political* significance could not be ignored. Indeed, the appearance of such forms of antipolitics may be a sign that the prevailing sense of the political is losing its grip as the necessary constitutive tension between the political and the society whose relations it regulates is weakened because the separation may have grown too great, or alternatively a process of fusion has begun. Indeed, fission and fusion may be occurring at one and the same time.

4 Defining the Political in the Twenty-First Century

At the outset of these reflections, I deplored the lost sense of political participation that characterizes contemporary democracy. At the conclusion of this attempt to confront the paradoxes that recur continually in the history of political thought, it is evident that the antipolitics that I deplore has a long historical tail. The symbolic framework that explains the emergence of antipolitics also demonstrates positively that all human societies are symbolically structured by the political, even when the specific nature and origin of that political principle remain implicit. The challenge facing the twenty-first century is not to deplore the decline of everyday politics and to regret the domination of an antipolitical mood that increasingly covers social life. Insofar as antipolitics is also potentially a politics, the challenge is to negate the negation. That dialectical transcendence of the contradiction between politics and antipolitics raises political thought to the more inclusive plane of thought where the political is defined. The challenge is not to eliminate the contradiction between politics and antipolitics; the task is to recognize—to re-cognize, to rethink critically—the historically contingent dialectical interdependence of these two modes in which the political is expressed in a given society. This is possible because, as the young Marx intuited, democracy represents the generic form of all politics. Defining the political today means renewing it. That is all a political theory can promise. The philosopher cannot be a prophet; the modest role of a critical theorist who is aware of the potential pitfalls facing post-totalitarian democracy is the most that can be asked of him at the outset of the new century. It is also the most that he can claim for himself.

Notes

1. Recall for example that in 1776, the year of the American Declaration of Independence, Edward Gibbon published his *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. The same year saw the publication of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*. The two themes—decline and wealth—bookend the history of the American democratic experiment proposed in the Declaration.

2. C.f., "The Great War and the Origins of Contemporary Ideology,' Chap. 15 below.
3. C.f. the rejection of John Adams's idea that the government should be a "representation in miniature of the free democratic society presented in "Rereading Arendt After the Fall of the Wall," Chap. 9 above.
4. The fiercely capitalist British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, famously replied to the critics who insisted that she take into account the good of society that "there is no such thing as society; there are only individual men and women and there are families." In a sense, she was right; "society" is not something that exists in a state of nature, without human intervention. It is politics that makes society—or in Mrs. Thatcher's case: antipolitics.
5. A further dimension of the political is suggested by the idea that religion could be a form of the political. The political is not identical with politics as it is practiced in our modern societies, or as it is defined by political science where political life is distinguished from other facets of social life by its governmental function. Political power need not be exercised by means of recognizably political institutions. Women were not wrong to denounce the *patriarchy*, socialists to refuse the *dictatorship of capital*, nor rationalists to criticize an unholy coalition of church and state.
6. This is clear when it is recalled that the Greeks distinguished between the laws of nature (*physis*) and a conventional or human law (*nomos*). The political belongs to the domain of human law.
7. It may refuse, arguing that the democratic institutions have been perverted, that the decision reflected a merely formal equality of participation that was overshadowed by the great wealth, or by those in control of the means of communication, or as a result of the abuse of governmental power. In this case, it would denounce the *merely formal democracy* and seek to create a *real or realized democracy*. But the danger here is that a legitimate criticism of abuses of democracy becomes in turn an *antipolitics*.
8. It might be argued that antipolitics enters the picture with the advent of the Thirty Years' War whose result inaugurates a new phase in the history of the political. The appeal to a transcendent deity is replaced by a secular vision. C.f. also the discussion of the way in which Luther's critique of the externality of Catholic religious rites led toward social rebellion in the Peasants' War.
9. C.f., *The Social Contract*, Book 3, chapter IV.
10. C.f., Karl Marx's suggestion in his 1843 *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, that "Democracy is the generic constitution; monarchy is a species, and indeed a poor one. Democracy is content and form; monarchy *should* be only form, but it adulterates the content."

CHAPTER 11

The Paradoxical Success of an Antipolitical Philosophy

As the Evil Empire showed signs of exhaustion before finally disappearing with barely a whimper, normative political theory came to play a political role in spite of its self-proclaimed deontological premises. Political decisions and democratic choices could no longer be justified simply by their opposition to the supposed values of the enemy, as if it sufficed to say that since they're bad we must be good. At about the same time, many on the critical left turned away from a socio-economic critique of capitalism to discover political philosophy by studying the work of Hannah Arendt. This turn to a German-born former student of Martin Heidegger had a curious precedent on the political right among students whose rejection of the consensus liberalism of the placid 1950s led them to the discovery of political philosophy through the work of Leo Strauss, another former student of Heidegger. I have discussed Arendt's work in another chapter of this book[1]; and I will leave the comparison of the political thinker and the master philosopher to intellectual historians. In the present context, I want to try to understand how an explicitly antipolitical philosophy could come to exercise so much political influence, within the academy and still more outside of its borders.

Leo Strauss's philosophy is both radical and critical precisely because he insists on the purity of the philosophical calling even while he has constantly kept his eyes pealed critically on the political world. One has the impression that his denunciation of the shallowness of modernity along with his criticism of the attempts of liberalism to hold back its own tidal pull rejuvenates

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D. Howard, *Between Politics and Antipolitics*, Political Philosophy and Public Purpose, DOI 10.1057/978-1-349-94915-1_11

Strauss's faith in the wisdom of the classical philosophers who form his canon. The result of his faith in the classics is the discovery of new arms and of new insights into the need to renew the critique of modern liberalism. This circular program leads to a series of paradoxes, evasions, and acrobatics that give his work its real power. Strauss denies that he himself has an original substantive political philosophy; he claims to offer only modest commentary on the texts of true (i.e., the classical) philosophers. This very lack of a doctrine made possible the creation of a Straussian school united around interpretation of the works and words of the master. For that same reason, however, the school has been subject to divisions among followers who are left without a positive doctrine that would permit them to routinize the master's charisma. As the most recent full-length study of Strauss shows, the fact that Strauss taught "philosophizing," which he took to be identical with philosophy, meant that his political thought could be applied critically to any social order and yet, for that same reason, it could not propose any positive content for renewing that order.[2]

The Straussians came to have real political influence in the USA even while, and because, they pursued ruthlessly their philosophical project.[3] This two-fronted orientation is illustrated in what can be seen as the "Manifesto" of the Strauss School, the 1962 volume of *Essays on the Scientific Study of Politics*, which stakes claim to the field in its entirety. Strauss denounces contemporary political scientists as "not even Machiavellian, for Machiavelli's teaching was graceful, subtle, and colorful." And while their political science is not "Neronian," Strauss continues dryly, "one may say of it that it fiddles while Rome burns. It is excused by two facts: it does not know that it fiddles, and it does not know that Rome burns." This biting attack is typical; its justification is the unspoken and thus irrefutable assumption that the author knows what the real questions are and where to look for them. Further, because the *Essays* are not a political philosophy or a theory of politics, they cannot be criticized; their modest goal is only to "lead to political philosophy." Yet, in his rebuttal to a critic who had denounced his claims as "intemperate," Strauss revealed the political thrust of his arguments by his hard-nosed insistence that "in scholarship at any rate intransigence—i.e., the habit of refusing to make concessions for the sake of peace and comity—is not fanaticism." This battle-cry dates from 1963, shortly after after a ringing appeal to "the conscience of a conservative" was published under the name of Barry Goldwater, who would go on to win the republican presidential nomination in 1964, proclaiming in his acceptance speech to the Republican convention that "extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice…. [and] that moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue."[4] This may be only a coincidence; Goldwater's ghost writer was L. Brent Bozell, the brother-in-law of William F. Buckley, who does not seem to have been a Straussian. Nonetheless, the challenge to the liberal American consensus (including the East coast republican establishment) was based on a radical critique that would take no captives.[5]

Strauss's political success is due to the paradoxical fact that for him philosophy is by its very nature unpolitical. He proposes no systematic theory of political processes, institutions, or actors; and he offers no solutions to problems of political order, nor does he present a political ethics. His basic insight is only apparently circular or self-contradictory. Philosophy, which is the privilege of the happy few who can achieve the freedom needed to live the *vita contemplativa*, must concern itself with politics; but it does so for philosophical, not for political, reasons. Philosophy has to be concerned with politics in order to protect itself from threats to its very existence by the untutored, and therefore unfree, masses. This presupposition can be understood by any undergraduate who has had to explain the trial and conviction of Socrates as the result of a democratic popular vote. When this insight is applied to modern American life, it takes the Straussian from the classroom to the Pentagon whose mission is the defense of the Free World. The Straussian in government does not seek power or influence for the sake of some external interest or project; the dirty work of politics is necessary only to protect the freedom that is the precondition for a life of philosophical contemplation. Who could object to such self-sacrificing modesty?

This basic assumption explains also the Straussians' success in the world of academic politics. True philosophical freedom is assumed to represent a threat to modern liberalism's mediocrity (or to mediocre political science unable to probe beneath positivist or relativist banalities). In order to protect itself, philosophical freedom must invent specific rhetorical tactics, of which the most important is the distinction between its *exoteric* self-presentation and its *esoteric* self-understanding. The exoteric has a double function; it has to convince the non-initiates that philosophy is no threat to their interests or to their self-esteem and at the same time that it preserves the preconditions for the philosophical enterprise that, eventually, will bring recruits to renew the esoteric project. These new recruits are not drawn to the exoteric doctrine; they know (or are taught) to read between the lines in order to decipher the esoteric teaching. This is the message of Strauss's famous essay on "Persecution and the Art of Writing." It is also the justification of Strauss's claim to enact only the modest role of commentator and interpreter of the classic texts whose dialogue with one another is the esoteric content of Philosophy writ large.[6] The difficulty, as Harald Bluhm points out, is that this supposes that the philosopher has complete control over both sides of his teaching—which is hardly the case of a true dialogue (and is still less often found in political life). More than that, this assumption permits the interpreter to impose a reading of a text on the basis of selective evidence without having to justify that interpretation or defend it against other arguments. The reader of Strauss is constantly astonished by his manner of seizing a tiny detail in a text in order to explode it into the key that unlocks the esoteric doctrine. That is why, as Bluhm notes, a crucial essay such as Strauss's reading of Machiavelli, which marks the breakthrough to his mature method, has found little interest or even debate outside the devotees of the school.[7]

But what is this "philosophy" that the Straussians want to protect? The exoteric answer is well known; it is the classical heritage that must be defended from the modern decadence that began with Machiavelli and was developed in the enlightenment and by the modern schools of subjective natural law. As Harald Bluhm points out, this begs too many questions. What fits and what does not fit into the classical heritage? Plato, of course; but only the *Republic*? The *Republic* and *The Statesman*? What about *The Laws*? The arbitrariness of the commentator cannot be excluded.[8] The same questions hold for the moderns. In the case of modern natural law, why do the positive contribution of Hegel or the critical observations of Hume find no place in Strauss's *Natural Right and History*? The answer of course is that Strauss is reconstructing the esoteric kernel from the exoteric shell; his self-defined task is not to present the history of political philosophy or even to offer his own vision of it.[9] If the task of the modest Straussian philosophical commentary is merely to "lead to political philosophy," and to philosophizing, this neglects the challenge of explaining the decline that led to the dominance of a modernity that is the object of Strauss's mounting and repeated scorn. Rather than diagnose the illness, which might in turn suggest a remedy, the Straussian commentator can only describe the price that is paid for the inevitable decline. This position is perhaps philosophically coherent but it is not politically convincing. Strauss seems to suggest that the decline that accompanies modernity paradoxically protects philosophy since if everyone were a philosopher no one would want to pursue philosophy. To suggest that there might be a remedy to the ills of modernity within modernity itself would imply that the wisdom of the classics is not in and of itself sufficient; it would give modernity more credit than Strauss allows it to bear.[10]

Despite Strauss's insistence on the purity of philosophy and its freedom, Bluhm's recontextualization of Strauss's work shows that he did not think in thin air. For example, Strauss's return to Xenophon's *Hiero* (which is not usually considered part of the classical corpus) to illustrate his analysis in *On Tyranny* only makes sense when understood as an implicit critique of post-war political science's attempt at a value-free analysis of totalitarianism. For Strauss, modern elements of totalitarianism such as the role of ideology and the use of technology do not affect the basic concept (which may be the explanation of his decision to include in the second edition of *On Tyranny* his debate with Alexander Kojève, his long-time friend whose brutal explanation of the need for the philosopher to cooperate with the modern tyrant was an expression of his cynical support for Stalinism). In the same way, Bluhm points out that Strauss's reconstruction of modern natural law across the work of Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Weber is in fact a continuation of his earlier critique of the insufficiently radical account of it in Carl Schmitt's definition of the concept of the political as control over the state of exception—a position that could serve him as a justification for the Nazi assumption of power amidst the supposed chaos of the Weimar republic.[11] Strauss's critique of Schmitt's decisionism implies that there exists a "normal" political order that had been identified by the classics, which Schmitt's appeal to the exception neglects. But Strauss can never offer his *own* account of that normal order, since that would entail defending or at least presenting an exoteric political theory rather than fulfilling the esoteric task of "philosophizing."

This question of the existence of an underlying "order" implied by Strauss's critique of Schmitt's existential decisionism cannot be ignored, particularly in modern democratic societies which are constantly threatened by their own individualist defense of subjective rights. Indeed, this was the rock on which Weimar's republic came to grief, as Bluhm illustrates by means of a comparison of Strauss with Arendt (and with Voegelin). They shared his recognition that the foundational problem of order cannot be solved by institutional remedies because it is not an empirical but a political problem; indeed, it poses the problem of defining the political. In this context, Strauss's insistence on the purity of philosophy (as philosophizing) acquires its political relevance. With the birth of philosophy,[12] there emerges a qualitative measure (or a value: truth) against which empirical orders have to be justified. This is the "order of order" in Bluhm's title. It is not the order of (plural) orders that is at issue here; that would entail a metaphysical assumption that Strauss rejects. But the absence of some deeper foundation is the reason why Strauss's philosophizing—and his critique of the modern "decline" (or fall: Verfall) away from the classical model—does not entail the proposal of remedies. There is no need to adapt various political orders to a unique standard, creating a kind of relative equality among them, such that different political regimes (or what Strauss calls "Cities") could, each in its own way, be a manifestation of that single qualitative order. That he error of modern historicism, and the source of a dangerous relativism, as Strauss never ceases to remind his readers.

The "order of orders" seems to play a double role for Strauss. On the one hand, it stands as a sort of normative horizon that recedes constantly as the philosophers, one after the other, have tried to approach it; but it never moves so far away that it ceases to attract the ardent effort involved in philosophizing. Precisely this status explains why Strauss knows from the outset that he can never propose remedies for the fallen political world whose decline and crisis, paradoxically, he is able to analyze just because of his access to this normative *horizon* of order. Indeed, the error of modernity is said to lie in its hubristic belief that it can cure itself by making immanent the transcendent horizon that is at once an opening toward and an always present barrier to philosophical truth.

On the other hand, the "order of orders" has an apparently non-political moral translation insofar as the freedom entailed in philosophizing is now expressed in the form of those classical virtues that teach the individual how to comport himself within a society composed not only of free (esoteric and philosophical) individuals but also of unfree citizens condemned to live in the (exoteric) shadow world of opinion and illusion. It is these virtues (which are taught also by Revelation) that give the esoteric teaching of philosophy what can be called its *non-political political role*. Bluhm proposes to label this appeal to the classical virtues as an "existential" choice, even though Strauss understands it tautologically as based on those classical notions of virtue that are opposed to modern subjective individualism. Philosophy, like classical virtue, is political because it takes place in the context marked by the modern decline and crisis of the political.

This context helps to understand the emergence of the Straussian school. Both subjective and objective grounds play a role in this process. The lure of the esoteric initiation through the guidance of a Master, along with the self-certainty and interpretative freedom that goes with it, is joined to the exoteric obligation of maintaining a recruitable group of youth on whom the future can draw. For example, it is necessary to establish a "canon" of certified texts and interpretations that are good enough for the general member of society at the same time that they preserve the possibility of discovering the esoteric evidence that can be known by the truly free thinker. This canonical project is encouraged by the fact that Strauss preached no doctrine and proposed neither a concrete analysis of the present nor a project for the future. That interpretative stance meant at first that failure was impossible; unity among the disciples was preserved as long as the master remained present. Since the school was based only on commentaries, interpretations could multiply harmlessly because disagreement concerned only an interpretation not an established and fixed theory.[13] But this same subjective unity opens the possibility of division when the weight of external, objective social conditions cannot be ignored.

At first, the American academic focus on political theory as a domain distinct from the broader field of political science favored unity among the disciples. This may explain why a Strauss school took hold only in the USA. The rise of a neo-conservativism that could legitimate its politics by appeal to Straussian rhetorical denunciations of the liberalism as justifying relativism, historicism, and subjective individualism added to its American appeal. But this practical success was not unambiguous. Its American roots could come back to haunt it, particularly as divisions emerged concerning the question whether the American founding maintained sufficient classical elements to save its liberal democracy from itself, or whether American democracy, especially in its Lockean variety, too will eventually have to suffer the decline typical of modern polities.[14]

The re-emergence of political philosophy after the fall of the Wall will have to meet the normative challenge posed by Strauss. Bluhm's contextualizing criticisms of Strauss's works are useful in that regard, but his general thesis is still more important. The political effects of Strauss's theory are based on his own unpolitical presuppositions (i.e., his stress on "philosophizing"), which make these political effects immune from counter-attack. By distinguishing a realm of truth and freedom from the quotidian world of compromise and constraint, Strauss guarantees himself an endless field for criticism while at the same time protecting himself from any external critique. The objects of his criticism can never defend themselves because they are by definition situated on a different plane since they deal with exoteric opinion rather than esoteric truth. And Strauss can never be challenged to produce his own positive political or institutional proposals because he has ruled this out by definition: the philosophical Word can never become Flesh, neither in Jerusalem nor in Athens. Or, if philosophy does descend, it seats itself in the individual, whom it teaches the ancient virtues of communal life that prepare those who are capable of it for the free living of the philosopher. Put differently, the paradox is that Strauss's positive views are expressed negatively, which means they cannot be attacked even while they provide the subjective basis for the unity of a school that must differentiate itself from those outside. One has to admire the philosopher who built this fortress. But, as with any political project, its cost must also be evaluated.

It might seem obvious that a normative political theory must be empirically informed, and it should include diagnoses and therapies rather than rely on an esoteric hermeneutics that is ultimately unfalsifiable. Although its opposition to the exoteric suppositions of the empirical political scientists is the basis of its strength, it can become the source of its inability to contribute to political theory as it is commonly understood. Perhaps this dilemma is, as some have suggested, a sign that the battle among such all-inclusive visions of political theory has ended? Perhaps the old Weimar expectation that persisted in a different form during the Cold War, that political theory could have practical implications is today an anachronism? Harald Bluhm weighs these possibilities before concluding that there is something in the rationalist and deontological calm that followed the end of totalitarianism that makes one uneasy. Without romanticizing past debates or reawakening the old metaphysical claims, the willingness of the Straussians to take themselves seriously *as philosophers* is impressive. Esoteric as it may be, their theorizing has an existential charge that gives it more than merely subjective weight. Although this source of strength can become a weakness, it can perhaps also be reinterpreted. Rather than taking itself so seriously as philosophizing, political thought should take seriously its own political responsibility. The Straussian school has no place for such a concept; it would probably consider it a pleonasm. Yet the (perhaps exoteric) fact that I am responsible to others is the precondition for recognizing the (perhaps esoteric) fact that I am ultimately responsible to myself. Only then can I philosophize.

NOTES

1. C.f., "Rereading Arendt After the Fall of the Wall," Chap. 9 above.
2. C.f., Harald Bluhm, *Die Ordnung der Ordnung. Das politische Philosophieren von Leo Strauss* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2002). Bluhm notes that such "philosophizing," based on a form of repeated questioning that Strauss calls "zetetic"—a term he takes from Sextus Empiricus—is typical also of

the work of Hannah Arendt. Bluhm suggests that this may have been a result of their studies with Martin Heidegger; but in a later chapter on the critique of modernity, he adds to the comparison of Straus and Arendt the figure of Eric Voegelin, who was trained in Austria.

3. The directly political role of the Straussians is studied by Shadia B. Drury in *Leo Strauss and the American Right* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997). The first paragraph of her Preface notes that Strauss was declared by the *New York Times* to be the "godfather" of the 1994 Republican Party's "Contract with America." Her book then moves directly to treat "Straussians in Washington," while the final chapter is titled "Neoconservatism: A Straussian Legacy." Although Drury is the author of a separate study of the political ideas of Strauss, she insists that this analysis too is "a book about ideas." However that may be, although it does not shy away from politics, Harald Bluhm's book is far more philosophically sophisticated.
4. I am relying here on Bluhm's reconstruction of Strauss's arguments, at pp. 308–310. The allusion to Goldwater is mine. Goldwater's acceptance speech to his party is found at https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Extremism_in_the_Defense_of_Liberty_Is_No_Vice.
5. Ironically, it appears that many of the leaders of the radical attack on the republican establishment that led to Goldwater's victory hat cut their political teeth as members of small Trotskyist sects where they learned how to take control of an organization, placing members in crucial political roles, manipulating motions at meetings, and the like. C.f., the fascinating study by Geoffrey Kabaservice, *Rule and Ruin. The Downfall of Moderation and the Destruction of the Republican Party, from Eisenhower to the Tea Party* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).
6. Note that it is this dialogue, not its content or one of the doctrines contending with the others, that is fundamental for Strauss. C.f., note 1 and the idea of the "zetetic" method of philosophizing.
7. Ibid., pp. 190ff. As Bluhm notes, the exception is Claude Lefort's reading of Strauss which pinpoints a logical flaw in his basic argument. Put simply, Strauss recognizes that Machiavelli is a philosopher moved by constantly renewed questioning; yet his method of looking for the esoteric doctrine hidden by the exoteric presentation assumes that Machiavelli had a fully formed plan underlying the written text If that were true, Strauss's argument would be circular because his philosophical "questioning" would not be philosophizing but only a rhetorical means for exposing this presupposed doctrine. Despite this criticism, Lefort once told me that Strauss's was the most subtle of the readings of Machiavelli.
8. This vagueness might explain why, at least in my copies, Strauss's books contain only nominal indexes; no attempt is made to bind together objective concepts or external referents.

9. Typical of Strauss's attitude is his comment Sabine's *History of Political Philosophy*, a book that was widely read in academic circles. Strauss asks the telling question: why one would want to present a history of error? Cited in Bluhm, op. cit., p. 312, n. 181.
10. The quest for such an immanent critique of modernity animated the early Frankfurt School; it has been the guiding thread to Jürgen Habermas's actualization of Critical Theory. C.f., "Citizen Habermas," Chap. 8, above.
11. Shadia Drury has also published a book on *Alexandre Kojève*: *The Roots of Postmodern Politics* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1994). It would also be interesting in this regard to study the relations of Strauss and Carl Schmitt, as well as those of Kojève and Schmitt. C.f. the relevant sections of Jan-Werner Müller's *A Dangerous Mind. Carl Schmitt in Post-War European Thought* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), pages 202–205 (*re* Strauss) and pages 90–102 (*re* Kojève).
12. The birth of revealed religion, which Strauss struggled to make compatible with philosophy, reconciling "Athens and Jerusalem," is a theme to which I can only allude here.
13. This may explain the continued friendship of Strauss and Kojève, despite their opposed views on the present-day implications of the tyrant and his relation to the philosopher: both were working within a framework marked by a supposed decline of the true philosophical project. C.f., note 10, above.
14. Drury, op. cit., devotes a chapter to "American Applications of Straussian Philosophy." Bluhm's final chapter treats the same issues, but is less concerned with "applications" than with philosophical argument.

CHAPTER 12

Claude Lefort: Elements for a Political Biography

I should note from the outset that Claude Lefort would never have endorsed the title given to this chapter.[1] A political biography rather than a philosophical analysis is a paradoxical way to keep alive one of the most significant political thinkers in post-war France who shied away from the lure and allure of popularity. While many well-known French thinkers since the 1980s have collaborated with younger intellectuals to produce autobiographies on the basis of informal "entretiens," Lefort turned down several requests to lend himself to this kind of popular simplification of his thought. Politics was central to Lefort's life and to his thought; indeed, he would refuse to accept their separation, as if one could think without acting or act without thinking. There is a further reason that Lefort would not approve of the idea of a political biography. As he indicated in the title to his study of Machiavelli, to understand the working of political thought it is necessary also to analyze how that work continues to work among new generations.[2]

The further reason for my hesitation to present a political biography of Lefort is that it would be impossible to separate the strictly political aspects of Lefort's life and work from the philosophical, professorial, and private richness of his life. From his earliest work, Lefort fundamentally challenged the positivist conception of a society seen as if from above, by a subject separated from that society which it divides into distinct and autonomous spheres—of economic, legal, theoretical, and aesthetic authority—which are recombined in different ways by different political

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D. Howard, *Between Politics and Antipolitics*, Political Philosophy and Public Purpose, DOI 10.1057/978-1-349-94915-1_12

regimes. For the same reason, Lefort did not consider his own life on this positivist model of separable fields of existence, as if there were only an external and accidental relation between his social, political, and cultural life. A student of Merleau-Ponty,[3] Lefort remained a phenomenologist, whether he was writing on working-class politics, Soviet totalitarianism, French or Renaissance history, and above all when he tried to understand the radical nature of democracy and of the democratic project.

There is a final *caveat* to add here, an ambiguity to be clarified. I will trace the path that brought Lefort from a nearly full-time commitment to political engagement to a more distant and self-critical intellectual commitment. Lefort was by temperament a radical and a risk taker; the choice of Trotskyism in a France dominated by the Communist Party, and then the break with the Trotskyists were significant choices. When he became convinced that the previous mode of party-political activism was doomed, the political did not lose its attraction for Lefort. The second phase of his political life was marked by two turning points. The first was the completion of his study of Machiavelli which led him radically to reformulate the notion of power. For that reason, and during the same years, Lefort's analysis of the events of May 1968 led him to concentrate his attention of the search for political novelty. This was the second turning point. Together, these two developments permit an understanding of why the next phase of his work began to investigate the nature and the positive implications of political democracy (and the idea of human rights). That is where I will leave the reader, having provided some of the elements of a political biography of a critical intellectual.

1 The Militant as Self-Critical Intellectual

Lefort was politically active, as an engaged militant, between 1941 and 1958,[4] at which point—after two previous ruptures and reconciliations—he broke finally with the self-proclaimed revolutionary political group that published the eponymous journal, *Socialisme ou Barbarie*. The ground of the break was his abandonment of the idea and the ideology of a grand political revolution which would put an end once and for all to the social contradictions of modern societies. The path that led to his disillusionment was presented in a collection of essays, modestly entitled *Éléments d'une critique de la bureaucratie* (1971). Its first chapters, beginning with "Trotsky's Contradiction" which appeared in *Les Temps modernes* in December 1948, turn around the question of the revolutionary party and its relation to the proletariat. The two crucial essays in second part of the

Éléments were both published in *Socialisme ou Barbarie*. "Totalitarianism without Stalin" (1956) appeared immediately after Khrushchev's "Secret Speech" blaming totalitarian failures on the Stalinist Cult of Personality. This was of course an attempt to legitimate really existing communism by finding a scape goat. "The Method of the Progressive Intellectuals" (1958) was another challenge to those who deny the presence of totalitarianism in the practice of the Communist Party itself. These two critical accounts prepared the third part of the *Éléments*, titled simply "Questions." One finds here Lefort's 1963 essay on "The Ideological Degradation of Marxism," as well as his turn toward democracy in the 1966 essay "Toward a Sociology of Democracy." This first period, which was marked by critique and self-critique, took a positive form in the theoretical–political essays that were collected in the volume titled *Les formes de l'histoire*. (1978). That title not only implies a criticism of the idea that history is an unilinear progression toward a *telos* of some kind; Lefort made clear the fluidity of his analysis in adding to the volume the subtitle, *Essais d'anthropologie politique*.

Although Lefort abandoned leftist political activism, he never limited his passion for politics (or separated it from his philosophical reflections), whether in his own country (e.g., in his critique in 1978 of the joint program of the Communist and Socialist parties, with regard to the illusions of Euro-Communism, or again Euro-Communism, or again concerning the refusal of Jacques Delors to enter the presidential campaign of 1995), or abroad (in essays on Eastern Europe, of course, but also in Latin America). His polemical essays were always provoked by political issues, whether it was a matter of denouncing philosophical modes (from those revolving around Sartre or Althusser to those that were generated by the so-called New Philosophers), or of defending the capacity of art to reveal the lineaments of reality (in essays on Blanchot, Orwell, or Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*).[5]

It is not surprising that his introductory essay to the journal *Libre*,[6] where he collaborated once again with Castoriadis, along with Abensour, Gauchet, and Luciani, was entitled *Maintenant*, or that the collection of his previously uncollected writings, published during 60 years of political and theoretical activity, is called *Le temps present*, *Écrits 1945–2005* (2007). In his brief introduction to that volume of more than 1000 pages, he explains that these works bear witness to his constant concern "to disclose or to reveal (*déceler*) the appearance of the unexpected, of that which is a signature of the present moment."

Returning to the theme of political biography, when Lefort does look back on his own political path, the spirit which animates his conception of the political comes clearly to light. In the Preface to the 1979 reedition of *Eléments d'une critique de la bureaucratie* written after the critique of totalitarianism had finally penetrated even the circles of the orthodox French communist left—in part due to Lefort's book on Solzhenitsyn, *Un homme en trop* (1975)—he rejects three erroneous implications that some political theorists had derived from that critique of totalitarianism. Although Lefort was addressing here particularly the so-called "New Philosophers" who had become popular at the time (although, typically, he does not name them), his argument retains a certain contemporary relevance. He rejects first of all the idea that the values of the West have always to be defended against the supposed totalitarian threat; the political world is not defined in black-or-white terms. Second, he refuses the claim that Western and Eastern European societies are both subject, differing only in degree, to the domination of the State (which is written with a capital "S" in order to avoid closer inspection of the social relations that it conceals). And third, he criticizes the idea that the resources necessary for resistance cannot be found in the deplorable spectacle played out on the stage of everyday politics, but are rooted only in the heart of the virtuous or moral individual, or in heaven (as one religious strain of the New Philosophy claimed). In order to escape a binary mode of thought which opposes totalitarianism and democracy as if each were absolute, self-sufficient and unified, Lefort recalls his own trajectory, which consisted in maintaining a double distance in relation to the ideology of revolution and to the weight of Marxism as a political ideology, which he refuses to identify with the thought of Karl Marx.[7]

Lefort explains his path, and his refusal of positivism, even more clearly in the Afterword to this same reedition of *Éléments* under the title "Novelty and the Attraction of Repetition." His earlier work, influenced by Castoriadis' theory of bureaucratic capitalism, had attempted to deploy a Marxist critique of the Soviet Union. To this end, he elaborated a Hegelian–Marxist conception of the proletariat as a political subject that is led, step by step, toward the overcoming of its own alienation until it finally recognizes its own (Stalinist) bureaucracy as its true oppressor.[8] His phenomenological analysis of what he calls in one article "the proletarian experience," and his polemics with Sartre around the same theme (at the time when Sartre was defending the role of the party as the conscience of the working class), predate the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. The experience of those unexpected radical events seemed to confirm the idea that Hungarian workers had not only revolted against totalitarian domination, but they had also invented new forms of self-organization.

These analyses and experiences, Lefort continues, still did not yet lead him to a critical self-understanding. It was the practical experience in the militant organization *Socialisme ou Barbarie* that made him understand that however pure, honest, and transparent a radical party wants to be, its experience inevitably leads to bureaucratic domination over those it claims to liberate. There will remain a division between those who (claim to) know, the leaders or the self-proclaimed vanguard, and those who are assumed to need revolutionary guidance in order to become what History decrees that they must become. This experience led Lefort to realize that "it is at the moment when we taste the bitter delight of overthrowing our biases that we reveal ourselves most fully prisoners of their principles." That is what Lefort's title refers to as "the attraction of repetition," whose force was illustrated at the time that Lefort was writing by the incapacity of Euro-communism to seize the new possibilities (the "novelties") that emerged in the Prague Spring of 1968.[9] Lefort does not exempt himself from this temptation that he calls "repetition," criticizing his own lack of audacity during his militant years. Why then, one wonders, did he publish these early essays as a book even though he had outgrown them? Why did he not take Wittgenstein's advice (in the *Tractatus*) and "throw away the ladder"? "Certainly," he concludes, "for me these essays are far from realizing their goal. I hope the readers will find in them what they are looking for: the incitation to persevere." In other words, Lefort does not want to replace one "militant truth" with another, be it his own. Like Power, Truth is not something that can be appropriated once and for all.

2 THE INTELLECTUAL AS SELF-CRITICAL POLITICAL THINKER

This critical reflection on his own political experience helps to understand why Lefort turned to Machiavelli, whose insistence on the primacy of the political appeared to offer an alternative to Marx's emphasis on the primacy of productive forces. In *Le travail de l'oeuvre Machiavel*, Lefort develops his concept of the work (*oeuvre*) that works (*travail*), creating a relation that is at once instituting and instituted. These terms, and their interrelation, had been a principle theme in Merleau-Ponty's posthumous works. Lefort draws from his close and detailed reading of the Florentine in his world and also in his legacy the lesson that the supposed political "realism" of which Machiavelli is said to be the initiator is based ultimately on his recognition of the *symbolic* role of power.[10] This distinction between the realist and the symbolic implies that politics is not *in* society; politics is rather a *dimension* of society. Particularly in a democratic society, what the objective or realist political scientist calls "politics" is only one dimension of *the* political, that is, of the way in which society represents symbolically not only its own legitimacy but also its future potential. This difference between the political and forms of positive politics has to be seen as one expression of the difference between that which institutes (the symbolic) and that which is instituted (the real), a relationship that is historically and socially variable.

The study of the work of Machiavelli prepared Lefort's next steps. He analyzed the Florentine first of all as a "name" that represents a vision of the political that is said to inaugurate an amoral realism in power politics. Lefort asks whether such a pure vision of power was ever historically effective. Second, he looks at the ways in which political theorists since Machiavelli have claimed to penetrate his essential presuppositions with the goal of overcoming the nefarious amoral implications of his work. As it turns out, each of these attempts at debunking can be shown to make its own presuppositions, pretending that there is an essence to Machiavelli's thinking which they claim to decipher. Third, a close and critical reading of *The Prince* and *The Discourses* proves Machiavelli to have been a constantly self-critical author whose thought is mobilized by events rather than expressing some claim to insight into the essence of the political. The "Machiavelli" who emerges from Lefort's 776 pages resembles no thinker more than the Karl Marx to whom Lefort had constantly turned and would continue to return.

Meanwhile, Lefort's next steps were now prepared. That he had overcome what he called the "attraction of repetition" and turned to the question of political "novelty" was clear in the essay that he wrote while the "events" of May 1968 were still underway. Published in early June of that year, along with essays by Castoriadis and Edgar Morin, *La Brèche* was the first book to propose an analysis that was at once radical but no longer caught up in the vision of revolution that sought to realize in the West what 1917 had supposedly begun in Russia. Lefort didn't propose an alternative theory; it sufficed at that moment to criticize the vision based on repetition and to insist on the need for novelty. The effort to identify the appearance of the new was presented in "Maintenant," the introductory essay to the first issue of the journal *Libre*.[11] The publication of that journal, although it did not last, points to another aspect of Lefort's life as a political intellectual. Despite the fierce independence of his thought, Lefort functioned within the French tradition of an “homme de revues” for whom collective intellectual work is a stimulation, and the essay is a vital form of expression. In addition to *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, and *Informations et liaisons ouvrières (ILO)*, Lefort was a co-editor of *Textures* (1971–1975), of *Libre* (1977–1980), and of *Passé-Présent* (1982–1984). Furthermore, most of his books are collections of essays, a literary form that seems most appropriate for democratic societies, because, like the path traced in *Élements*, it incites his readers to move forward in their reading, challenging them to understand what will follow.[12]

3 From Antitotalitarianism to Democracy

At the conclusion of this brief essay, what can be learned from Lefort’s political biography? I have alluded to the increasingly recognized reception of Lefort’s critique of totalitarianism, and to his rejection of the antipolitical binary simplifications of that critique by the so-called New Philosophers and their epigones. The challenge posed by what Lefort called the dialogue between repetition and the new remains with us, although its form changes, just as do the forms of ideology that Lefort analyzed in his ground-breaking 1974 article “L’ère de l’idéologie” (published in *Les formes de l’histoire*). For example, when an interviewer suggested to him that Solzhenitsyn was a political reactionary and therefore his pathbreaking *Gulag Archipelago* could not be taken seriously by the left, Lefort replied that even “supposing he was a reactionary, that does not prevent him from drawing a correct portrait of Soviet society, tied at least to his experience.” Similarly, in Lefort’s own case, preachers of political correctness who do not understand the symbolic nature of power and who therefore reduce the political to “realistic” politics criticize Lefort’s later work on the advent of democracy and human rights as “liberal.” Defining politics by who-does-what-to-whom, they reduce it to a simple binary choice between progressives and reactionaries. They do not understand why Lefort would devote himself to critically rereading nineteenth-century liberal thought (Tocqueville, Guizot, Quinet, and of course Michelet have been subjects of his essays in the subsequent period). These self-declared radical realists have not noticed, apparently, that the two volumes in which these essays were published—*Écrire: à l’épreuve du politique* (1992) and the *Essais sur le politique, XIX–XX siècles* (2001)—also contain repeated interrogations of the actuality of both Marx and Machiavelli. In this context, it is clear that Lefort turned to those nineteenth-century liberals because they produced works whose sense cannot be exhausted in a single reading precisely because they question a present characterized by instability, searching for principles of order, asking how to trace the figure of these new conditions. Lefort is not a historian of ideas; he is not interested in these thinkers for their theories but as representatives and expressions of the novelties (and the risk of repetition) of a new democratic society.

Perhaps Lefort's path is best summed up in the small book published in 1999 entitled *Complications.* The essay is another "return," but this time it returns to the question of communism itself.[13] Challenging the interpretations of François Furet (in *Le passé d'une illusion*, translated into English as *The Passing of an Illusion*: *The Idea of Communism in the Twentieth Century*) and Martin Malia (in *The Soviet Tragedy*). Both authors want to demonstrate that the Soviet Union was doomed because of the weaknesses and flaws of its ideological basis. But Lefort objects to this reading that privileges the role of ideas. He recalls his arguments that the symbolic character of power should not obscure its material reality, and that the understanding of "the political" should not exclude the interpretation of politics in its most sordid expressions. He pushes further his argument when he points out that the two historians are "ideocrats" who treat ideology as a real power. Despite his own insistence on the symbolic nature of power, Lefort recognizes here that ideology alone does not suffice to explain reality's complications, which are indeed real. The militant who had become a self-critical intellectual returns here to 60 years of debate about the nature of communism. He demonstrates that those who based their critiques solely on the sordid nature of communist politics have in their turn avoided the essential "complication" that results from the symbolic constitution of the political. While it is true that ideas cannot stand on their own feet, neither can the real be reduced to a brute fact whose immediate and objective description would be sufficient to understand its complicated relation either to others of its kind or to ideas that purport to exhaust its meaning. As I said at the outset of these remarks, the political militant and intellectual remained a phenomenologist in the best sense of the term.

When Claude Lefort died at the age of 86, on October 3, 2010, the French press marked his passing with pages of praise that honored and remembered one of the great thinkers of the century. American and German media remained silent. A brief anecdote may help to understand this neglect. When Lefort received the Hannah Arendt Prize given by the city of Bremen in 1998, I was asked to deliver, in German, the *Laudatio*, expressing the jury's reasons for honoring him with this distinction.[14]

At the beginning of my presentation, at the City Hall before a non-academic public, I asked why a German prize jury had to send for an American in order to honor a French thinker. Franco-German relations were not so bad after all, I pointed out, and indeed they had become more frequent of late. This was of course a rhetorical question, permitting me to go on with the obligatory discourse (which was another sort of political biography of Lefort). I then suggested three reasons for this neglect. First, Lefort was a critic of totalitarianism who did not restrict the relevance of that critique to political regimes of the past, particularly after the Fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Second, given German history—both Nazism and what was called in the post-war East "really existing socialism"—political theory in Germany had to give a unique and positive—rather than a "complicated"—picture of democracy. Third, German political theory tends to be overwhelmingly sociological in its orientation, tending toward functionalism and realism. For these three reasons, I suggested that the political path of a thinker capable of self-criticism like Lefort was bound to be an unwelcome challenge to the framework of German self-consciousness. I wondered, but did not ask in that context, to what degree these same three factors have interfered with the American reception of Lefort's political thought? If I return to this little story today, at the end of these remarks, it is to emphasize how much the work of Lefort—or perhaps I could say, playing on the title of his Machiavelli the work of his works—continues to put into question the supposed perennial virtues of our own democracy.

NOTES

1. This chapter is based on my talk given shortly after the death of Claude Lefort, on October 3, 2010, at a memorial Conference held on October 30 2010 at the New School for Social Research, co-sponsored by the journal *Constellations*. As the first paper presented, my assigned task was to give an overview of Lefort's life as the introduction to a two-day conference.
2. C.f., *Le travail de l'oeuvre* Machiavel (Paris: Gallimard, 1972). The title suggests that there is a "work" called Machiavelli, whose working Lefort will analyze. The English translation by Michael B. Smith capu\tures one aspect of this title. C.f., *Machiavelli in the Making* (Northwestern Universiy Press, 2012).
3. This interdependence of life and thought can be seen also in Lefort's work on the posthumous work of his teacher and friend, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, editing *Le visible et l'invisible*, *suivi de notes de travail* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964) and *La prose du monde* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969). There

exists also a lengthy unpublished manuscript on Merleau-Ponty in English that is based on the lectures and readings that Lefort gave at Stony Brook University as a visiting professor.

4. His commitment was not just academic or polemical. He explains that already in 1941 he had organized resistance to the German Occupation of Paris in 1941, giving him hope that in spite of his disagreements with the prevailing views of the Trotskyists, he could mobilize support for his political views inside the resistance. Later, after permanently leaving *Socialisme ou Barbarie* in 1958, he joined with others to create a journal for workers' self-expression called ILO (*Informations et liaisons ouvrières*). When this project came to naught, he took part in a discussion group called the Cercle Saint-Juste, where he rejoined Castoriadis, Vidal-Naquet, Vernant, Châtelet, and others in discussions of Greek history and the French Revolution. Later, Lefort participated in the editorial committees of several journals, including *Textures*, *Libre,* and *Passé-Présent*, as I will note in a moment.
5. One can find most of the texts to which I refer here in the many pages that compose the anthology of his previously uncollected essays, *Le temps present* (2007). His writings on aesthetics and philosophy are also found in *Sur une colonne absente. Écrits autour de Merleau-Ponty* (1978).
6. The editorial committee of *Libre* (whose first issue was published in 1977, and whose last issue dated from 1980). Its editorial committee was composed of Miguel Abensour, Cornelius Castoriadis, Pierre Clastres, Marcel Gauchet, Claude Lefort, and Maurice Luciani. The journal, which appeared twice yearly, was subtitled "Politique-anthropologie-philosophie." The hyphens connecting the concepts in this subtitle were meant to be taken explicitly. The renewed collaboration with Castoriadis did not last. The last issue of *Libre* contained an essay on the Soviet Union with which Lefort disagreed profoundly. The editorial group divided among the supporters of one or the other, and dissolved.
7. In an interview with the group *Anti-Mythes* (now republished in *Le Temps present*) Lefort compares his own attitude toward Marx to that of Castoriadis. He argues that Castoriadis's critique of Marxism and of Marx is "entirely justified." But, he continues, Castoriadis does not see, and will not admit, what his critique itself in fact owes to Marx: "His desire to desacralize Marx, which is legitimate, pushes him to accentuate his break with Marx."

   Having returned again and again to Marx—notably in a long essay "D'une forme d'histoire à une autre," later in a rereading of the *Communist Manifesto*, and more recently in his critique of Marx's criticism of the idea of human rights—Lefort sees in Castoriadis' attitude "the illusion of *knowing* what Marx is doing" which is a displaced version of the illusion that there can be an ultimate knowledge of society which would permit the surpassing of its divisions. In other words, Lefort is once again criticizing the illusions of positivism to which I referred at the outset of this essay. C.f., also Lefort's critical engagement with the work of Leo Strauss, to which I refer in "The Paradoxical Political Success of an Antipolitical Philosophy," Chap. 11.

8. The Trotskyist theory assumed that by abolishing private property the 1917 Revolution created the material basis for communism, but that the Stalinist superstructure (i.e., the bureaucracy) prevented the proletariat from benefitting from its own conquests.
9. "Euro-Communism" was the last-ditch attempt, initiated by Spanish and Italian communists, to save the Marxist project by creating what was called "socialism with a human face." In the 1970s, it remained for some an ideal that had flowered briefly during the heady days of the Prague Spring that had met its demise when Soviet tanks crushed the reformist politics that had been briefly in power. The rise of Polish *Solidarnosc* and its crushing by the coup d'état of 1981 put an end to Euro-Communist hopes.
10. This distinction is illustrated clearly in Miguel Abensour's analysis of the two phases of Lefort's critique of totalitarianism, the first based on a radical political realism, the second developing his understanding of the symbolic function of power. Abensour's essay is published in *La démocratie à l'oeuvre. Autour de Claude Lefort*, edited by Claude Habib and Claude Mouchard (Paris: Editions Esprit, 1993), pp. 79–136.
11. During the time of *Libre*, Lefort also joined with Clastres, Gauchet, and Abensour in a collective study group that produced a new commented edition of Étienne de la Boétie's *Discourse on Voluntary Servitude*, touching another theme that remained central to his political thought.
12. C.f., for example, Lefort's essay, "Democratie et l'art d'écrire" in *Écrire. A l'épreuve du politique*, whose title suggests that writing is itself the test of the political. Also worth noting in this context is his essay, "Philosopher?" whose interrogative title is significant. Lefort suggests that his true ambition was to be a writer (this essay is published in op. cit.).
13. The English translation is *Complications. Communism and the Dilemmas of Democracy*, translated by Julian Bourg with a Foreword by Dick Howard (Columbia University Press, 2007).
14. I was a member of the jury. C.f., the text in its original German that appeared in the *Festschrift zur Verleihung des Hannah-Arendt-Preises für politisches Denken 1998* (Bremen: Boll Stiftung, 1998).

CHAPTER 13

The Necessity of Politics

Since the Fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, radical political philosophy has been adrift. The well-worked opposition of variants of deontological liberal rights theories and attempts to (somehow) update the Marxist philosophy of praxis no longer help either to understand or to change their the world. But it is hard to give up the old certitudes and set out for new horizons. As a compromise, there have been attempts to adapt the old orientations and language to the new world. The result only produces a new opposition, this time between the quest to realize a system of normative international law and the attempt to invent new forms of global civic solidarity. This brings the older opposition up to date; but the opposition remains. The deontological paradigm now proposes a normative corrective to a globalized market, while the idea of an autonomous civil society that led to the revolutions of 1989 is subsumed under the vision of a cosmopolitan idea of human rights. Looked at more closely, both visions share a common set of presuppositions. They begin from the notion that the end of communism means that we now live in One Global World which, for the moment, exists only *an sich*, implicitly, until a politics is invented that will help it become *für sich*, realizing its potential. The problem, however, is that this manner of formulating the challenge of our new age is essentially *antipolitical*. Its demand for universality occludes the particular, its quest for unity leaves no place for difference; and in the same movement practice is subordinated to theory.

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D. Howard, *Between Politics and Antipolitics*, Political Philosophy and Public Purpose, DOI 10.1057/978-1-349-94915-1_13

The concept of antipolitics is paradoxical because antipolitics is still a form of politics. Antipolitics reached its fullest expression in totalitarianism whose overthrow is symbolized by the Fall of the Berlin Wall. More broadly, the events of 1989 marked the end of what I have called “two hundred years of error” during which different more or less successful variants of antipolitics became the dominant form of politics. This development was the result of the failure to understand that democracy is itself a radical force.[1] When it burst onto the political stage with the American and then the French Revolution, politicians and philosophers sought to tame the unruly, even anarchic, democratic spirit. From the perspective of liberalism, three options came to dominate: the subsumption of public and private social relations under legal rules, the imposition of the bureaucratic or technocratic regulations, and a common sense pragmatism to smooth the hard edges of conflict.[2] From the side of the Marxist philosophers of praxis, a similar role was played by the assurance that the economic infrastructure was leading to an historical transformation when the attainment of political power by the proletariat would put an end to class struggle. In both cases, *politics* (*and political theory*) *become antipolitical*. Their goal is to eliminate conflict either by discrediting any particular interest or by claiming that because there exist only particular interests no overriding political claim can be valid. The paradox of antipolitics is that it is a politics that seeks to put an end to the political.

The potential opened by the breakdown of totalitarianism can be captured by articulating the paradoxical structure of antipolitics in order to conceptualize the necessity of a specific kind of political *judgment*. In this context, politics does not refer to a unique aspect of social relations distinct from, say, economics or law which could be described by an objective observer. Politics expresses the way in which society as a whole is organized; more broadly, the political is the foundation and the origin of social life. The implications of this idea of the political can be illustrated when Marx’s work—all of it!—is interpreted as *systematic philosophy*.[3]A new version of the paradox of antipolitics emerges from this perspective. While Marx described with brio and brilliance the emergence of democratic society, this systematic philosophical imperative led him to misunderstand his own achievement. Because democracy is not a state of affairs that can be observed by an outside (or divine) spectator, it is never fully realized because its premises constantly challenge its existing form. Like the paradoxical relation of politics and antipolitics, the incompleteness of democracy leads to the temptation to try to realize its potential. The specter of antipolitics reappears, as a brief comparison of the American and the French revolutions illustrates.

The difference between the two democratic revolutions can be expressed by the antithesis of a "republican democracy" and a "democratic republic." As has been suggested earlier, the French sought to realize a democratic republic by using political power to transform society so that the tension between the universality of the state and the particularity of society was overcome. The conquest of political power in 1789 was to be completed by the social revolution of 1793.Had they succeeded, the result would have been antipolitical. The Americans did not succumb to that temptation, although it did appear, for example, in the opposition of the Anti-Federalists to the new constitution of 1787.The practical effects of that constitution made possible a republican democracy that was fully realized by what contemporaries called "the revolution of 1800." The fact that power passed peacefully from one political party to its opponents, consecrated by the Supreme Court in 1803, meant that the nation was at once politically united and yet socially diverse. This was the form of a republican democracy that did not put an end to politics. For just that reason, American history has not been exempt from the temptation of antipolitics.

The antithesis of a democratic republic and a republican democracy can be expressed conceptually as the difference between a "politics of will" and a "politics of judgment." The distinction draws on, but is not identical to, the difference between Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* and his *Critique of Judgment*. Just as democracy by its very nature seems to be incomplete and in need of additional inputs for its realization, so too the relation of moral principles to their realization is uncertain, open ended, and disquiet. Practical reason is founded on the moral will of the free individual; yet a will that expresses only a moral principle is incomplete because no matter how universal its principle, it demands concrete realization in particular conditions. But the external application of moral principles transforms the politics of will into an antipolitics.[4] This temptation is avoided by Kant's notion of reflective judgment, which begins from the concrete particular case in order to assert a claim that is universal. That claim, however, cannot be imposed; it must be accepted as valid by those concerned by it. The resulting "politics of judgment" could provide a way to interpret the new situation in which we find ourselves after the revolutions of 1989.

1 Politics and Enlightenment

My title could be read as an allusion to Marx's 11th *Thesis on Feuerbach* (1845), which asserts boldly that philosophers have only interpreted the world whereas the point is to change it. The usual interpretation of Marx says that his life and work were the fulfillment of that imperative. I want to correct that oversimplification, which is based on the posthumous publication of notes written by Marx as he tried to overcome his Hegelian heritage by means of what he called *The German Ideology*. Three years later, exiled from Paris to Brussels, Marx penned another famous aphorism in a pamphlet that became a foundation stone of a political movement: "A specter is haunting Europe, the specter of Communism."*The Communist Manifesto* described more than the progress toward the final stage in the history of economic class struggles; alongside, or rather beneath, the rise of capitalism, Marx intuited a fundamental change in the foundations of social relations. The traditional hierarchical image of social relations was shattered. As another aphorism put it, "All that is solid melts into air; all that is holy is profaned and man is at last compelled to face, with sober senses, his real conditions of life and his relations with his kind."It becomes clear that the "specter" that Marx portrays is the specter of democracy. In classical terms, he described the birth of a democratic *regime*, a type of social relations whose uniqueness I will illustrate in a moment.[5] Why did Marx, and then later Marxists, misinterpret the truly radical implications of this new democratizing world?

Faithful to the imperative of the 11th *Thesis on Feuerbach*, Marx tended to conflate politics with revolution. Ever the philosopher, he assumed that there existed, beneath everyday political activity, and at the foundation of the sudden upheavals that could be captured only by metaphor, simile, or aphorism, socio-economic conditions that either explained events or explained why the actors misunderstood the imperatives of their own situation. More broadly, revolution was inscribed necessarily onto the agenda of History.[6] *The Communist Manifesto*, as its title suggests, claims to make manifest this underlying truth; in the process, human consciousness is brought from the darkness into the light. In this sense, Marx's theory belongs to one strand of the Enlightenment. In another sense, however, the politics of revolution does not fit so well with the goals of the Enlightenment. With the notable and late exception of Condorcet's *Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Spirit* (1795), the *philosophes* did not put the same explanatory weight on historical progress. For

Marx, and still more for his twentieth-century followers, the canonical progress was incarnate in the movement of the French Revolution from 1789 to1793.This intuition was confirmed by the apparent return of the repressed in 1830, 1848, 1871, before it finally reached its apotheosis in 1917. "Well grubbed, old Mole," wrote Marx in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, referring this necessary progress of the revolutionary spirit.

The interpretation of Marx's political theory as an historical determinism is contradicted by another aspect of his Enlightenment heritage. It can be claimed that Marx identifies politics with the process of demystification, the denunciation of false consciousness, and the materialist critique of idealism. Politics and the critique of ideology seem to share common roots in the Enlightenment. Both denounce the injustices of alienated or exploitive social relations; both agree with Voltaire's imperative to *écraser l'infâme*. The reader of *Capital* is literally swamped with information about its ill effects, for example, in the long chapter on the working day in volume I. The problem is that this vision of politics is based on an *external criticism*. The critic stands outside of the relation between consciousness and its conditions; the result becomes an antipolitics. The young Marx had developed a theory of *immanent critique*. In his "Introduction to a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right" (1843), he defines the task of politics as "to make these petrified relations dance by singing before them their own melody." This image supposes that the seeds of a better, more rational, and therefore more just society are already *immanent in* the relations of modern society; critical politics pierces beneath the appearing world to draw out its radical potential, making it dance in the sunlight of reason.[7]That is why Marx spent his critical energy writing *Das Kapital* rather than describing the inevitable coming of *Der Kommunismus*!

A century later, the notion of immanent critique was the crucial insight of the Frankfurt School, which rejected the rigid orthodoxy that had come to power in the name of communism. The foundations of this method and its implications were most powerfully elaborated in the two essays of 1936–1937 in which Max Horkheimer and Herbert Marcuse explained the difference between "Traditional and Critical Theory," and the relation between "Philosophy and Critical Theory."[8] The presupposition of their critique was a Marxian vision of history stripped of its determinism. But their experience of two totalitarianisms and their American exile led Horkheimer and Adorno to turn the critical method on itself in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947).In this dark vision, the paradoxical result of the historical process of Enlightenment had become a "totally administered world" populated by subjects who have lost their critical and self-critical subjectivity. Horkheimer refused for two decades to publish his earlier Marx-inspired works while Marcuse, who remained in the USA, titled his critique of contemporary society *One-Dimensional Man* (1964).The concluding sentence to his radical critique was a despairing citation from Walter Benjamin: "It is only for the sake of those without hope that hope is given to us." The further development of Critical Theory's method of immanent critique need not concern us here.[9] Contrary to the Marx's imperative, it is important to understand the *philosophical* roots of the ambiguity in his concept of radical politics.

2 The Systematic Structure of Marx's Dialectics

I have tried to show elsewhere that there is a unity in Marx's work which is the result of his systematic philosophical project. Its earliest formulation is found in a note that he added to his doctoral dissertation indicating his dialectical intent. Marx suggests the need to understand that philosophy cannot stand outside the world that it seeks to understand, but he adds that this becomes possible only insofar as that world itself becomes philosophical. Becoming worldly, the nature of philosophy is transformed; becoming philosophical, the world becomes rational. Neither change can be realized without the other. That means that neither can be said to cause or condition the other; their relation is originary and therefore is systemic. Marx's intuition was clearly influenced by Hegel's dialectical logic, but he wants to free himself from the philosopher's idealism. His next advance came in two essays of 1843: "On the Jewish Question" and the "Introduction to a Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*." The systemic dialectic returns in a series of originary formulations. Marx insists, for example, that "the weapon of critique" goes together with "the critique of the weapons," and that the "practical party" cannot succeed without the "theoretical party" for the same reason that the latter cannot succeed without the former. The demonstration then culminates with the discovery of the proletariat which incarnates the dialectical logic insofar as it is both a subject capable of action and also an object produced by past history. This subject-object of history is not to be confused with the poor or the oppressed classes of prior history; the new social relations that Marx identifies with capitalism have made it capable of acting to make change (rather than simply reacting to what has been done to it).This sets the stage for revolution; the actors are present, the play can begin. There remains one difficulty. Marx says that the hour of emancipation will occur when the "lightning of thought" strikes this "naïve soil of the people." It could be said that the rest of Marx's work attempted to unpack this metaphor.

The double imperative of Marx's dialectical philosophy can be understood as the attempt to unite a Hegelian phenomenological (or genetic) account with a logical (or normative) analysis in order to produce a systemic dialectic.[10] Thus, in the *1844 Manuscripts*, a first, phenomenological, analysis criticizes the structure of alienated labor before the manuscript breaks off, as if Marx were unable to see how the negative experience he describes could itself be negated. A second manuscript then moves forward by describing a logical clash between capital and labor. At first, these two forces cooperate for their mutual benefit, but then, in a dialectical inversion, each recognizes its own proper interest; the result can only be a final clash rather than a new unity. The third manuscript returns to "the greatness of Hegel's *Phenomenology*" to try to find a synthesis in the notion of labor itself. When this project again falls short, Marx apparently gives up on the implicit idealism of his dialectic to elaborate his systemic project in the historical materialism presented, with Engels, in *The German Ideology*.

But philosophy, with its double, systemic imperative, continues to be present in Marx's later works. Perhaps the best illustration is found in a long argument in the *Grundrisse*.[11] To be complete, the account of the necessary dissolution of capitalism must have four distinct moments corresponding to the genetic and the normative expressions of use value (i.e., the real usefulness of a commodity) and exchange value (i.e., its market value).From the side of capital, the demonstration must show (1) that it develops use values whose realization is blocked by its one-sided stress on exchange value; and (2) that even on its own terms it produces economic crises caused by the pressure of competition that drives it to expand beyond its own limits. This dual contradiction must be accompanied on the side of labor by the demonstration (3) that "civilizing" processes occur within the alienation of capitalist production that produce a new "wealth" of needs and capacities which form the basis of a new form of social relations; and (4) that the labor theory of value is made obsolete by economic development itself such that alienated labor can no longer reproduce capitalist social relations. Enough has been said about the economic problems in capitalism's self-realization; while it will not break down on its own, the crises that plague its process of reproduction cannot be denied.

The other three moments are developed in a brief but lucid—even prophetic—account of fully realized capitalism at the beginning of Notebook VII of the *Grundrisse*. While its arguments explain Marx's expectation in the *Critique of the Gotha Program* (1875) that, in the second phase of communism, "the springs of wealth" will flow freely, they also suggest the need to reconstruct a normative notion of the political that can replace capitalism's "obliteration" of that domain.

Marx argues that the complete development of capital takes the form of modern industry based on machinery. In these conditions, it is not the "direct skillfulness" of the worker but "the technological application of science" that is the crucial productive force. (Gr, 699) At first, this appears to produce a "monstrous disproportion between the labor time applied and [the value of] its product..." (Gr, 705). And "the human being comes to relate more as watchman and regulator of the production process itself," inserting "the process of nature, transformed into an industrial process, as a means between himself and inorganic nature, mastering it" (Id). From the standpoint of exchange value, the worker simply stands at the side of the process; he is present "by virtue of his presence as a social body." But *this is where the process inverts itself.* "It is, in a word, the development of the social individual which appears as the great foundation-stone of production and of wealth." And, Marx continues, "*the theft of alien labor time on which present wealth is based* is a miserable foundation in the face of this new one" (Id, Marx's emphasis). This account goes beyond the abstract individualist view of alienated labor formulated in 1844. Its economic premises have systematic philosophical consequences.

Marx's argument can be reconstructed in four steps. Beginning from the side of labor (4) he shows that the development of productivity by the application of science makes nature work for man. This implies that labor time ceases to be the measure of value. As a result, production based on exchange value will break down of its own accord. The growth of the power of social production increases the disposable time available to society, which at first falls to the capitalists. But as this disposable time grows, it becomes clear that "real wealth is the developed productive power of all individuals. *The measure of wealth is then not any longer*, *in any way*, *labor time*, *but rather disposable time*" (Gr, 708, my stress). In this way, concludes Marx, capitalism contains a "moving contradiction" which leads it to reduce labor time to a minimum at the same time that it assumes that labor time as the measure and source of wealth. Further, (3) since work has become supervisory and regulatory, the worker recognizes that "the product ceases to be the product of isolated direct labor; rather it is the combination of social activity that appears as the producer" (Gr, 709). Individual labor has now become social labor; it is no longer producing exchange value but use values. In addition, "[f]ree time—which is both idle time and time for higher activity—has naturally transformed its possessor into a different subject, and he then enters into the direct production process as this different subject" (Gr, 712).With this, the first part of Marx's demonstration is complete.

To the "moving contradiction" of labor in capitalism, Marx now adds the perspective of capital. Capitalism considers wealth only in the form of exchange value. As a result, (2) capital seeks to limit the new human possibilities for free human development. If it succeeds, this will have the necessary result that there will be surplus production that cannot be sold for lack of available consumers. The accumulated capital which is the sum of the surplus labor imposed by capital will not be realized; the cycle of production, exchange, and expanded reproduction will break down. There is a further contradiction facing capital.(1) Its normative orientation to the production of exchange value may slow the development of new productive techniques because it refuses to admit that the priority of "[t]he free development of individualities, and hence not the reduction of necessary labor time so as to posit surplus labor, but rather the general reduction of the necessary labor of society to a minimum, which then corresponds to the artistic, scientific etc. development of the individuals in the time set free, and with the means created, for all of them" (Gr, 706). Productive inventions that that could better social conditions will not be put to use because they do not increase the exchange value that is the norm for capitalism.

The four moments necessary to the transcendence of capitalism *on its own basis* are now present. The demonstration is magnificent in its philosophical rigor, but it says nothing about politics, and nothing at all about the democracy that—I claimed at the outset of this discussion—was what Marx was in fact describing. Marx seems to give too much weight to philosophy and its rational imperatives, and too little to the particularity of politics. If we continue to look at Marx to try to find the fruitful errors from which we can still learn, we have to take at face value Marx's claim—presented in the *Jewish Question* (1843) and present throughout his writing—that "merely formal democracy" is insufficient. A formal democracy expresses apolitical alienation that needs to be overcome. Just as philosophy must become worldly as the world becomes philosophical, so too democracy must become worldly as the world becomes democratic. This would be the task of the Marx's revolutionary politics, which is inscribed in the historical existence of capitalism whose secret *telos* he claimed to have made manifest in *The Communist Manifesto*. But Marx's concept of revolutionary politics remained as undefined as his youthful appeal to "the lightning of thought" to awaken the slumbering proletariat.

3 Democratic Republic or Republican Democracy?

Although he earned much of his income from journalism that he published in the *New York Herald Tribune*, addressed a congratulatory letter to Lincoln on his reelection in 1864, and late in life suggested that the USA might advance to communism without a violent revolution, Marx never asked what was revolutionary about the American Revolution. A German of the nineteenth century, Marx had no reason to distinguish between a political republic and a democratic society. As I have suggested elsewhere, the difference of a "democratic republic" (on the model of the French Revolution) and a "republican democracy" (typified by the American experience) became pertinent only after the twentieth century's experience of totalitarianism. But Marx would have been aware of a theory that distinguished the "two revolutions" that emerged already at the time of the revolutions themselves. Friedrich Gentz, a disciple of Edmund Burke and later secretary to Metternich at the Congress of Vienna had published a pamphlet on the subject in 1797.Gentz's work was immediately translated by John Quincy Adams to be used as a weapon in his father's campaign against the Francophile, Thomas Jefferson. The implication drawn by Adams was that the American Revolution was ultimately conservative and orderly because it remained merely political without touching the basic hierarchies of traditional society whereas the French was anarchic and disruptive because the social transformations that it sought were without limits. The political thesis of Adams' translation was that Jefferson was a Francophile whose victory would be the prelude to an American version of the Reign of Terror. The political gamut did not pay off; the victory of Jefferson brought a revolution—but not in the French mode. Nearly two centuries later, Hannah Arendt could develop the idea of the "two revolutions" in *On Revolution*.[12]

In the process of freeing himself from Hegel's idealism, the young Marx had criticized a "merely" political revolution in his essay *On the Jewish* Question (1844).For him, the French had invented a truly revolutionary politics that went beyond the establishment of political liberty by the overthrow of the monarchy in 1789 to demand in 1793 the transformation of that liberty into social equality. Revolutionary politics in this way seeks to realize democracy by overcoming the political alienation that separates the state from society. The result is a paradoxical and ultimately antipolitical politics. The paradox lies in the fact that *if it were realized*, *this Marxist revolution would leave no room for politics.* The difficulty can be formulated in dialectical terms. If the sovereign *will* of the people, the demos, were able to externalize itself, to represent and to realize itself truly and fully, there would be neither space nor time for political *judgment* and rational discourse. The same paradox is seen in Rousseau's *Social Contract*, whose influence on the French Revolution is well known. Rousseau distinguishes the *volonté générale* (the General Will) from the *volonté de tous* (the Will of All).The General Will, like the Revolution, either exists or it does not exist; there is no way that the sum of the votes of all citizens as individuals, let alone a simple majority of them, can achieve the universal validity of the General Will. The resulting theory is antipolitical; it leaves no space for discussion, debate, or the exercise of judgment.

Marx's attempt to define a model for *future* revolutionary action on the basis of the egalitarian phase of the French Revolution that was in fact a *failed* radicalization points to another paradox. The comparison of a democratic republic and a republican democracy shines a new light on the French and American revolutionary experiences. The aim of a democratic republic is to overcome the distinction between society and the state, whereas the task of a republican democracy is to preserve the universality of the republican political framework in order to make possible political action that enriches democratic life. It was no coincidence that twentieth-century communist-ruled states referred to themselves as "democratic republics."[13]There was no place for politics in these totalitarian systems which claimed to have abolished the political alienation that separates the social and the political. For the same reason, the individual's judgment was subsumed under the sovereignty of the universal reason of the democratic state. On the other hand, paradoxically, American a republican democracy realizes the model that was implicit in Marx's appeal to a *failed* radicalization that was open to future political activity. The maintenance of the republican constitutional framework permitted and even encouraged the development of a democratic population.[14] America's republican democracy insured that the space between the state and society remained in principle open for political engagement.

A final paradox emerged in the history of America's republican democracy when what appeared to be a "failure" became the source of success. The republican democracy seems to reproduce the distinction between the state and society that the young Marx had criticized in 1844. As a result, the kind of radical political engagement that it encourages seems to be based on a critique of the incompleteness of merely formal democracy. If that were the case there would have been more attempts to create a democratic republic.[15] The difference in principle between the American republican democracy and the nineteenth-century European state can be seen in the two decisive moments of the early American political experience. When contemporaries called the election of Thomas Jefferson the "revolution of 1800," they meant more than the empirical passing of power from one party to its opponents. This transfer of power was peaceful because the republic was understood to be the framework which permitted the particular interests of society to co-exist. This assumption was confirmed in 1803 when the decision of the Supreme Court in Marbury v. Madison affirmed that the sovereign power in the USA does not repose in the wishes of the temporary majority that has formed the government. That assumption would imply that America was a democratic republic (as many of Jefferson's supporters would have wished).The decision of the Court implied that the will of the sovereign people is expressed in the constitution; no particular interest can claim to express or represent it but all such interests can compete with one another within its framework. In this way, the American republic is both one and divided; it is united symbolically in spite of the persistence of different interests and ideas whose conflict and compromise are the stuff of democratic politics. It is a republican democracy.[16]

4 The Principles of the Politics of Judgment

Although history neither repeats itself nor serves as a guide for the future, the comparison of the two revolutions offers some *principles* for judging the possibilities and the dangers that were opened after 1989 with the end of "two hundred years of error" in 1989. Like any democracy, a republican democracy cannot avoid the temptations of antipolitics; in philosophical terms, this is the result of a politics of the will. Drawing on Hegel, Marx proposed a politics of the will on the basis of his understanding of the radicalism of the French Revolution. In philosophical terms, both Hegel and Marx sought to actualize Kant's critical philosophy by overcoming the dualism of the knowing subject and the objective world. Hegel universalized the knowing subject (in the form of Spirit); Marx universalized the objective world (in the historical path to communism).There were, however, good grounds for Kant's self-limitation, which preserves the role of particularity without abandoning the quest for universality. Indeed, Kant's dualism is in the end what makes his philosophy *critical*. After his *Critique of Pure Reason* (showing the limits of knowledge) and his *Critique of Practical Reason* (restraining the reach of liberty that must submit to law), Kant turned to the *Critique of Judgment* (which can never be imposed on others).

The principles of Kant's theoretical dualism find an echo in the structure of republican democracy. In politics, Kant was a republican; and his definition of Enlightenment as "freedom from one's self-incurred tutelage" is consonant with democratic principles. In the "Theory of Right" elaborated in his *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant insists that because "individuals or peoples must influence one another, they need to live in a state of right under a unifying will: that is, they require a *constitution* in order to enjoy their rights." These principles are articulated in Kant's essay on "An Idea of Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View." In its Fourth Proposition, he underlines the role of "antagonism within society," which he defines, in italics, as man's "*unsocial sociability*." This characteristic of men in society is said to be transformed from "a *pathologically* enforced social union …into a *moral* whole" by a republican constitution. None of these brief passages, or others that could be added, implies that that Kant is a forefather of the American Revolution. They do lend plausibility to the attempt to draw from Kant's *Critique of Judgment* principles of political judgment that could apply to the new political world that has arisen after 1989.A final citation, from Ninth Proposition of the "Idea of Universal History," encourages such speculation: "A philosophical attempt to work out a universal history of the world… must be regarded as possible and even as capable of furthering the purpose of nature itself."

Judgment is called for when the individual is faced with a situation that is new and singular. There are two ways to understand the novelty of the particular situation. The way of science *subsumes* the newness of the phenomenon under a pre-existing law whose validity is universal. Subsumptive judgment begins from an accepted universal law to which it assimilates the particular experience. In this way, the singularity is integrated into the existing stock of knowledge; the subsumptive judgment has no effect on the observer, nor does the observer affect the conditions being observed. Kant then points to other kinds of experience that cannot be subsumed under pregiven laws, most prominently aesthetic judgments of taste.[17] Judgment that begins from the singularity of the phenomenon can only *assert* a claim to validity. To be valid, that judgment must claim universality (otherwise it would be merely subjective). But this second kind of universality is not that of natural science; it is not objective but subjective; its foundation is the critical analysis by both the person who makes the claim and the others whose acceptance validates the assertion.

Reflective judgment is an activity that resembles the way politics takes place in a republican democracy. Particular claims that cannot be subsumed under pregiven laws are presented for public debate; their supporters make arguments to explain why others should accept them. The process is double: the singularity of the particular situation or experience about which the validity claim is made must be demonstrated (so that it is not confused with a scientific claim); then the receptivity of the others to that claim must be assured (in order to avoid the reproach of subjectivity). The historical specificity of both moments must be taken into account. Just as conditions in the evolution of aesthetic taste change, so too in the world of politics circumstances change; particular demands must represent universalizable solutions, but care must be taken to ensure the cooperation of all the concerned participants. The crucial mediation between these poles is found in the notion of a "common sense." Kant shows how this general idea of *a* common sense passes through stages of development: beginning as a particular common *sense*, it then develops into a shared *common* sense before reaching completeness as a *communal* sense (a *gemeinschaftlicher Sinn*) that contributes to designation of both the particulars that call for judgment and the shared receptivity to the validity claim of judgment. This three-stage movement explains why judgment is not simply a passive observation of a world external to it.

This brief excursus into Kant's theory of judgment suggests three fundamental principles can serve as critical warnings against the drift from politics to antipolitics. The first is the distinction between subsumptive and reflective judgment. The assumption that there exists a pregiven lawfulness under which particular choices can be subsumed to produce political results opens the door to antipolitics. There are of course some forms of lawfulness and regularity in the political world, but there is a difference between technocracy and democracy. The challenge is to distinguish necessary interventions from ideological presuppositions, for example, concerning the free market, or social planning, or even global warming. The second danger arises within the framework of reflective judgment. The claim that the conditions now facing society are new, that they are singular, and that their particularity cannot be subsumed under pregiven rules must be critically evaluated. The challenge is to justify (or not) the flexibility needed to translate accepted legal agreements into practical measures, for example, with regard to budgetary agreements, or international treaties, or perceived threats (that can be manipulated by those in power). Finally, it is necessary to analyze critically the conditions of receptivity of the public to the reflective political propositions. Receptivity can be influenced by ideologies, by the mass media or by distortions in the public sphere. Once again, critical reflection is necessary. Also important is critical modesty. As Pierce Butler, one of the Framers of the US Constitution insisted during the heated discussions at the Convention: "we should follow the advice of Solon who gave the Athenians not the best constitution, but the best that they could accept."[18] In the context of the active politics of reflective judgment, this is indeed all that a republican democracy can demand.

In the wake of the revolutions of 1989, many observers and some participants have been disappointed. They have to ask themselves whether their regrets stem from a sort of malicious betrayal imposed from without, imagining a sort of conspiracy, often by the anonymous forces of Finance or other powerful material or national interests. These external threats of course existed in 1989 and exist still today, as they always have and always will. But they have accomplices in those who are unwilling or unable to abandon the politics of will (and the concept of self-certain sovereignty) rather than engage with the critical and always challenged politics of judgment. The triumph of antipolitics was not preordained. A reformulated critical theory, building on both Marx and Kant, remains possible precisely because of the principles that explain the philosophical necessity of politics.

Notes

1. The thesis concerning the "two hundred years of error" is developed first in some of the essays collected in *Political Judgments* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996). The radical implications of democracy are developed in *The Specter of Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).
2. This pragmatic perspective is criticized for its abandonment of any critical perspective by Max Horkheimer in *The Eclipse of Reason*, a book that was originally published in English in 1947 and translated into German only in 1967 under the title of *Kritik der instrumentellen Vernunft*, accompanied

by a selection of Horkheimer's later essays that reflect his turn away from the sharply critical stance of the original Critical Theory.

3. Unlike some interpreters, I do not accept the distinction between a more philosophical or humanist young Marx and a mature scientific author of Capital. C.f., Dick Howard, *Marx*: *Aux origines de la pensée critique* (Paris: Michalon, 2001). In the present context, c.f., also "Von der Politik des Willenszur Politik der Urteilskraft. Einekantianische Deutung des Marxschen Systems," in *Marx-Engels-Jahrbuch*, 2005. For a briefer English version, c.f., "Philosophy by Other Means," *Metaphilosophy*, vol. 32, Nr. 4, October 2001, pp. 462–501.
4. This transformation is seen in Hegel's critique of Kant's moral theory in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. Either the will remains pure, in which case it becomes a "beautiful soul" that is either incapable of action or plunges into immediate action without recourse to reason. What I call antipolitics becomes for Hegel's idealist theory a stage on the way to the realization of reason as Spirit.
5. The concept of a "regime" goes back to the Greek understanding of the political; in modern terms it refers to the kind of all-encompassing phenomenon that Marcel Mauss called a "total social fact."
6. Marx's journalism of course dealt with everyday politics and with international relations as well. The most complete overview is found in Jonathan Sperber's *Karl Marx. A Nineteenth Century Life* (New York: Liveright, 2013). Sperber's description of Marx as a man of his times makes clear that Marx's overriding vision was built on his image of revolution as following the sequence of a 1789 leading to a (successful) 1793, even if that future would not be achieved in his own times.
7. This calls for a kind of phenomenological approach to political history, as I tried to practice it in *Aux origines de la pensée politique américaine* The book (Paris: Buchet-Chastel, 2004, 2nd edition Hachette 2008) tries to recreate the historical–political emergence of a peculiar kind of American democracy, to which I return below. Each chapter has four parts: lived history, history conceptualized, history reflected upon, and history as rethought by successive generations of historians. The three chapters into which the work is divided represent themselves in the phases of lived, conceived, and reflected history. I will return to these arguments below.
8. Originally published in the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* (Paris: Alcan, 1936–1937).
9. C.f., the discussion of Jürgen Habermas's political adaptation of this method in Chap. 8, "Citizen Habermas," above, Chap. 8.
10. I first developed this distinction at some length in my own attempt at a systemic originary philosophy in *From Marx to Kant* (1985; 2nd revised edition 1993). The distinctions to which I refer in the next paragraphs—

between the necessity and the completeness of an originary system—were developed in the same volume.

11. This lengthy, incomplete, and unpublished manuscript is the first complete outline of the systematic project of *Das Kapital*. Marx's incomplete project was to have a dialectical structure. The first volume was to treat the "immediate process of production," while the second would analyze its mediation through the sphere of circulation, and the third was to treat "the process as a whole." Indeed, a fourth volume—the Theories of Surplus Value—was intended to show how economic theory prior to *Das Kapital* led toward and was encompassed in Marx's master work. This dialectical structure (which is not stressed in the posthumous volumes edited by Engels) is often clearer in Marx's spontaneously written drafts.

    Citations in the pages that follow are indicated by the sign *Gr*, followed by a page number. The translation is from Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1973). C.f., also, André Gorz's use of the Grundrisse, discussed in Chap. 7, above.
12. C.f., my discussion of Arendt in "Keeping the Republic: Reading Arendt's *On Revolution* after the Fall of the Berlin Wall," in Chap. 9 above. Note that section three of that chapter, "Rethinking the American Revolution," presents the historical basis of the theoretical claims made here; I have omitted that material here to avoid repetition.
13. The Soviet Union was in theory ruled by councils, called "soviets," which were forms of direct democracy.
14. C.f., for example, Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution How a Revolution Transformed a Monarchical Society into a Democratic One unlike Any Other that Had Ever Existed* (New York: Knopf, 1992). Wood does not stress in this study the republican political foundations of the American achievement. These were the theme of his earlier *Creation of the American Republic, 1776–1787* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969).
15. Movements seeking to realize a democratic republic of course existed in American history from the very beginning, as was the case mentioned a moment ago of the "Anti-Federalists" who opposed the Constitution of 1787.
16. As indicated above in endnote 12, c.f., the longer explanation of the crucial turning points in the creation of the American republican democracy in Chap. 9, "Keeping the Republic…," The same logic also explains the American understanding of the classical doctrine of the separation of powers.
17. Kant also investigates teleological judgments, for example, in the case of organic beings and the peculiar case of the products of "genius." In the light of the Ninth Proposition cited in the previous paragraph, it is tempting to apply the notion of teleological judgment to historical progress.
18. The citation is from Plutarch's *Life of Solon*, Paragraph 15.

PART IV

Engaging with Contemporary Ideology

CHAPTER 14

What Is a Revolution? Reflections on the Significance of 1989/90

Before 1989, few people expected the overthrow of what was often called "really existing socialism." Although that euphemism signaled a kind of political pessimism it also expressed a shared understanding that, whatever name the rulers gave it, this was not the socialism that had inspired and given courage to so many people for well over a century. That may be one reason that, once the Wall had fallen, everyone seemed to have his or her own explanation of why the rupture had been inevitable. The fact that only a few expected it does not mean that no one wished for change, even radical and systemic change; but the other fact, that everyone thought that they could understand it after it had occurred, does not mean that the roots of change could actually have been understood prior to its occurrence. That is the nature of politics: there is no certainty of success, yet, after the fact, the results seem to have been preordained.

Appearances can deceive; they must be put into perspective for their sense to become clear. The ruptures of 1989 occurred two centuries after the outbreak of the French Revolution. That revolution was no isolated event. It occurred during what R.R. Palmer described in two classical volumes as *The Age of the Democratic Revolution*.[1] Palmer subtitled his work "A Political History of Europe and America, 1760–1800." Those dates are important, as is the inclusion of Europe and America in the analysis. Palmer's first volume describes what he calls "the challenge" that pitted "revolutionary movements against aristocratic forms of society" between roughly 1760 and 1791–1792; the second volume describes "the struggle" between the forces of revolution and counter-revolution that seems

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D. Howard, *Between Politics and Antipolitics*, Political Philosophy
and Public Purpose, DOI 10.1057/978-1-349-94915-1_14

generally to culminate in 1800. Although it has been subjected to criticism during the more than 50 years since publication of the first volume, Palmer's perspectival approach warns against oversimplification. The age of the democratic revolution did not culminate in a global triumph, nor did it fail everywhere; it planted seeds for further growth, that is all. From 1800 to 1815, Europe was at war (and the new USA tried in vain to stay apart from it); the peace that finally came was *not* just the prelude to new challenges and new struggles. The democratic revolutions had opened up a new space for political action that the counter-revolution set out to destroy by creating forms of *antipolitics.*

Looking back from this wider perspective, the revolutions of 1989 seem to have opened the possibility of rediscovering the spirit of struggle that characterized the age of the democratic revolution. This possibility is suggested by paradoxical dialectic with which the earliest dissidents described the goal of their action. The Hungarian, George Konrad described his actions as an "antipolitics" that did not set out simply to replace one group in power by another; the Czech Vaclav Have insisted on the existential imperative "living in truth"; the Pole Adam Michnik called his approach a "new evolutionism." In each case, the aim was a paradigm shift in which the locus of the political would be transferred from the state to what was generally called civil society.[2] Democracy was to be reconstituted in these spaces of horizontal social relations. Twenty-five years later, a modern form of antipolitics unlike the military might that crushed the hopes awakened in 1789 has triumphed over the democratic hopes of civil society.[3] There are many reasons for this (perhaps only temporary) setback. One of them that has not been sufficiently discussed is in large part the result of the inability of the *West* to learn from the new politics that emerged in the East that it too needed to rethink the political.

1 DECIPHERING TWO CENTURIES OF ANTIPOLITICS

Antipolitics is a paradoxical concept that was born with the origin of political thought itself. Its most famous practitioner was Plato, who was writing not only after the defeat of Athens, but also after its restored democracy had voted death to Socrates. Plato's ideal of a just society was ruled by Philosopher Kings who were the "selfless servants" of Truth. Their rule would make participation by the citizens unnecessary, superfluous, even harmful; the universal justice imposed by the rule of the philosopher would leave no place for particular judgment by citizens concerning singular events. Aristotle's reply to Plato's antipolitical philosophy insisted on the role of particularity, diversity, and difference in the construction of a *Polis* composed of finite humans who come together to maintain not simply their biological life but to enjoy what they themselves freely determine to be the Good Life. Although the competition between the Platonic and the Aristotelian visions of politics reappears throughout the history of political thought, it has become more acute in modern times, when the teleological vision of the world is replaced by a progressive, historical conception.

The forms of modern antipolitics to which I will refer in this discussion did not conceive of themselves as antipolitical; on the contrary, each of them—economic liberalism, conservatism, and socialism—considered itself to be the means to the highest realization of the traditional goal of politics: the creation of justice and the enjoyment of the Good Life. Each developed political programs accompanied by political ideologies that appealed for support to social and political interests. And each of them achieved at least some of their goals, while their competition with other forms of antipolitics produced a relative stability that lasted until the explosions of 1914.[4]

It was the experience of the ruthless seizure of power by totalitarianism that made it possible to recognize paradoxical foundation of antipolitics. Whether in its Nazi or Bolshevik form (which differed in many other ways), totalitarianism claimed to incarnate an ultimate value whose realization would mean that there was no longer any need for either political deliberation or personal judgment by the citizens. In reality these totalitarianisms were not static although they tolerated political activity only insofar as it was directed against the (internal and external) "enemies" of their absolute power. Political activists existed in the world of the totalitarians, but they functioned (in Harold Rosenberg's phrase) as "intellectuals who didn't think." They didn't think because they didn't need to think; they had only to consult the party line to know what was true and what was false; they had no way to judge in particular instances, and no ability to live with ambiguity. The totalitarians had given up their autonomy in its literal sense, as "autos"-"nomos", the ability to give oneself (or one's community) freely chosen laws. Yet it is just this autonomy that is essential to democratic politics.

While post-1914 totalitarianism is not identical to the antipolitical currents that came to dominate Western political life during the two centuries that followed the democratic revolutions, its extreme form highlights tendencies present in them. Totalitarianism radicalizes the antipolitical temptations inherent in democratic societies because its proponents were not able to understand and to live with the political uncertainties, instability, and conflicts that are inherent in democratic social and political life. The antipolitics of the market liberal, the traditionalist conservative, or the socialist (to remain with these most general categories) attempted reaffirm foundational principles of certainty, stability, and harmony in the post-revolutionary world.[5] Totalitarianism went one step further because it was more idealist (or more cynical), less tolerant of ambiguity, and unwilling simply to understand the world when the challenge facing them was the moral necessity to change that old order.

From this point of view, the significance of the revolutions of 1989 was that they made it possible to return to the intellectual starting point of the age of democratic revolutions by attempting to rethink the principles of a free political life—in the West (which was blind to its own antipolitical assumptions) as well as in the formerly communist lands. The fact that communist totalitarianism—however revised, pacified, and reduced to formulaic incantations—had *not* been defeated from outside but had fallen to its own internal contradictions is significant. It could have been understood as a sort of "revenge of the political," a return of the repressed, a negation of the negation. One reason that the new possibilities were not recognized was that the art of thinking politically had been lost during the two centuries of antipolitical domination. How that loss took place, and how and why antipolitics became hegemonic, needs to be explained in order to understand the strangely passive manner in which the fall of communism was received in the West. It was as if a tree fell in a forest where no one heard its unexpected and unnoticed demise. As a result, the protagonists of political renewal in the East remained content with the elimination of an old regime while being unable to imagine the lineaments of their new political life save in terms of the bric-a-brac of Western antipolitical principles.

2 Misunderstanding the French Revolution

The "revolution" in the French Revolution was not the overthrow of a monarch or even of an Old Regime. That had occurred a century earlier, in 1689, in what the British called their "Glorious Revolution." The French knew that the "Declaration of Rights" that resulted from this overthrow established only the rights of Parliament (while preserving the monarchy by Divine Right and an Established Church). The French concept of rights was more radical. It was modern insofar as it eliminated reference to all forms of transcendence—that of a God (who divinely ordained rulers) or that of Nature (whose unyielding lawfulness was ordered by a hierarchical *telos*). Modern natural law is subjective, derived from human nature and used to elaborate rational norms to regulate social relations. The French *Declaration* in 1789 concerned both the Rights of Man and those of the Citizen. It drew the practical implications of the idea of natural rights, stating that "ignorance, forgetfulness or contempt of the rights of man, are the sole causes of the public miseries and of the corruption of governments." But while these rights were said to be immanent in society, natural rights were not identical to the positive laws by which the state attempts to realize them in society. This non-coincidence between what is the case and what ought to be the case insures the possibility of social criticism that is the foundation of democratic politics. It also provides the spark that fires the hearts and minds of revolutionaries. For both of these reasons, this non-coincidence could have unintended consequences.

The challenge to realize (modern, subjective) natural rights became acute when it became clear that reality was recalcitrant to the poetry of revolutionary rhetoric. If natural rights and liberties were to be actualized, they would have to be imposed by the power of the state. This recognition came about slowly but with an inexorable if paradoxical logic. The radicalization of social demands led to an increase in the power of the state which in turn led to increased resistance to its egalitarian project from an individualistic society insistent on its rights. The result was a political voluntarism that culminated in the Jacobin Terror. The revolutionaries thought that their enemies were getting support from the "indulgents" as well as from those who simply wanted to stay out of trouble; they denounced both categories as being "objectively" supporters of the enemies of the revolutionary cause. Robespierre famously rationalized this policy in his speech on "The Principles of Political Morality."[6] If "real democracy" was to be realized, he explained, true equality must reign, only then will the "virtue" of the people be able freely to express itself, unhindered by the forces of the counter-revolution. For this reason, the "revolutionary system" of the Jacobins would combine "virtue [,]without which terror is disastrous [and] terror, without which virtue is powerless." This appeal to virtue was pre-modern, but its bold and ruthless admonition expressed a larger truth about modern revolutions. Revolutionaries claim to possess a "virtue" and to have access to a "truth" that is immanent to society; their use of force is comparable to that of a Platonic "midwife" or a "selfless servant" helping society to give birth to what it already truly is, or ought to be. With this extreme attempt to save the principle of revolution, the revolutionaries put an end to democracy; now criticism became opposition, even passivity appeared to be a threat, and politics became the sheer exercise of power.

The French Revolution represents a first stage in the development of the modern form of antipolitics. Its "revolutionary" thrust was based on its recognition that no transcendent norms bind human social relations, and that autonomy is both the means and the end sought by politics. This opened the space for democratic freedom. But the space was, in the last resort, empty; self-rule and no-rule (i.e., anarchy) seemed to be identical. Meanwhile, the recognition of the need to use the power of the state to overcome the existing social hierarchies in order to create equality, combined with the steely purity of the revolutionaries' own virtue, pointed to the goal of overcoming the difference between the political state and the social relations over which it exercised its power. The state had to be made stronger in order, paradoxically, in order to eliminate its difference from society. The realization of Jacobin politics, in other words, would eliminate the need for politics.

The fault does not lie with the persons of Robespierre and his fellows. The purity of the revolution cannot be saved by blaming one or another group for deviations. Even before the Jacobin seizure of power, the revolutionaries had sought to eliminate all of the intermediate powers through which society could express its particularity, preserve its diversity, or conserve its privacy. Aside from the series of measures depriving the Church of its independence, the most famous of these pre-Jacobin revolutionary measures was the *lex Le Chapelier* (1791), which banned all forms of worker self-organization. In philosophical terms, the foundation of these choices was that once natural law had become instituted as positive law, the universality of the new socio-political order would leave no room for, and have no need of, particularity. In political terms, once the society and the state had become identical, there was no room for autonomous political action. The dream (or nightmare) of antipolitics had dawned. Instead of a *republican democracy* that would combine the benefits of republican political equality with the creativity of democratic personal liberty, the legacy of 1789, and especially of 1793, has been the quest to create a *democratic republic* in which social equality is identified with political freedom.[7]

How can we explain the force and the staying power of the antipolitical dream of a democratic republic? On the left, the roots of socialist antipolitics are present in the hold that Jacobinism—with its always lurking, real or imaginary, Thermidorian or aristocratic enemies—had on the political imaginary of the succeeding century. It recurs in the historical sequence that began in 1830, passed to February 1848 before it was extinguished by force in June, only to reappear in 1871 in the Paris Commune. The "spirit" of revolution then migrated to Russia in 1905, before finally triumphing in 1917.And then, even when that final victory began to taste like burnt ashes, the faith lived on; critics of totalitarianism were a small minority, and many of them, like Trotsky, blamed a "Stalinist" deviation while clinging to the original purity of the scheme that predicted a passage from 1789 to 1793 onward to 1917 and happy tomorrows. This does not mean that all those who continued to dream the centuries' old revolutionary dream deserve the label "totalitarian." That accusation is too harsh because it is moral rather than political. It is more accurate to explain their politics as *antipolitical*. Robespierre's terrorist rule was not totalitarian; his pre-modern concept of "virtue" set limits on what even his vision of revolution could imagine.[8] Totalitarian politics, on the other hand, accepts no concept of limits.

3 Liberal, Conservative, and Socialist Versions of Antipolitics

There is no need here to establish a definitive definition of totalitarianism, nor to ask whether the Soviet Union was always totalitarian, whether the thaw after 1956 was significant, or whether Gorbachev's later project of a liberal communism was plausible. Nor is it necessary to define the political systems of the countries of the former Warsaw Pact or to consider their unique histories. It is enough to see that the states that made up the old communist bloc, and chiefly the USSR, were antipolitical, and to recognize that their goal was to realize a democratic republic that left no space for the rule of law and the protection of rights. Since the French Revolution, that project has been identified with the political "left." That identification is both understandable and seriously misleading. Once the critique of totalitarianism has made clear that this goal is shared with the project of modern antipolitics—defined as the attempt to erase the difference between society and the state, the fusing of the particular with the universal and of the individual with society—it becomes evident that antipolitics is not limited to leftist politics.

Palmer's "age of the democratic revolution saw the rise of two other antipolitical currents, whose emergence the historian neglected. The first was signaled by the publication of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* in 1776. Its analysis of the socio-economic relations that were replacing both mercantile and feudal political institutions inaugurated the new science of political economy. Of course, the Scottish professor of moral philosophy did not mean to replace politics by economics; but in conditions of modernity—where the source of norms and values was immanent to the social world—his theory can be seen as expressing the tendency to subordinate politics to the production of economic wealth. Although Smith recognized the negative consequences of the division of labor on the workers who produced the new forms of wealth; and although he understood the danger that capitalist "combinations" could hold wages to a minimum, his faith in the impersonal justice of the market overweighed the "moral sentiments" which he had invoked in his first great book of 1759. Indeed, it is significant that he constantly revised that book until the year of his death.[9] Neither morality nor politics could insure a normatively just distribution of the "wealth" on which the power of the nation was built. In Smith's eyes, the market alone was able to realize a collective will that was hidden beneath the jumble of conflicting interests. In this way, Smith's market liberalism was similar to the antipolitical faith of modern revolutionaries who sought to restore unity in the face of diversity, overcoming the difference between society and the state. They tried to impose it by the force of the state; for his part, Smith put his faith in the anonymous force of the market. The expected result was the same denial of the autonomy of the political.

The second antipolitical tendency that emerged as a reaction to the French Revolution was traditionalist conservatism. It is important to recognize that this conservatism only became possible in modern conditions where there was no longer any external source of political legitimacy. Binding norms and sources of political obligation had now to be located within society. The Father of this kind of conservatism, Edmund Burke, turned to the historical past in his *Reflections on the French Revolution* (1791).Unlike the Jacobins who dreamed of restoring the classical virtues, Burke looked to a past whose wisdom was still present despite the refusal of the always critical modern spirit to admit its presence.[10] He criticized the revolutionaries for their blind faith in an abstraction. Who is this "man" whose rights are proclaimed, asks Burke? Why worship an abstraction? As for the state, which the revolutionaries used as an instrument to their own ends, Burke insists that its existence precedes that the individual, for the source of a spirit that binds the community cannot be the result of a contract, like those regulating the sale of tea or spices. The existence of the state and the rules and regulations it establishes is the precondition for such private affairs as contracts for the sale of commodities.[11] More generally, the philosophical abstractions of the revolutionaries are said by Burke to be simply a way to avoid having to deal with legitimate conflicts, even though it is just such difficulties that teach men judgment, warn against facile shortcuts, and impose limits on political voluntarism. The error of the revolutionaries in Burke's eyes is that they are "so taken up with the rights of man, that they have totally forgot his nature," which is to be part of a history that is larger than himself. This conservative appeal to a larger history reveals an antipolitical basis insofar as it tries to reconcile what is with what ought to be, to overcome division, and to reconcile the political state with society.

Dissatisfaction with these two forms of antipolitics gave rise in the nineteenth century to a third form: "socialism." This more variegated style of political thought ranges from economistic to utopian models, with religious variants on one side, nationalist versions on the other. Indeed, the fact that one can speak even of "conservative" forms of socialism, suggests that this third still present form of antipolitics can be seen as the attempt to bridge the gap between the liberal and conservative tendencies that both serve to justify the established order. Although its earliest appearances insisted on the goal of overthrowing the existing regime, which made its intent appear to be political, its longer-term vision is antipolitical insofar as it entails the elimination of the need for political action by reconciling the individual, society, and the state. That may be one reason that the proponents of Social Democracy historically have had such difficulty in justifying their "compromises" when attacked by more radical factions.

4 What the West Could Learn from 1989

It is time to return to the question of the meaning of "revolution," and the significance of the "events" of 1989/90.Against the backdrop presented here, it is clear that these revolutions make possible the renewal of the democratic political project insofar as they point to the need to understand and to overcome the antipolitical tendencies of the age. That implies that 1989/90 was potentially a revolution *in the West* as well as in the East. Although dictatorships had been overthrown in the West—in Greece (1974), in Portugal (also 1974), and in Spain (1975)—that did not lead the Western democracies to reflect on their own political systems. It is true that the regimes that were overthrown were not forms of totalitarianism, but they were animated by antipolitical goals.[12] On the other hand, 1989 was also the year of the awakening of Chinese student democrats, whose movement was crushed in blood at Tiananmen Square. Although its significance was overshadowed by events in Eastern Europe later that year, no one seems to have thought further about the famous photograph taken on June 5, when "tank man" standing alone brought to a halt a row of military tanks on their way to crush the student demonstrators.[13] Was the resistance of a single—and still today unidentified—man a sign calling for political renewal? Were the rights of man, and of the citizen, back on the agenda?

My analysis of the failure of the French Revolution suggested that one reason for its antipolitical turn was the inability of the revolutionaries to recognize the existence of *limits* on their political project. The autonomy that was symbolically inaugurated by the fall of the Bastille and consecrated by *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* was transformed into a politics of will. This did not take place from one day to the next; the course of the revolution was not determined from its outset to its end by its ideology. The ever-repeated attack against *la faute à Rousseau* is too simple, but it is not false either. In retrospect, an inexorable logic seemed to produce a political voluntarism that treated all resistance, even when it was passive, as a threat that must be eliminated. On the other hand, the American Revolution, which was a revolution, followed a different political logic. It shows that all revolutions founded on the demand for rights are not condemned to follow an antipolitical course. That was the argument made in Hannah Arendt's oft-cited comparative study of in *On Revolution*.[14] The same demand for the rights of man was once again a feature of the events that, a quarter of a century ago, surprised the unsuspecting public opinion in the West when newspapers announced the Fall of the Wall. Why did this unexpected gift not provoke greater self-reflection?

What is the source of this blindness to the political implications of the revolutions inspired by the demand for human rights on the part of those who should have rejoiced in it—the Western political left, and those who sought its renewal? The answer can be found in Marx's 1843 essay "On the Jewish Question."[15] What Claude Lefort called the "force of repetition" seems to draw even the non-communist, non-orthodox left back to its founding father and his foundational texts. In his essay, Marx criticized the French revolutionary appeal to human rights for being merely formal and "bourgeois," the product and the reflection of the emerging capitalist society marked by both alienation and exploitation. His vision of the future communist society sought to transcend what he denounced as an abstract and idealistic vision of eternally existing human rights by the realization of those rights in a society that has finally become reconciled with itself, overcoming the distinction between economic society and the political state. Marx's theory seems convincing, and it has come to represent a common sense approach to politics. That is just the problem. That analysis is simply another variation of the antipolitical faith that held sway during those two centuries of antipolitical self-deception. Marx's critique of lawyers' law is simply the voice of a self-evident truth. Ironically, among those who had read him, including the rulers of countries that still claimed his legacy in 1989, acceptance of Marx's critique may have been one reason that they did not understand the strength of the opposition that would dethrone them by revealing their feet of clay. They too did not take seriously a demand for rights, nor did they understand the cost that they would pay for the violation of these rights of man which, in their dogmatic eyes, were merely a formality, an abstraction, or a private matter.

This interpretation of the revolutionary implications of the declaration of rights[16] explains why the regime changes of 1989/90 were indeed revolutionary: they made possible a democratic politics of rights. These transformations did not mark the "end of politics," as Francis Fukuyama famously claimed in *The End of History and the Last Man*. It would be equally wrong to suggest that they represent the triumph of "liberalism."[17] Those in the West who had grown accustomed to two centuries of antipolitical thought were unable to recognize that the dissident movements in the East were demanding *more* than the realization of what they had come to take for granted. This failure to understand the East and the accompanying failure of self-understanding by the West explain in part the reason that the possibilities awakened in 1989/90 have not been realized. Without a sympathetic echo from the West for their renewal of political life rather than simply a pat on the back for casting off of communism, the critical forces in the East were overwhelmed; even among their own peoples, where they were already a dissenting minority, they found no encouragement to pursue their political project.[18]

The fact that the Western left did not learn from the events in the East makes it co-responsible for the failure to realize the political revolution that had become possible in 1989/90.The reason for this failure on the part of the West was its own complacent antipolitical mode of life. It did not learn the lesson that follows from the critique of antipolitics which is that there are *limits* on what politics can do. Politics cannot put an end to the very conditions that made it possible; if it tries to do so, it becomes antipolitics, perhaps veering toward totalitarianism if leaders stir the pot of populist or nationalist resentment in a newly freed society. This is the context in which the Eastern theories of "antipolitics," of "civil society," and of "living in truth" should have spoken to the complacent Western left. These concepts all express the demand for autonomy by proposing to redefine the political. They recognize that when politics is defined by the search for *autos-nomos*, self-given laws, *society* will have begun to realize again the democratic project that was opened two centuries ago by the "age of the democratic revolution." The goal of the newly defined shape of the political will be to encourage this social autonomy precisely by *limiting* its own sphere of action. It is not possible to know more precisely what forms a new politics will take, but thanks to the critique of totalitarianism by the dissidents in the East, it is possible to know what antipolitical temptations must be avoided. That is already a significant achievement.

5 NOTES

1. R.R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution. A Political History of Europe and America, 1760–1800*, two volumes, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959 and 1964), p. v.
2. A thorough overview of the concept and its political context can be found in Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992).
3. The military force that crushed the political revolution was used not only by the Old Regime; the triumph of antipolitics can be seen as well in the triumph of Napoleon and the creation of the Empire. C.f. the incisive critique by Gérard Grunberg in *Napoléon Bonaparte: le noir génie* (Paris: CNRS éditions, 2015) as well as the first volume of Patrice Gueniffey's biography, *Bonaparte* (Paris: Gallimard, 2013), whose second volume will be titled *Napoléon*!
4. For a discussion of the shock waves that emanated from the Great War, c.f., "The Great War and the Origins of Contemporary Ideology," Chap. 15, below.
5. This inability to live with uncertainty, followed by the attempt to reintroduce it, describes the situation of those who, before 1989 did not expect radical change, and who, after it had appeared, sought to show that the unexpected was in fact necessary! This inability to think and to judge the singularity of the unexpected event helps to explain why the new democracies in the East have in some cases adopted rigorous principles of market capitalism, while in others they lean toward forms

of traditionalism, even radical nationalism. Their rejection of "socialism" is equally radical, and equally antipolitical.

6. C.f., "Des principes de la morale politique" (February 5, 1794), cited in my translation from *Les grands orateurs républicains*, *tome V*, *Robespierre*, Henri Calvet, editor, (Monaco: Les editions 'Hemera, 1949–50).
7. C.f., "The Necessity of Politics," Chap. 13, above.
8. For example, he did deliver his speech to the Convention, even though most of his enemies had already been purged!
9. These constant revisions to his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* could be an expression of his dissatisfaction with the antipolitical implications of his market economism.
10. This structure is analogous to Smith's appeal to the market's collective wisdom; truth and justice are immanent to society, despite its modern individualism.
11. C.f., the discussion of Durkheim in "Philosophy by Other Means," Chap. 6, above. Durkheim points out that the idea of a contract, and the practical means of enforcing it, must pre-exist the individuals who decide to contract with one another. This similarity between Durkheim and Burke does not imply that Durkheim is a "conservative," as some interpreters claim.
12. The distinction between supposedly "authoritarian" and truly "totalitarian" regimes proposed by Ronald Reagan's ambassador to the UN, Jeane Kirkpatrick served as an ideological justification for American support for certain "friendly" regimes. The category of antipolitics subsumes both types of regime, and suggests lines of criticism for both.
13. C.f., the image of this event on https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tank_Man.
14. C.f., also "Rereading Arendt After the Fall of the Wall", Chap. 9, above.
15. It is of course not the case that all those who criticize formal rights by pointing to their material foundation base their arguments on this early text of Marx. Indeed, Marx's critique of religion was indebted to his contemporary Ludwig Feuerbach, and the identification of Jews with commerce had been underlined by another contemporary, Moses Hess. As for Marx's critique itself, Louis Althusser famously suggested that its political inspiration may be communist but its method is not (yet) truly "Marxist."

16. This interpretation is indebted to the work of Claude Lefort, which shows the intimate relation between the critique of totalitarianism and the possibility of democratic political life. C.f., also “Toward a Democratic Manifesto,” Chap. 5, above.
17. Indeed, although Fukuyama titled the lecture on which his book was based “The End of History,” he added the allusion to “the last man” (a notion borrowed from Nietzsche) in order to make clear that he was not cheering the triumph of liberalism. Fukuyama was a student of Allan Bloom, himself a disciple of Leo Strauss.
18. There were exceptions. One notable case was that of Jürgen Habermas, who criticized the fact that German unification did not take place through a democratic vote in both Germanys. C.f., “Citizen Habermas,” Chap. 8, above.

CHAPTER 15

The Great War and the Origins of Contemporary Ideology

The historical rupture that resulted from the Great War of 1914–1918 and its refraction throughout the twentieth century have been more controversial in Germany than elsewhere. At the beginning of the century the German nation, only recently unified under Bismarck, had rapidly become a leading force of modernity in every arena. Material progress underpinned by scientific creativity was quickly translated into technology; the new industries in turn favored the emergence of a new middle class while the state took responsibility for the well-being of those in need as well as those who came to work in the giant new factories. National self-affirmation was evident also in the growing power of the army and especially its professional officer corps (its "General Staff"), as well as in the growth of maritime power accompanied by new colonial ambitions. Reflecting on what had been, the distinguished American historian Fritz Stern recently recalled the observation of Raymond Aron, who had foreseen the rise of "a German Century."[1] Alas, the four grinding years of the Great War transformed the dream into a nightmare, and the history of the war lent itself to a politicization that became the incubator of different and opposed ideologies.

Today, a reunified Germany has again become a "power in the middle" of a new and enlarged Europe that is still searching for the political conditions that can insure a stable and democratic order. The republican and democratic institutions that had finally taken hold in the West were extended to the formerly communist "democratic republic" in the East, as

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D. Howard, *Between Politics and Antipolitics*, Political Philosophy and Public Purpose, DOI 10.1057/978-1-349-94915-1_15

if this would expunge the wounds left by the terrible years of another war unleashed by Nazi regime that four decades of "really existing socialism" had only papered over.[2] While historians and polemicists continue to try to fathom the depths of the Nazi genocide, the centenary of the Great War offers an occasion to think again about an axial point in the political history of Europe's twentieth century. Called by its contemporaries the "Great War," the shock waves that followed in its wake are undervalued when it is retrospectively referred to simply as "World War I." It was indeed a world war, but its impact was refracted above all in its effects on Germany, that latecomer to European history.

1 German Ideologies in the Twentieth Century

Just as the French Revolution gave rise to repeated conflicts of interpretation and to the birth of aggressive ideologies during the nineteenth century, so too the history of the Great War was at the center of ideological controversies in Germany. In the French case, as François Furet demonstrated in *Imagining the French Revolution*[3], the result occluded the political foundations of the revolution. In the German case, the event itself seems to have disappeared; since 1978, as Herfried Münkler points out, no German historian published a synthetic history of that desperate conflict. Now, 25 years after the Fall of the Wall, Münkler proposes a "global history," that attempts to synthesize not only Germany's geopolitical past but also its potential future. Written by a German political theorist, the book is subtitled "the world, 1914–1918." As in the case of the French historian Furet, the author attempts to "think" the political significance of the Great War as an event that marked an epoch.[4]

Politicians of the left and the right had to fit the events of the Great War into their interpretation of German history. Although working from the framework of their own presuppositions, their conclusions converged surprisingly. The *doxa* of the right presented the Germany of 1914 as a victim of hostile forces that arose just at the moment when it had finally found its national unity. From this point of view, Germany was the victim of its virtues. Its increasing national prosperity fostered both fear and jealousy in the neighboring nations, which sought to limit the success of a potential rival. When the war broke out, Germany was the nation in the middle, surrounded by the greater military strength of the Entente (France, England, Russia). Although its army fought valiantly, and its people sacrificed mightily, these national virtues could not have insured a two-front victory. Ideologues had to ask how to explain the defeat. The temptation was to find internal scapegoats, and then to purge and defeat them, in order to recreate the unity of the nation. This accusation was foreshadowed shortly before the end of the war by the ostentatious retirement of generals Hindenburg and Ludendorff, after the failed offensive at the second battle of the Somme. Their gesture meant that, at the war's end, the freely elected Parliament led by the Socialist Party had to sign the surrender of the German armies.[5] As a result, the first ideological *slogan* of the right became the legend of a "knife in the back" (*Dolchstosslegende*) wielded by the traitors who lost the war. And of course the "traitors" were not only socialists; the concept could be expanded, depending on which political group was defining the "Fatherland."

Applied to democrats during the Weimar Republic, and to the Socialists in its Parliament, the knife-in-the-back reproach was the most simple form of right-wing demonizing. The accusation deepened as its reach widened. Germany was seen also as a victim of the thirst for "revanche" by the victorious Allies who imposed in the famous "Clause 321" of the Versailles treaty that stipulated that Germany was responsible for starting the war. Not only did the treaty bring this moral stigma, it also imposed heavy reparations, which in turn gave rise to a devastating inflation that destroyed what remained of the propertied upper classes (the *Junkers*). As a result, for an increasingly radicalized right, the post-war Weimar Republic was denounced as the reign of rootless financial interests (typically identified as Jewish); its republican political system proved incapable of restoring the health of the nation. In these conditions, it is not surprising that Hitler and the Nazis took power with the support of the mythical general and guarantor of national unity, Hindenburg.

The right-wing narrative did not end with the defeat in 1945. The right that emerged after the war of course disapproved of what it called euphemistically the "excesses" of the Nazi regime (and also, at least after the fact, of its anti-Semitism). Once again, the right saw Germany as the victim of this second war both insofar as it suffered terribly from the allied bombardments during the fighting, and because it was forcibly divided in its aftermath. Of course it could not quite say this publicly, and it seemed in both the eastern and the western post-war states to assume its guilt with a sometimes masochistic pleasure. A further mutation of right-wing ideology took place in the West where an irenic worldview for which the (real or imagined) affirmation of national power lost all legitimacy. From this perspective, a pacified and democratic Europe would replace the national self-affirmation that had been the foundation of German unity under Bismarck, the "Iron Chancellor."

This now pacified right-wing ideology that came to dominate the Christian Democratic Party (CDU) under the leadership of Helmut Kohl fit quite well also with the *world view* of the reformed left that had bid farewell to its Marxist ideology at the Social Democrats' 1959 Congress in Bad Godesberg. Although some were attracted by the preachers of a pacifist "internationalism" that was in fact often a disguise for Soviet policy aims, the West German left also had roots in the experience of the Great War. Its opposition to capitalist domination took the form of an "anti-imperialism" which claimed that since the interests of the capitalist ruling class had led to the Great War, anti-imperialism could replace the class war that had been rejected at Bad Godesberg. This interpretation was given credence two years later by the publication in 1961 of Fritz Fischer's best-selling book, *Griff nach Weltmacht*.[6] The historian wanted to demonstrate that the aggressive policies of imperial Germany had led to a war from which its leaders expected to benefit. The book was met by polemical replies, often those of war veterans who still bore its wounds. It also lent support to the claims of the communist rulers in East Germany who pretended to incarnate the "good" Germany finally healed from the scares of an imperialist past. Both sides seemed to recognize the folly of the imperial will to dominate and to accept guilt for the past while affirming a vision of the future based on apolitical modesty. Nonetheless, as Herfried Münkler notes, this assumption of guilt was also an ironic form of *hubris* insofar as it assumed that Germany possessed (or was possessed by) a quasi-demonic power.[7]

2 THE MECHANICS OF THE WAR

This brief sketch makes clear that the *political vision* of the left could easily become compatible with that of the irenic, pacifist right of Helmut Kohl's CDU. Indeed, the two camps could find common ground in support for the project of a European Union. As in the case of the French Revolution analyzed by Furet, the result is that history is replaced by ideology which makes it impossible to think the political weight of the events. Herfried Münkler's *Der Grosse Krieg* has the opposite effect; it calls for thought, particularly at a time when the European project is no longer a self-evident goal for the left or the right.[8]

Münkler's historical study is a lively and astute narrative that takes account of the multiple histories that exploded in 1914 and were transformed by the shock waves it produced. The narrative underlines the conflict of the imaginary expectations of leaders and the real situation of the combatants. The political historian describes the experience of civilians and soldiers, officers and common troupes, politicians and intellectuals as they overlapped, interfered and often contradicted one another. If the central actor is Germany, Münkler's subtitle insists that he is describing "The World 1914–1918." Beyond the five Powers that opened the war (joined in 1915 by Italy), he describes the changing fortunes of the battles in the territories of the dying Ottoman Empire, first in the Balkans—after Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria—and then into the Arab Middle East and beyond to the African and Asian colonies that were in spite of themselves part of the "world" at war.

If the four years of war were characterized by frustrating stalemate, the internal progress of the means of killing was rapid and eventful. Tactical choices offered by the rapid introduction of new weapons affected the strategic vision of the army leadership. For example, the first use of gas was a tactical choice, but the fact that the gas could be caught by counter-currents that created a boomerang effect forced military scientists to change the chemical composition of the gases, while generals had to find a strategic use for this, and other, new weapons that could not be fitted simply into the old strategies. Similarly, although rudimentary aircraft were first used to replace the cavalry for purposes of reconnaissance, it became clear that they could become skirmishing fighter warplanes flown by heroic pilots. Both tactical choices were at first simple adaptations of traditional tactics; but they led to strategic innovations, for example with the use of bombers which were militarily more effective because of the size of the huge armies mobilized as war went on. Another irony emerged here. As the arms became increasingly heavy in order to effect greater damage on the massed forces of the enemy, they could also become too massive; for example, when the English introduced the first giant tanks on the stalemated Flanders fields, these huge vehicles sunk sullenly into the sodden soil of that water-soaked climate. It was only in the last months of the war that the light-weight tanks invented by Renault came to play a crucial strategic role (replacing the improvised use of Parisian taxis at the decisive battle of the Marne).

In effect, technology moved more rapidly than tactics, and the results led first to improvised (and costly) responses that were only slowly translated into strategic reforms. The results could be devastating. At sea, unlimited submarine war against commercial ships had the inevitable result of drawing the USA into the war in 1917 (as Max Weber and a minority of liberal intellectuals feared). The fact that a submarine could not fight head to head to conquer and take the enemy prisoner but could only destroy him without the possibility of saving the drowning sailors contradicted the traditional laws of maritime warfare. Meanwhile, on land, unimaginable, unexpected and unprepared trench warfare, with its periods of boredom, sunk in slime and filth, alternating between freezing cold and suffocating heat, always interrupted periodically by intense long-range bombardments and followed by deathly mass infantry attacks across barbed wire separating dug-in enemies wielding newly efficient machine guns changed the face and feel of war.[9]

As the years wore on, there was no new strategic progress, no new understanding the political effects of all-out war. Advances of a few hundred meters continued to be paid by thousands upon thousands of deaths. During ten months of battle at Verdun in 1916, the French lost 315,000 men, the Germans 280,000. What was this victory? Beyond the numbers there are the images, for example of barbed wire stretched between enemy trenches where the wounded and the dead lay unattended, blasted corpses, their bones whitening in the pale sun…These images are well known; their deeper cultural significance, notes the political historian, is that this was the first war in history in which the dead were not buried at the conclusion of the battles.[10] It was truly the end of an era, of a civilization. It was modernity, with a vengeance.

3 How to Think About the End and the Ends of the Great War

Herfried Münkler's reflections on the cruel vanity of the war that ended an era of progress point to broader considerations about the nature of the political. His historical reconstruction challenges the ideological visions that both the right and the left drew from the experience of the Great War. He does not accept the liberal view that the timing of the outbreak of the war was accidental although it was from this perspective, in the long-term, inevitable and in the end fatal. It is of course true that accident and the unexpected played a role. An incidental fact, among many that he raises, illustrates his point. A German spy in the Russian embassy in London informed Berlin of secret Russian-British negotiations that seemed to announce an alliance (the Entente) trapping the German nation between two enemies. This scenario had haunted the German imaginary since Bismarck. As a result, this minor spying incident reinforced domestic partisans in favor of a preventive attack, a first strike presented as a necessary self-defense. This kind of misunderstanding, based on chance, on missed opportunities, and on conflicts within the national governments, was present in other nations as well. The resulting accumulation of accidents poses the question whether there was some underlying, determinant cause. How could the assassination of the Austrian Archduke in the provincial town of Sarajevo lead to the end of a world? If the political historian has to interpret the attitudes of the peoples and to explain the choices of the politicians, he has also to *think* the global panorama which shapes the significance of the facts that he recounts.

Münkler suggests that the outbreak of the war demonstrates the failure of *the political*. After all, the great powers had previously faced up to similar threats, many of them more serious, in the territories that had formerly belonged to the Ottoman Empire. The Morocco Crisis of 1906 and its recurrence at Agadir in 1911 had been resolved in spite of their gravity; and the great powers had been able to limit the costs and impact of the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913. But suddenly, in the summer of 1914, the political framework broke down. Historians, most recently Christopher Clark, have described the stages of the breakdown step by step and day by day.[11] Münkler's thesis is broader because he is thinking about the framework of the political rather than being lost in the everyday calculations of politics. Everyone in every country involved knew that war was coming; it was a shared horizon of fear and of hope. The effect of this assumption was that a preventive war was perceived as not only legitimate but also necessary. The political paradox is that the expectation of an immanent expectation of an immanent war whose date remained undetermined ultimately made its outbreak necessary; it was a self-realizing prophecy! Each nation hoped to prevent an attack by the other by mobilizing its forces before the others' in order to have the advantage of striking the first blow. But this only constrained the others to mobilize their own military might, setting into play a diabolical machinery.

Several factors played a role in Germany's decision to strike first. The weight of the military in domestic politics led it to think that it could abandon the type of political settlements that had prevented earlier outbreaks of war. A first blow struck by the powerful German army would open a window of political opportunity. Its professional leadership had been revising plans for this moment since the elite on its General Staff elaborated the Schlieffen Plan in 1905. With supposed scientific certainty, the Plan sought to overcome the geopolitical disadvantages of Germany's position in the middle of Europe by avoiding a simultaneous war on two-fronts. A lightning war in the West, ignoring the existence of the Belgian border, was to create a fait accompli permitting the Germans to race forward to the doors of Paris, forcing France quickly to sue for peace. The speed of this conquest would then permit the transfer of large parts of the German army to the East before the Russians had time to complete the mobilization of their massive but slow-moving and badly led conscript army. On paper, the Plan was brilliant; in practice, as intended, German forces arrived rapidly at the doors of Paris at the beginning of September. There, however, military "science" proved insufficient; the weight of the political made itself felt. The offensive was brought to a halt by a counter-offensive whose popular political spirit was conveyed by the mobilization of the Parisian taxis which ferried new forces to the battle of the Marne. The front was stabilized; deadening and deadly trench warfare replaced the lightning mobility that the General Staff had counted on.

Although the best of all scientific war plans could not have expected this "miracle of the Marne," the Germans' failure was not due only to bad luck. Its generals had forgotten one of the principle political lessons of their master, Carl von Clausewitz, who insisted that in war there will always exist "friction" that interferes with the apparently clear logic of the best of all possible military plans. In the present case, that friction arrived in the form of a Belgian national spirit which, against all expectations, gave rise to strong resistance to the invaders. Although the Germans easily overcame this improvised opposition, the ruthless fury of their counter-attacks cost of civilian lives and left civil damages which served as propaganda that helped convince the British to mobilize their own forces in support of "little Belgium."[12] Worse still, the Schlieffen Plan had been formulated with such precision, and the German officers were so rigidly faithful in its execution, that they neglected a second lesson of Clausewitz: the need for flexibility in order to cope with the unexpected. As a result, once the advance toward Paris had been stopped, a war that was supposed to be lightning quick became a war of position that would last for years; and in that kind of war the advantage is always with the defense. The German forces that were supposed to be transferred to the East had to remain on French soil, and the Russian mobilization, which was more rapid and better organized than expected, prevented the transfer of reinforcements from the East to break the bloody stalemate on the Western front.[13]

When the early German enthusiasm based on the expectation that a short war had disappeared, politicians had to invent a new sense of the political in order to legitimate what became endless butchery. The early political arguments were attempts at self-justification based on the devaluation of the other. All sides claimed to wage war in the name of "civilization." For the Germans, including the Social-Democrats, the threat to civilization came above all from the Russians. A "war of the pen" to defend the "values" of their nation broke out among French and German intellectuals. Already on August 8, 1914, the future Nobel Prize winner Henri Bergson delivered a speech to the Académie Française in which he contrasted "French civilization" to the militarist "barbarism" of Germany. The German reply followed quickly. In an "Erklärung der Kulturwelt" published on October 493 intellectuals and professors accused the French of refusing to admit that their critique of the supposed German militarism was a hypocritical pretense for an attack on German culture itself.

It was not sufficient to criticize the other; each side had also to present itself as a incarnating a singular value. That meant that domestic class conflict had to be set aside or to be considered to have been overcome. This was easier in Germany, where anti-capitalism could be integrated into a positive national self-understanding because the progress of industry and the development of urban life had gone together with the growth of Social Democracy. For example, the sociologist Geog Simmel (a Jew who had finally gotten a professorship in formerly French Strasbourg) delivered a speech in November 1914 on the "Internal Transformation of Germany" which sought to encourage the "birth of a New Man." A variant of that same argument was turned against the British enemy by the economist Werner Sombart in a well-received pamphlet in which he opposed "Merchants and Heros" (*Händler und Helden*). For Sombart, the German hero ready to sacrifice his very life for the good stands in contrast to the capitalist merchant who asks crudely what life can offer to him. Meanwhile, the practical Anglo-French leaders of the Entente insisted that their battle was justified by the German "barbarism" that had violated Belgian neutrality and the repressed its just resistance.[14]

On the German side, as the war continued and the stalemate persisted, the "heroic" values praised by the intellectuals were superimposed on the cruel daily reality. The mythic values tried to offer a higher meaning to the unending struggle. But the sacrifices in battle affected relations on the home front where the enthusiasm of the August days of 1914 diminished. The higher meaning of the war itself was replaced by the stupid evidence that the honor of the nation now depended simply on continuing the battle, upholding the sacrifice of those who had suffered, thereby insuring that their trials were not in vain. The "heroes" were now those who had held on, continuing the battle in spite of all, showing themselves worthy of those who died for the cause. This paradoxical but stubborn heroism as an end in itself was reflected in civilian society as well as in the army. The "cause" became an end in itself, with no content, without ends and without an end. As a result, no political solution seemed possible.

An unintended dialectic took the story one step further. The "hero" was democratized as the war and its losses affected all of society. This equalization of conditions led to an implicit redefinition of the goals and the significance of the war. Unlike its earlier phases, this redefinition was not the work of intellectuals; it was now society itself that sought the meaning of its suffering. The "hero" was present in everyday life; the heroes were those who persisted, who were ready to continue to suffer until the victory. No longer simply quiet and inarticulate cannon fodder of trench warfare, their questions and their demands could not be ignored. They wanted peace and the end of suffering, but they were not ready to accept it at any price. As a result, attempts at negotiation were doomed to failure because, by another dialectical twist, the democratic "hero" had become a proud, determined nationalist: he wanted peace, but could accept nothing less than a victorious peace achieved by the united strength of all arms: a *Siegfrieden*. Unfortunately, the Treaty of Versailles that was finally accepted by the German Parliament after the resignation of the leaders of its army led to the antipolitical legend of the "knife in the back" that would ultimately condemn the new democracy created by the Weimar Republic. Was this fate necessary? Was it contingent on the relation of domestic forces in 1919? Or was it an unintended result of the idealism of Woodrow Wilson that lent a universalist sheen to the Versailles treaty that, like the war that it concluded, was blind to the exigencies of the political?

4 Another Political Analogy

Herfried Münkler's study of this foundational moment in German history suggests a further comparison with French interpretations of the revolution of 1789. The impetuous path inaugurated in France in 1789 gave rise to a series of events, challenges and questions that seemed impossible to master as the revolution became an end in itself.[15] In both cases, the question that torments the nation, and its historians, is how to bring this revolutionary rupture to an end? Wherever they stood on the political spectrum, this was the challenge that tormented French historians of their revolution. In the analogous case of Germany, where the trench warfare continued beyond what anyone could have imagined, an analogous question arose: how could the war come to an end? Faced with events that are indefinable because there is no way to understand the goal that could give meaning to the conflict, diplomats as well as the newly democratized populations were powerless, their imagination was turned to the past, their judgments retrospective. There could be no final end because the battles and the heroism sought no political end; as such, they were without limits and could only become an end in themselves. It is not surprising that in ninteenth century France as in twentieth century Imperial Germany at war, a new nationalism based on the glorification of the people emerged with carrying an unsuspected popular charge.

Herfried Münkler's reading of the story of the Great War offers a suggestively different point of comparison that is more political. He recalls the debate that occurred in 1916, when a minority of German intellectuals, including Max Weber, opposed the declaration of unlimited submarine war. They made the pragmatic argument that this would make the conflict a "world" war that would draw the USA out of its neutrality. Such pragmatism seemed too simple when faced with the heated warrior ethos. From another standpoint, Eduard Schwartz, a professor of classics, turned to Greek history to suggest a justification for this war that seemed to have become an end in itself. Schwartz (like Fritz Stern, much later) compared Germany's condition in 1914 to that of Athens at the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War. As described by Pericles in his "Funeral Oration," Athens was surrounded by jealous neighbors, envious of its domination and its wealth, fearful of its culture, of the refinement its social relations and of the proud self-assurance of its people. This combination of jealousy and fear led the Athenians to fear an attack by a coalition of its enemies. As a result, they made the *political* decision to find an *particular occasion* for a preventive attack. Schwartz's analogy suggests that the accidental occasion for the outbreak of the war should not be confused with the *cause* of the war, which was the neighbors' fear of Athenian hegemony. Just us Athens was not guilty, by analogy Germany could not be declared responsible for the terrible war.

Analogies can be misleading. Münkler points out that in this case "the analogy becomes an apology." After all, the analogy concerned conditions at the time of the outbreak of war, in 1914, whereas the debate in 1916 concerned the extension of the war, a decision for which Germany would clearly be responsible. Still more fatefully, the declaration of unlimited naval war would abolish any *political limits* on the goals of the war. In this context, it is important to recall that, in the Greek case, once the war had broken out, Pericles advised the Athenians that the superiority of their civilization permitted the Athenians to adopt a defensive posture while its enemies exhausted themselves before finally recognizing the vanity of their war. After Pericles death, the leaderless Athenians gave in to the temptations of an expansionist war that concluded with the disastrous invasion of Sicily. The force of the analogy returns in another guise, suggesting that expansion without limit leads to chaos, and worse. Was this the message of Eduard Schwartz? Was his goal to recall that the political has to know how to admit its limits if it is not to perish as the victim of its own madness, its *hubris*?

There remains the question how to determine the limits of the political? That is a political question. The analogy to the history of Athens, and the distinction between the causes of war and the occasion for its outbreak, suggests that the Great War was necessary, even predestined, although its hour and date were neither predetermined nor the result of a determinant cause. This seems to imply that politicians were responsible only for the choices that led to the outbreak of a war that was fated to come, although no one could say when and how it would break out. In that case, their choices (of 'when' and 'how') were not political in the strong sense of the term; they were about politics and pragmatics. The analogy to the history of Athens suggests that it was the declaration of unlimited war that was a *true* political choice, as was the Athenians' later and ultimately foolish decision to invade Sicily, because their refusal to accept limits destroyed the framework that had, until then, defined the political universe.

Analogies can be misleading but they are suggestive. As Paul Ricoeur once put it in a commentary on Lévi-Strauss, they are "good for thinking" (*bonnes à penser*). It might be suggested that after the Athenians' refusal to accept limits destroyed the political framework that defined the City-State, opening the way for the Age of Empire that began with Philip and Alexander's Macedonia, so too the Great War was followed by its own Imperial vision of the political that culminated in the second World War, followed by the Cold War? It would follow that the task of contemporary politics is *not* to invent a new totalizing ideology for a new age but rather to invent a type of political *limits* whose paradoxical effect is the creation of new modes of political coexistence. This would produce an expansion of the political rather than the struggle for political expansion that characterized the world that emerged from the senseless slaughter of the Great War.

NOTES

1. C.f., Fritz Stern, *Einstein's German World* (Princeton University Press, 1999). The historian's autobiography, *Five Germanys I have known* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2006), enriches and contextualizes his assertion.
2. C.f. the account of both processes—the democratization of the West and its unification with the east—offered in "Citizen Habermas," Chap. 8, below.
3. The title of the French edition seems more fitting: *Penser la revolution française* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978). I tried to show the usefulness of "thinking" rather than just "imagining" a revolution in 1983 (in "The Origins of Revolution," *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* (Vol. 14); reprinted in *The Politics of Critique* (1978).
4. Herfried Münkler, *Der Grosse Krieg. Die Welt 1914–1918* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 2013). The present essay was first published in French as a review of Münkler's book, and of his work more broadly, to which I am indebted.
5. The reputation of these two generals was won at the outset of the war at the battle of Tannenberg on the Eastern front, whereas the German offensive in the West was stopped at the Marne, on the doorway to Paris. As Münkler, the author of a fascinating study of *Die Deutschen und ihre Mythen* (2009), points out, Hindenberg was fully aware of the "mythical" signification of Tannenberg, the battlefield where the Polish and Lithuanian armies had defeated the Teutonic knights *in 1410*! Hindenberg became the incarnation of German valor and redeemer of national prestige whose support would insure the nomination of Hitler as Prime Minister in 1933.
6. The English translation of this massive, heavily documented volume of 896 pages as *Germany's Aims in the First World War* (1968) made the author's intentions appear less partisan than the German title. The verb *greifen* has the connotation of an animal's paw reaching toward its prey.
7. Critics of Fritz Fischer wondered whether the fact that he had been a member of the Nazi party between 1938 and 1943 had influenced his reading of the documents. Was his book an attempt to compensate for his past? For a recent reading of the controversy, c.f., Stephen Pezoldt, "The Social Making of a Historian: Fritz Fischer's Distancing From Bourgeois-Conservative Historiography, 1930–1960 in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol 489., Nr. 2, April 2013.
8. It should be noted that Münkler is the author of a study of *The New Wars* (2002) and *Empires. The Logic of World Domination* (2005) as well as *Middle and Mass. The Struggle for the Correct Order* (2010). In the latter, he compares the geopolitical situation of the German Reich in 1914 to that of reunified Germany in 2013.
9. How many died from illness contracted in the trenches rather than from bullets fired by the enemy? Hygiene was a vital problem, as always in war.

Similarly, there was the need to organize what Münkler describes as "Latrines and Bordellos." One photograph shows a clear distinction between bordellos for officers and those for common soldiers; the same no doubt held for the latrines! Some aspects of war did not change during the Great War.

10. This point is stressed by Münkler. The anthropological uniqueness of the Great War is analyzed and illustrated from another point of view by the French art historian, Philip Dagen, in *Le silence des peintres. Les artistes face à la Grande Guerre* (Paris, Hazan, 2012). Dagen asks why this new form of warfare proved to be immune to painterly representation. More precisely, why did it prove opaque to the modernist painters of the early twentieth century whose inventions (such as cubism and its offshoots) reflected an awareness of the weight of the new technological world?
11. C.f. Christopher Clark's best-selling *The Sleepwalkers. How Europe went to War in 1914* (New York: HarperCollins, 2013).
12. Although the British belonged to the Entente, their military doctrine was based on their sea power; the idea of a continental land war was for them something to be avoided if at all possible (which is another reason why the German spy's report had such weight). But here too military logic had to make way for political motives in a democratic nation.
13. Was the rapid mobilization of the Russians another political factor neglected by the military logic of the Schlieffen Plan? After Hindenberg's victory at Tannenberg, victories followed by setbacks led to a certain stability on the Eastern front until the Bolshevik Revolution and the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918 took Russia out of the war.
14. More liberal Germans, including many Social Democrats, justified the war as a battle against Czarist barbarism whereas others adopted the arguments of Sombart for whom capitalist England was the principal enemy.
15. C.f., most recently *Bonaparte*, by Patrice Gueniffey (Paris: Gallimard, 2013). The title points to the fact that the Corsican, whose first appearance on the stage of the revolution came after Thermidor, was the actor who would bring to closure the rupture inaugurated by the revolution. A second volume will be titled *Napoleon*, the name adopted by the ruler of the short-lived French Empire. A more critical biography is offered by Gérard Grunberg's, *Napoléon Bonaparte. Le noir hero* (Paris: Editions CNRS, 2015), which argues that what Napoléon terminated was in fact the first emergence in France of *political* liberalism.

CHAPTER 16

From Anti-Communism to Anti-Totalitarianism

The very nature of democracy makes its defense difficult. In a democracy, the majority has the right to be wrong and the opportunity to make public its private passions while acting on its personal interests. What is more, democratic tolerance of pluralism and recognition of social conflict ensure that democracy will be characterized above all by self-criticism. As a result, when it is threatened, its enemies will find at least some domestic support from citizens who despair of democracy, or at least of *this* democracy, and who convince themselves that a better, more substantial or less superficial, democracy can be brought into being. Such critics of the really existing democracy are convinced that they are acting in the name of *real* democracy. So it was, for example, that the General Secretary of the American Communist Party in the 1930s, Earl Browder, could claim that (Communism is 20th century Americanism.” Following the same logic, the CIA took it upon itself to support not only opposition to Soviet influence but also to encourage and finance what Frances Stonor Saunders calls the “cultural Cold War”[1] The shared logic of the CIA and the CPUSA turns out to be, as the saying goes, no accident.

The discovery of the secret CIA financing in 1967 dealt a fatal blow to the attempt to create an anti-communist left. It came just when antiwar protests led by the aptly named Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) had convinced Lyndon B. Johnson not to run for a new term in 1968. Joining with the Civil Rights movement to develop a politics of democratic renewal, the New Left soon lost its ability to conceive of itself

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D. Howard, *Between Politics and Antipolitics*, Political Philosophy
and Public Purpose, DOI 10.1057/978-1-349-94915-1_16

as the stimulus to the invention of a new politics. Although it never had organizational links to the (legal) Communist Party—indeed, SDS was the youth group of the strongly anti-Communist League for Industrial Democracy—the New Left adopted an "anti-anticommunist" program.[2] But the double negation contained in this new credo threatened at times to become an affirmation: the enemy of my enemy becomes my friend. That in turn opened the way to factional excesses as Maoists competed with Trotskyists, Castrists, and assorted ideologues in doctrinal quarrels increasingly removed from the civil and democratic goals that made up the newness of the New Left. It was not long before SDS disappeared, replaced by a variety of political and apolitical fundamentalisms (including the underground "Weatherman" faction). They were held together only by their shared opposition to the war in Vietnam, with whose end they also disappeared. This too was no accident.

The self-destruction of the New Left (with a lot of help from the FBI) made it difficult to recognize the radical political project that it had represented, that of a democratic politics which argued that, as is often the case, the best defense is a good offense. The New Left thought of itself as new because it rejected a tainted communist political heritage; but it was unaware of other ancestors who had been marginalized in the Manichean world of the Cold War and then were discredited by the CIA revelations. Those forerunners included the creators of the international Congress for Cultural Freedom which was meant to be a vehicle for the development of an anti-totalitarian left. With the revelations of 1967, guilt by association wiped away their positive achievements in the eyes of self-righteous critics who portray political choices in black and white.

The story of the Congress for Cultural Freedom is told from different perspectives in three recent books published in three different languages, from three different perspectives. Stonor Saunders's account concentrates on the paradoxical but ultimately nefarious role of the CIA. In her version, the Cold War has only one protagonist, the USA. As a result, she neglects the European activities initiated by the Congress, which did not end with the 1967 revelations. Pierre Grémion's historical study of the Congress underlines the role played by its central office in Paris, emphasizing its contribution to the rise of a democratic sensibility that would transform Eastern Europe in 1989.[3] The transformation of earlier anti-communism into a broader theory of anti-totalitarianism is the theme of Ulrike Ackermann's study[4] which concludes that the intellectual and political legacy of the Congress remains still vital even after the Fall of the Wall, since the triumph of democracy can never be taken for granted.

1 The Ugly Americans

The British title of Stonor Saunders's book, *Who Paid the Piper*, is descriptively exact but conceptually misleading. Her goal is to unmask a conspiracy by the CIA. Her detective work is good and her style is lively. But her neglect of the historical context colors the overarching argument of her book, making the evidence that she piles up to the point of overkill appear sinister. On reflection, it would have been dereliction of duty had the CIA not been involved.[5] The author's multiplication of revelations has the effect of dulling the reader's analytic sensitivity. The fact, for example, that the CIA contributed to the funding of "at least a thousand books" (245) doesn't say anything specific about either the form or the content of the cultural cold war: which books did it fund, and why?[6] That the CIA was involved with "over 170 foundations" (135) leaves a similar question. Is the author's intent to taint as many institutions as possible with guilt by association? But of what, exactly, were they guilty? The historical context needs to be considered.

The story begins at the height of the Cold War, in 1948, when the communists' seizure of power in the Prague coup was followed by the Berlin blockade. While the Marshall Plan would bring economic recovery, the West had also to reply to the attractive power of communist parties backed by the Soviet Union and identified on the cultural front with the anti-fascist resistance. Liberal culture and political rights were denounced as an ideological cloak for the self-serving masters of the capitalist economy which was said to have been the true cause of the military and human horrors of the just-ended world war. The Soviets and their allies in the western communist parties took over the leadership of a political movement that was anti-capitalist and also anti-liberal. In this context, the CIA supported the initiative of a group of anti-totalitarian leftists whose best-known representatives, Arthur Koestler, Manès Sperber, and Ignazio Silone, had lived the experience of both communism and fascism, having joined and then broken with the former and then fought against the latter. They had tasted the bitter fruit; and they were convinced of the need to oppose any and all totalitarian politics. Meeting in divided Berlin in 1950, they created the Congress for Cultural Freedom.[7]

Stonor Saunders tells her reader little about how the Congress contributed to the CIA's cultural counter-offensive. She is more interested in blaming the American policy more broadly. The birth certificate of the Cold War, she explains, was the decision known as NSC-68 in which the

National Security Council defined communism as an aggressive monolith that must be fought on all fronts (97). As a result, the budgetary allocation for "psychological warfare" was quadrupled in 1950 (id.). It was spent in part to support those "more than 170 foundations" that could be secretly manipulated by the CIA. The result is depicted as a "semi-privatization of foreign policy" which would later give rise to "Oliver North type disasters" such as Irangate (145). This is painting with a broad brush. The author blames the folly of some CIA interventions on the fact that their authors were imbued with the doctrinaire certainty that they were the bearers of all that is good and just: the American Way of Life (234). Further, because their activity was clandestine, there was no need to justify it through reasoned argument and debate. As a result, their convictions became still more rigid and their faith more absolute. Amidst this denunciation, the author doesn't stress the paradox that this same self-confidence permitted the CIA to support radical forms of cultural modernity, from jazz to abstract impressionist painting, that would penetrate the Iron Curtain even though they remained the province of an elite at home.

Rigid faith combined with secrecy also help to explain why the CIA could enter into compromising agreements with former fascists whereas it was without pity for those who had shown the slightest sympathy for communist regimes (227f). Stonor Saunders's condemnation is telling.[8] The *anti*-anticommunism implied by this comparison leads her to criticize the CIA's refusal to accept the legitimacy of "neutralism" and other attempts to find a "third way" between communism and capitalism without recognizing that those political programs were similar to proposals coming from the communist side. It is one thing to denounce McCarthyism for withdrawing from American libraries abroad the same books that Hitler had condemned as "subversive" (193). It is something different to relativize the responsibility of the two blocs by adopting a neutral stance as if there were no distinction between them. Admitting that certain Soviet writers were persecuted, Stonor Saunders adds the qualification that this was "on a scale which does not, and cannot, bear comparison with the McCarthy campaigns in America" (206). From here, she takes the short step from moral relativism to Cold War revisionism. "Perhaps the question is, could McCarthyism have happened without the Truman Doctrine?" (211). She answers her own question by explaining the "essence of Cold War thinking" as the result of political choices by the United States. In this way, the denunciation of CIA meddling becomes a critique of American responsibility for the Cold War, which was supposedly the result of the

Truman Doctrine. The “war” becomes a unilateral action; the Soviets are its victims, the Americans the aggressors.

The story becomes more complicated when Stonor Saunders considers the actual influence of the CIA on culture, which presents another political paradox. On the one hand, she cites the editor Jason Epstein, who blames the CIA for supporting mediocre writers who, fearing loss of grants and honoraria, played along with “professional anti-communists” who used Agency support to expand or protect their own “markets.” On the other, she criticizes philistine McCarthyists such as the justly forgotten Congressman Dondero, whose attacks on abstract painting blocked attempts by the State Department “to deploy American art as a propaganda weapon.” (255f) In cases like this, the CIA’s culture of secrecy insured its freedom of action. Stonor Saunders cites the CIA agent, Tom Braden, who boasts that its agents “were the best art critics in America in the fifties…” (259). The artists whose work they sent abroad were a true modernist vanguard. In the same way, its autonomy extended to matters of policy in unexpected ways. “Far from denting the CIA, McCarthy eventually contributed to its enhanced prestige … [as] something of a haven for foreign policy ‘freethinkers’…” (212). Drawing the balance sheet for the 1950s, Stonor Saunders insists that “both factions missed the one important truth: absolutism in politics, whether in the form of McCarthyism, or liberal anti-Communism, or Stalinism, was not about left or right, it was about refusing to let history tell the truth” (228). That historical “truth” for Stonor Saunders appeared finally in 1964, when the Cold War became laughable: Stanley Kubrick’s *Dr. Strangelove*, John LeCarré’s *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, and Joseph Heller’s *Catch 22* showed, in the old type of conflicts, reality and madness were quite compatible with one another (359ff).

While the absurdity of the Cold War may have then become clear to cultural critics in the West, the communist regimes continued for another quarter century. Meanwhile, the domestic influence of the CIA’s elite politics was preserved by the existence of a hidden dialectic between the American public in general and the CIA in particular. America’s ruling class considered “Donderoism” more dangerous than even McCarthyism. In its eyes, Americans were a raw, uncultured people who needed to be protected from such misguided cultural instincts by a civic elite, educated at the best universities, knowing one another so well that they would never need to ask themselves or each other too many questions. This elite would do whatever is necessary for “democracy” to escape the populist temptations of its citizens. Such were the hard core of the early CIA. There existed a vast network of collaborators who would either volunteer or let themselves (or their foundations) be co-opted. This network made up of well-connected figures from business, the academy, and of course diplomacy and politics, entrusted itself with the preservation of democracy. In retrospect, Stonor Saunders argues, that network was a threat to the very democracy that it claimed to preserve.

This is the context in which the cultural Cold War acquires its salience. The elite that was supposed to protect America from its own undemocratic instincts was isolated from public debate; as a result, its activity was perverted for the same reasons that enabled its activity.. This gave rise to a "sublime paradox of American strategy in the cultural Cold War: in order to promote an acceptance of art produced in (and vaunted as the expression of) democracy, the democratic process itself had to be circumvented" (257). The elites were "modernists terrified of modernity" (249), aristocrats who felt obliged to defend a popular democracy whose virtues they doubted. Their defense of democracy employed means that were contrary to democracy. The CIA wanted to have it both ways: its use of conspiratorial means was justified by its claim to defend a popular will whose very weakness is said to make necessary their conspiracy.

Stonor Saunders's target is not only the corrupting influence of the CIA; the thrust of her critique is directed, in the last resort, at the USA itself. The culprit is America's inept imperial democracy, of which the CIA and its ill deeds are only the sad symptoms. Her account of the CIA's role during the Cold War brings new details to the story of Cold War historical "revisionism." She does this by rejecting the simplistic identification of "America" with the capitalist economy. The object of her criticism is broader and deeper; she aims at a democracy too uncivilized to govern itself which must give secret power to an elite which will necessarily betray the very democracy it claims to serve.

This unspoken premise explains the absence of the second actor in the cultural Cold War, communism as it existed not only in the Soviet Union but also in the domestic communist parties in the West. This explains why she delights in debunking the CIA's interventions while downplaying the actual work of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, whose anti-totalitarian cultural politics developed also independently of the CIA. The results of the Congress' work would affect change in a changing world after 1989. Looking backward, Stonor Saunders is concerned to denounce misdeeds and to warn against the influences of unscrupulous elites certain of the righteousness of their cause. Her final chapter sums up "A Bad Bargain" that she implies was not so much imposed on "suckers" as it was put into practice by "hypocrites" (409).[9] There are good and plenty of reasons for her criticism; but the author herself has also provided materials for a more reflective judgment that she unfortunately leaves fallow.

Even in America, it takes two parties to make a war. Public attention may be mobilized more radically by an imagined enemy than by the real threat. This assumption seems to be implicit in Stonor Saunders's vision of the cultural Cold War. It confirms her disesteem for American democracy, which seems to offer only the options of crude populism or elite manipulation. Unlike the CIA, there were other critics among the cultural anti-communists who tried to take into account the existence of the other party to the Cold War, and the changes in its goals over time. Rather than fixating on conspiracy theories that inculpate the USA, Pierre Grémion's *Intelligence de l'Anticommunisme. Le Congrès pour la liberté de la culture à Paris 1950–1975* provides a broader account of the development beyond anti-communist politics to the effects of its practical activities. Grémion's study makes it clear that the Congress's for Cultural Freedom's self-conception remained anchored on the left; as a result, its early anti communism became a critique of totalitarianism that was articulated in tandem with its critical analysis of modern industrial societies, East and West. The activities of the Congress continued after the end of the association with the CIA, creating networks in the East that nourished the dissident movements that prepared the events of 1989. In the West, among the French left, these activities eventually produced a changed self-conception once it became clear that democracy is not the identical twin of capitalism.[10] French anti-communism became anti-totalitarianism.

2 The Anti-Totalitarians

Stonor Saunders's rejection of the claim of one of the (unwitting) participants that he had been a "sucker" reveals more than she intended about the limits of her project. To call him a "hypocrite" implies that history and politics are written in black-and-white, with no place for doubt and no room for conflicting interpretations. Another study of the cultural Cold War, Serge Guilbaut's *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art. Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War*[11] tells the story differently. Its thesis is apparently simple. America became a global power economically thanks to the Marshall Plan, and politically thanks to the

Truman Doctrine. To complete its triumph, it needed to transcend its cultural mediocrity. Only then would the "American Century" be legitimate. Such legitimation, however, could not be produced simply by propaganda. It depended on the existence of a truly autonomous culture.

The abstract expressionist painting of the New York School could be put into the service of this hegemonic project. Its unique painterly style incarnated an individualism that could be seen as the living refutation of socialist realism. As conceptualized by critics such as Harold Rosenberg, Clement Greenberg and Meyer Shapiro[12], this art could claim a universal validity insofar as it appeared to be the expression of an alienation inseparable from modernity. Rejecting not only the conformist "realism" of totalitarianism (of the right and left), but also the conformist mediocrity of middle-class *kitsch*, this American art could acquire a political function; there was no need for outside intervention. In this way, an art that considered itself antipolitical could have political effects, precisely because its goals were individual rather than social! It could be adopted by a new international elite that was as hostile to communism as it was to middle-class philistinism. But its triumph was paradoxical: individualist art was frozen into a School, it became "authoritarian" and exclusive, transforming its original alienation into a (self-) mystifying certainty.

The reader of Stonor Saunders knows that the CIA (and the Congress for Cultural Freedom) did make use of this art. But Guilbaut's description does not suggest that either organization had a role in *creating* abstract expressionism, or that the painters were "suckers," let alone that they were "hypocrites." His claim is that structural conditions that existed independently of the creative process permitted it to become successful. If New York "stole" modern art, this was not the work of the CIA. There is no secret agent to point to; there are only structural conditions. Yet the triumph of the new painting came at a price. As with Stonor Saunders's self-isolated and thus self-deluded elite, the triumph of the New York School created conditions that would destroy its own project. "Avant-garde radicalism did not really 'sell out,' it was borrowed for the anti-Communist cause," insists Guilbaut. But "the art suffered tremendously—to the point that paintings by Mark Rothko lost their intended mystical quality to become colorful pieces of decoration in the modern home as shown in *Vogue*."[13] Could it have been otherwise? Abstract expressionism "took upon itself the positive role of representing liberal American culture, which had emerged victorious from the 1948 presidential elections." That liberal culture was defined more precisely in Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.'s vibrant manifesto, *The*

Vital Center (1949), as the NCL, the *non-communist left*.[14] The NCL was involved from the beginnings with the Congress for Cultural Freedom, in which Schlesinger himself was a central figure.

The NCL did not believe it could stake out a calm center equidistant between two equally unreasonable extremes. *The Vital Center* called for a "fighting faith" founded in the recognition that cultural freedom and critical politics express aspects of modern democracy that produce an "anxiety" that can lead the citizen to the right or to the left … or to the totalitarian deformations of these political poles.[15] The nuances of Schlesinger's analysis differed from the blunt anti-communist politics that dominated the 1950 Berlin Congress of the new Congress for Cultural Freedom, when tensions had been heightened by the surprise attack on South Korea. That aggressive anti-communism reduced the democratic self-criticism of the NCL to silence—or tried to. As a result, the American participants soon split over whether or not to downplay the battle against McCarthyism for the sake of the fight against communism, said to be the greater evil. Some hard-liners (such as Irving Kristol or Norman Podhoretz) now took the first step in a long march that would lead toward neo-conservatism; others (such as Irving Howe, Meyer Shapiro and Lewis Coser) would begin in 1954 to publish the democratic-socialist journal, *Dissent*.

Grémion's study begins from the Berlin meeting of the Congress which was conceived under the bitter banner of anti-totalitarianism.[16] Its leading figures were writers, such as Koestler and Silone, whose best-selling novels denounced the totalitarian temptation in more agressive terms than Schlesinger's cooler social scientific language. The political objective of these anti-totalitarians was shaped by their concern with an internal threat in Western Europe that came from those "progressive intellectuals" whose anti-fascism, learned in the Spanish Civil War and nourished in the struggle against Nazism, was translated after the war into an anti-capitalism that was blind to both the virtues and the dangers of democracy. Those progressives formulated a simple syllogism: because fascism was anti-communist and pro-capitalist, it followed that an anti-fascist had to be anti-capitalist and at least *anti*-anticommunist! As opposed to this binary logic, the anti-totalitarians stressed the political implications of the similarities between fascism and communism: since both were intolerant threats to freedom, the true anti-fascist cannot harbor a blind faith in the radiant future promised by any flavor of communism—any more than the anti-totalitarian NCL could accept without criticism the rich offerings of a capitalist economy.

Left-wing anti-totalitarian politics were not invented by the Congress for Cultural Freedom. That orientation had appeared already among exiled Russian Mensheviks, and it reappeared in the NCL of the Weimar republic. It adopted different forms in different countries, depending on their history and actual political conditions: sometimes it acquired a Trotskyist coloration, at others it stressed the moral (or religious) basis of politics, and at still others it became a quest for "true" Marxism freed from its distorted over-politicization. As a social-scientific theory, it would find its canonical form after the war in the theses of Brzezinski and Friedrich, while it acquired its philosophical pedigree in the work of Hannah Arendt. This is not the place to trace its various forms; but it is important to stress that anti-totalitarianism should not be simply equated with a right-wing anti-communism, be it capitalist, imperialist or simply pro-American. That error is rectified in William David Jones's recent study, *The Lost Debate. German Socialist Intellectuals and Totalitarianism*, which reconstructs the details of this historically rich vein of political theory.[17]

A politics that is defined simply as "anti…" is not self-sufficient. The initiative taken in Berlin in 1950 needed further development. The first step was the creation of intellectual journals. The monthly publications of *Der Monat*, *Preuves* and *Encounter* presented sophisticated theoretical debate accompanied by well-documented factual news and analysis to a (relatively) large, educated audience. Their goal was to demonstrate that culture can flourish only in a climate of free debate and, conversely, that the existence of such freedom is proved by such a cultural flowering. At the same time, the translations that these journals published from each other's pages permitted the creation of networks of personal relations that were concretized and maintained at regular colloquia and large-scale meetings. The contents of the journals and the activities associated with the Congress were cultural and well as political. For example, 1952 saw the organization of a large music festival in Paris accompanied by an exposition of contemporary American art. In 1953, the idea of cultural freedom was expanded to include a reflection on scientific practice through the organization of an international colloquium in Hamburg. This kind of cultural activity needed the support of a central organization, which was established in Paris under the leadership of Michael Josselson, who was not only the contact person for the funding from the CIA, but also the link to various independent sources of financial support.

The death of Stalin in 1953 was followed by the revolt of East German workers, which was promptly crushed. Although the end of Stalinism had led some to hope that, at last, a true communism could be created, the Congress turned up its attack. Already in 1952, and more strongly in 1953, "it took up the challenge in two essential domains: it reacted against the vision of modern art as degenerate by organizing the Paris festival; and it attacked Marxist theory of science at the Hamburg Congress" (151).[18] The time was now ripe for the organization of a new international congress, which was held in Milan in 1955. This meeting took account of the shift in the anti-totalitarian political analysis since the original Berlin congress. Whereas Koestler's concluding speech in Berlin, presented before a public of 10 to 15,000 persons, had promised "an offensive of freedom," the organizers of the Milan Congress—in which Koestler did not take part—proposed to debate the *question* of "The Future of Freedom." The pendulum had moved back toward the nuanced approach of Schlesinger's vital center. Although Hannah Arendt and a few others did take up the anti-totalitarian theme in Milan, the context had changed: freedom was no longer considered as an autonomous and conquering value; it was necessary to take into account society and the constraints that it imposes. This shift in accent was not the expression of a failure of nerve so much as the reflection of a new sobriety. It was clear that the critique of totalitarianism is not, in itself, a politics. The critique had to reflect also on the nature of the society in which totalitarianism is born— or where it threatens to take root.

History also affected the new problematic proposed at Milan. Soviet-American negotiations had begun in Geneva in 1954, at the same time that the Bandung Conference saw the birth of the Organization of Non-Aligned Nations. In 1956, Khrushchev's "secret" speech denouncing the excesses of Stalin was followed by Polish strikes that returned Gomulka to power, and then by the Hungarian revolution, which was soon crushed by a Russian invasion. The same year saw the disastrous Anglo-French-Israeli seizure of the Suez Canal, which implied the immanent end of colonial rule. What would the Congress make of this new situation? At its foundation, relations with potential allies in Eastern Europe had depended on the mediation of émigrés. Indeed, one of the first to join its Paris office in 1952 was Czeslaw Milosz, whose essay, *The Captive Mind*, was a vital contribution to the anti-totalitarian project. After 1956, a renewal was necessary. New and direct relations could be established, first of all with recent Hungarian émigrés, whom the Congress helped materially in their new lives and politically by publishing a *White Book* to refute the scandalous accusations spread by the Soviets and their progressive friends for whom the revolution was obviously a capitalist plot.

1956 was also a significant year in the West as the repression of Hungarian freedom led many intellectuals to quit the Communist Party, or at least to doubt its formerly blinding certainties. Grémion stresses two other consequences for the Congress. The Hungarian revolution was seen as the last of the nineteenth century revolutions founded on an unconditional demand for freedom; its defeat signified the triumph of the technical civilization of the twentieth century (272). This implied that the question posed in Milan (as well as the offensive of freedom promised in Berlin) had to be rethought—not only by the writers and philosophers who had dominated the first phase of the Congress but now by the sociologists who began to analyze what came to be called industrial society. In this way, adds Grémion, the elites of the social sciences who were housed at Harvard came to replace the civic humanism incarnated by the elite of Yale, whose networking within the CIA was criticized by Stonor Saunders.

The analysis of industrial society—which was not identical to capitalist society, and seemed, possibly, to apply to Soviet society—occupied the Congress over the next decade. A important implication of the new analyses was the need to understand the nature and the role of ideology. The earlier political analysis of totalitarianism identified ideology with propaganda. The sociologists were more nuanced. Grémion sees their contribution summarized in three publications. Raymond Aron concluded his essay on *The Opium of the Intellectuals* (1955) with a chapter that asked whether we were at the end of the ideological age. The same question was posed anew in Edward Shils's presentation at the Milan Congress that was published the next year in *Encounter*. Finally, Daniel Bell answered the question in a collection of his essays, written at the request of the Congress, with the announcement of *The End of Ideology* (1960). Neither the questions nor the answer implied that these three authors suggested that industrial society had created a transparent and rational world where ideas, ideologies—or critical thought—were no longer necessary.[19] Their goal was to underline the novelty of industrial society, and to reformulate the anti-totalitarian critique in order to reinvigorate the NCL. But if the demise of the old political totalitarianism (or of Stalinism) did not mean the end of critical thought, what was its new role? The "messianic" posture of Berlin in 1950 was no longer available. Was the sociologist the new figure of the critical intellectual? The work of the Congress, the thousands of pages published in its journals, the research that it funded, and the colloquia that it organized in the years between the large meeting at Milan in 1955 and the revelations of 1967 were dominated by these questions.

Although they did not find a simple or univocal solution, it is important to stress that they were posed, and posed again, critically.

The sociological focus on the manifestations of equality in modern industrial society needed to be joined with the more philosophical insistence on freedom if an NCL was to emerge. The difficulty of holding on to both poles increased in the fluid political context, domestically as well as internationally. The détente sought during the 1960's brought with it what Grémion calls the end of the "hot" Cold War and the beginning of a "new type" of Cold War. (359f) The assumption of a basic and irreconcilable opposition between two systems began to be replaced by the idea of a possible convergence between two industrial societies. The first to draw the political implications of this analysis were the West German Social-Democrats (the SPD) who stripped their party program of its Marxist presuppositions at the 1959 Bad Godesberg conference. The new American president, John F. Kennedy, abandoned John Foster Dulles's rhetoric of "rolling back" communism (after the disaster of the Bay of Pigs). Kennedy's new foreign policy was characterized by a surface pragmatism that did not hide the actual relations of forces that would catch up with the U.S. in Vietnam. The old anti-communist ideology remained strong in the USA, in spite of the presence of Arthur Schlesinger in the White House. France, which was finally emerging from its war against Algerian independence, presented a different figure: its neutralist flirtations now caused less worry than its Gaullist pretensions and support for the Third World. When the American war in Vietnam called forth youth revolts throughout the West, these American and French threads converged. A "New Left" characterized by *anti*-anticommunism emerged, only to be destabilized by the revelations about the CIA before it could critically lay claim to the heritage of the Congress by developing its own critique of totalitarianism on its own.

But the project did not die. The Congress was recreated in Paris as the International Association for the Freedom of Culture. It joined the "Fondation pour une entraide intellectual européenne" that had been created in 1966 to work with Eastern Europe. With this shift, the global ambition of the old Congress was lost, but the location of the new organization in Paris had consequences for the redevelopment of the project of the NCL. When the crushing of Prague Spring in 1968 put an end to hopes for a Euro-communist "Third Way," a new East-European emigration joined the Westerners whose faith and hopes had been shaken by 1956 and were now fully destroyed. The anti-totalitarian critique found a new legitimacy in Paris. During the next years, some members of the French "New Left" who had thought for a moment that they could continue and develop May 1968 by means of an imaginary "Maoism" realized that the true lesson of May was the pure madness of the old idea of revolution in modern industrial society. This context explains why Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago* was read in France as it was read nowhere else.[20]

The French were able finally to give the anti-totalitarian critique a positive content in the form of a politics of human rights. The "cultural freedom" that had accompanied the anti-communist critique acquired the political form that had been sought throughout the life of the Congress. The NCL had felt from the beginning that anti-totalitarianism and democratic politics are but two sides of a single coin. Grémion's concluding chapter shows how the practical work with Eastern Europe enriched the theoretical reflection that had begun at Milan and was developed by the critique of ideology. It is no surprise that many of the dissident leaders of 1989 appear in this new framework. Less expected is Grémion's description of the impact of the anti-totalitarianism in France. French Communism was rooted sociologically in the Jacobin tradition whose centralism coincided with the Communist idea of a state-centered politics. Communists were especially well represented in the educational system, where their contribution to modernizing France was appreciated. The educator (not the Parisian intellectual) was expected to train republican citizens, eliminating (Catholic) superstition, and preparing for individual autonomy. But in reality cultural life was subordinated to a conformity that strengthened the hegemony of communist ideology. The new concern with a politics of human rights and the idea that the individual can have rights against the state put this synergy into question. The decline of French Communism became inevitable. As a result liberalism could acquire new significance with the emergence of a French version of Schlesinger's NCL.

3 WHAT IS THE USE OF ANTI-TOTALITARIANISM TODAY?

The democracy that seemed to triumph so easily and unexpectedly in 1989 can be understood as the positive and self-conscious form of anti-totalitarianism. At least that is the kind of philosophical language the French like to speak. In the prose of reality, the new democracy faced serious difficulties early on, notably in the Balkans after the breakup of the former Yugoslavia. Ulrike Ackermann uses the different reactions of the French and German lefts to the crises in the Balkans to test the practical implications of the anti-totalitarian understanding of the challenge of democracy.[21] She frames her inquiry by using the history of the Congress for Cultural Freedom to reconstruct the paths of these political crises. The result puts into question any oversimplified understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the Western concept of democracy.

Left wing political thought in Germany was paralyzed by its contradictory presuppositions. On the one hand, the legitimacy of the Federal Republic was based on an anti-totalitarianism presented as the antidote to fascism.[22] On the other hand, the left assumed that in reality post-fascist Germany represented the triumph not so much of democracy but rather of capitalism. The resulting dilemma explains the popularity of the Frankfurt School's "critical theory," as expressed particularly in Max Horkheimer's 1939 essay "The Jews and Europe," which insisted that "He who does not want to speak of capitalism should be silent concerning fascism." This pattern is familiar. Because communism was anti-capitalist and presented itself as anti-fascist, the German left faced the problem of *anti*-anticommunism. Ulrike Ackermann sees parallels between the situation of the German left and that of the Congress for Cultural Freedom as it sought to make its way between a communism that was hegemonic among progressive intellectuals in the West and a liberalism whose political phraseology barely hid the economic or national interests that made use of it. She suggests that this German left that had to learn that a democratic politics of human rights may make necessary new kinds of political intervention, for example in the Balkans.

The French case seems to provide a critical standpoint from which that German left could better understand itself. Although her title talks of the "Sins of the Intellectuals," Ackermann does not so much denounce evil as explain the temptations or the seductions (*Verführungen*) of intellectuals in democratic societies. For example, the facile discourse that identifies fascism with capitalism, and then equates capitalism with political liberalism, neglects the fact that Nazi fascism never got along well with the German bourgeoisie (who, historically, were *Bürger*, not just profit-seeking capitalists). The inability to make such political distinctions explains why people of good will were ready to ignore the existence of the Soviet camps, and why they could continue to support communism as an ideal even after the revolt of the East-German workers in 1953 or the repression of liberty in Hungary in 1956. When equated with anti-fascism, communism was given the benefit of the doubt by the *anti*-anticommunists of the German left, who wanted dearly to find themselves, this time at last, on the right side of history.

Whereas Pierre Grémion's account of French developments is more sociological, Ulrike Ackermann's portrait returns to cultural politics. She admits that, like all portraits, hers emphasizes certain details while neglecting others. Her use of the history of the Congress as a guideline has the disadvantage of neglecting a crucial problem for the German left: the inability to explain Nazi totalitarianism, which seems to result from the fact that the Holocaust makes the Nazi crimes unique, irreducible and incomparable to other political forms. But her account of the French experience compensates for this omission while making clear the stakes of cultural politics. Whereas the German left could look to East-Berlin where "really existing socialism" seemed to some to represent an alternative to Western capitalism, in France communist power was cultural and ideological rather than institutional. The communist school teachers described by Grémion were not the masters of society; Marxist political culture was not imposed by decree. This contrast suggests that the fascination of communist ideology was based on advantages that were imaginary rather than real, cultural rather than material. It explains why, once the sand fell from their eyes, French leftists converted so readily not only to anti-totalitarian but also to democratic politics and the idea of rights.

This contrast of these two lefts suggests that perhaps the German political choices have been themselves motivated by cultural and ideological factors of which they were unaware. For example, why did May 1968 give rise to in Germany to a terrorism claiming to represent leftist politics while the French Maoists who were for a moment tempted by this option quickly abandoned it? Why was the 1974 publication of Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago* met with quite different readings in the two contexts? Even when both lefts agreed with the critique of Soviet Russia, they drew different consequences. The French saw the need to open a dialogue from below, encouraging the autonomy of civil society as it was being sought by Eastern dissidents, whereas the German Social-Democrats opened a dialogue from the top, seeking a politics of détente between two sovereign states. [23] Similarly, in 1989, the German left (and the Social Democratic candidate for Chancellor) showed uncertainty as to whether the end of "really existing socialism" was entirely a happy result whereas the French left intellectuals (however ambivalent about the future course of a united Germany) recognized immediately the importance of the threat to the new democracies represented by the 1991 bombardment of the Croatian city of Vukovar by the Serb-led troops of the former Yugoslav army.

Ulrike Ackermann pursues these contrasting choices to their intellectual roots in the analysis of totalitarianism. She tries to explain the German reception of the 1997 translation of the *Black Book of Communism*, a polemical denunciation of misdeeds whose existence did not shock the French left.[24] The Germans saw this denunciation of global communism as a provocation because they assumed that criticism of communism implied praise of capitalism! Although the French editor's Introduction to the *Black Book* did read like a provocation, Ackermann sees the German response as indicating that *anti*-anticommunism remained alive and well. A similar tendency had been present in the *Historikerstreit* in 1986 that was unleashed by the right-wing political theorist Ernst Nolte's attempt to "historicize" Nazi totalitarianism by arguing that it was a justifiable response to the earlier totalitarianism of the Bolsheviks. The inability to criticize both totalitarianisms results from the assumption of a binary opposition that leaves no gray zones where political judgment must be exercised. It produces a tendency to whitewash the sins of the supposedly more "progressive" form of antipolitics.[25]

Ackermann's goal is not a one-sided attack on the German left.[26] Her use of the parallel history of the Congress to reconstruct the history of that left has a more basic goal. Like Arthur Schlesinger, she identifies with the NCL and seeks to understand the temptations and seductions that threaten the democratic intellectual.[27] In her conclusion, she cites an elegant sentence of Manès Sperber, who insists that the intellectual must "not only take part in the struggle against the threats and temptations of power but also against the narrowness of so-called realpolitik that doesn't understand the transitory nature of its achievements *because it treats the present as the all-powerful heir of the past rather than as the past of a future that has yet to come*."[28] On first reading, this passage recalls position of the Frankfurt School. But Ackermann wants more than the politically paralyzing stance of a "critical theory" that, abandoned its insistence that anti-fascism cannot be separated from anti-capitalismin in favor of a totalizing "dialectic of enlightenment" in which rational progress is paid for by a further subordination of the individual to the system.[29] Ackermann is not a pessimist.

4 ANTI-TOTALITARIANISM AND DEMOCRATIC THEORY

It remains to determine the status and reach of the critique of totalitarianism. That critique could not be founded by the kind of sociological analyses undertaken by the Congress for Cultural Freedom in its second phase. The French experience shows that the critique had to become philosophical in order then to become political. As philosophical, it does not claim to know what will count as reality. That was the error of those for whom liberal rights were simply formal promises whose reality is illusory. The experience of East European dissidents shows the real efficacy of these rights in themselves, their power and the effects of their systematic violation. After 1989, the question of their relation to democracy, understood as popular sovereignty and the incarnation of the general will, has again arisen. Which will have priority, human rights or the popular will? The politics of human rights may have been effective under totalitarianism because they impose limits; but the status and efficacy of such a politics in a democratic polity remains to be shown.

The contribution of the Congress for Cultural Freedom can be reinterpreted from the standpoint of this question. The contradictory arguments of Stonor Saunders turn out to be fruitful in this context. While she joins the left in denouncing the intervention of the CIA as an attack on democracy, she also criticizes American democracy for being always ready to give birth to little McCarthys (or cultural Donderos) who, in turn, lead to the self-destruction of the democracy that they claim to incarnate by making necessary the intervention of an anti-democratic civic elite. This contradictory behavior suggests the need for a more complex theory of democracy. If we are all democrats, we are all like Molière's Monsieur Jourdain: we have lived with it without knowing what it is. Stonor Saunders unwittingly makes clear the fundamental instability of democracy, which is precisely the reason why the first critical analysis of really existing democracy by Tocqueville asserted that he treasured it not for what it is but for "what it makes people do."[30]

How does the critique of totalitarianism explain what democracy "makes people do"? Democracy cannot be identified with the brute fact of unitary popular sovereignty; its basis lies in the recognition of difference, which depends on the affirmation of human rights. Such rights are not a form of property that can be given, or taken, once and for all. Their affirmation does not depend simply on their juridical protection by a neutral state in a present that has neither a past nor a future. Their affirmation has no positive foundation; they are not based on the General Will, nor on the will of a social majority. This lack of a positive foundation has practical consequences. It means that human rights exist only through their constant reaffirmation. They become effective through a double process that affects both the person claiming them and those to whom that claim is addressed, who thereby benefit from them as well. When I affirm my rights by taking responsibility for them—an act which is the presupposition of all critique and of any democracy—I am also making a claim of *political solidarity* with those on whose recognition my rights depend. Rights result from the fragile and apparently paradoxical experience of a personal affirmation that can be validated only through relation to another person: that is why no one can make himself a citizen by simply willing that it be so. This quest for rights as a form of political solidarity that can never be taken for granted is what democracy "makes people do."

The Congress for Cultural Freedom would have come to similar conclusions had its existence not been compromised by the CIA. That is the lesson of these three recent studies of its evolution, which suggest that rather than reduce the critique of totalitarianism simply to anti-communism, it is important to recognize its intimate relation to the problematic nature of modern democratic political life. From this perspective, paradoxically, the study that is politically and theoretically the weakest of the three—Stonor Saunders—is also the most telling. Her ambivalent attitude toward democracy confirms that the temptations and seductions that Ackermann's study traces are not intellectual "sins" willfully committed; they are rooted in the unstable structure that is at the foundation of democratic self-criticism which the sociological turn of the Congress after 1955 sought in vain to understand. This is the lesson that Grémion's pursuit of the East-European activities of the post-CIA Congress also makes clear. For if democracy "makes people do" many good things, one has to also admit that it can make people do stupid ones as well. That too is part of the radical nature of democracy, which the naïve *anti*-anticommunism of the New Left could never admit to itself.

NOTES

1. Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (New York: The New Press, 2000). The British edition was published as *Who Paid the Piper?* (Granta, 1999).
2. This shift was given explicit recognition in 1965 when the members removed from the organization's statement of principle the clause stating that it stood opposed to "totalitarians of the left and the right."
3. Pierre Grémion, *Intelligence de l'Anticommunisme. Le Congrès pour la liberté de la culture à Paris 1950-1975* (Paris: Fayard, 1995).
4. Ulrike Ackermann, *Sündenfall der Intellektuellen. Ein deutsch-französischer Streit von 1945 bis heute*, (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2000).
5. In his "Souvenirs: Paris 1956-7" (*La Revue Toqueville/lThe Tocqueville Review*, Vol. XXI, No. 1, 2000), after asserting that "none of this was

surprising," Daniel Bell insists that "[t]he Congress was never a puppet organization of the C.I.A." (p. 20) He notes that some of the funding came from the Ford Foundation, which also financed in part the creation of the Free University in Berlin and the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme in Paris. Does that make them CIA tools, he asks rhetorically.

6. Numbers in parenthesis refer to the American edition of *The Cultural Cold War*.
7. Peter Coleman's earlier study *The Liberal Conspiracy. The Congress for Cultural Freedom and the Struggle for the Mind of Post-War Europe* (New York: The Free Press, 1989) recounts this story, as his title indicates, from the standpoint of political liberalism.
8. C.f., in this regard, Martin Jay's review of Alexander Stephan, *Communazis. FBI Surveillance of German Emigré Writers* in *The New York Times Book Review* (January 28, 2001). Jay concludes his article with a rather pertinent question: "Why, one wonders after reading this book, when the names of former Gestapo or Stasi heads adorn no governmental buildings in Berlin, is the F.B.I. headquarters in Washington still named, despite all we now know of his sordid career, after J. Edgar Hoover?".
9. Stonor Saunders does describe the entire historical existence of the Congress. But she doesn't analyze it. She recognizes, for example, that Koestler was soon marginalized, and she describes the process by which the American group led by Sidney Hook was ultimately eliminated as its anti-communism came to entail support for McCarthy. But she does not ask herself what these exclusions signify about the project of the anti-communist *left*. Instead, she suggests that the presence of such rabid anti-communists is only a sign of the original sin involved in the very conception of the project. Pierre Grémion's study is more satisfying in this regard, as will be seen in a moment.
10. The analysis of the French left is not Grémion's primary concern. Ulrike Ackermann's account helps to make explicit what is often implicit in Grémion's study.
11. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).
12. All three critics came from the anti-communist left. Greenberg, the most influential of the three, was a former Trotskyist whose theorization of the superiority of abstract art was based on an historical vision rooted in Marxism (whose vocabulary he avoided). On this latter point, c.f., Donald B. Kuspit, *Clement Greenberg. Art Critic* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979).
13. In Guilbaut, *op. cit.*, pp. 202, 204.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 195. Guilbaut notes that the cover of the 1962 republication of Schlesinger's book "used abstract art to symbolize the balanced center position.… Thus it occurred to at least one book designer in 1962 that abstract expressionism represented the new liberalism." (p. 247, n. 23).

15. These are the titles of the first four chapters of the book, whose concluding chapter is "Freedom: A Fighting Faith." Along the way, Schlesinger deploys a remarkable knowledge of anti-totalitarian theories, including those of the Frankfurt school. His half-century old book still bears reading.
16. Grémion is a French sociologist, perceptive and careful in his judgments. But a perspective from the inside, by a participant in the *American* side of the debates that nourished the Congress, was suggested in 1953 in Hannah Arendt's brilliant dissection of the politics of "The Ex-Communists" (reprinted in *Essays in Understanding*, *1930–1954*, New York: Schoken Books, 2005). Typified by Whittakker Chambers and distinct from "former communists" such as Picasso or fellow travelers who had put behind them a past which never had defined their identity, the ex-communists became as fanatically anticommunist as they had been anti-liberal communists. Citing Chambers's decision to testify before Congress, Arendt points out that, as in his communist days, in his own eyes "He makes history, he does not simply act politically." These early participants in the foundation of the Congress, typified by the virulent philosopher Sidney Hook, were driven to the sidelines in the ensuing years. The fate of their avatars is worth consideration.
17. (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999).
18. Numbers in parenthesis in this part of the text refer to Grémion, *op. cit.* It should be noted that the facts cited by Grémion are not absent from Stonor Saunders's account. Indeed, her interviews with many of the participants are a useful supplement to Grémion's more sociological account.
19. The accusation against the "end of ideology" theory recalls strangely the criticism addressed 30 years later to those who saw the fall of communism as identical to the triumph of democracy. The criticism is directed against the idea that with the end of ideology, or the end of communism, history had come to an end, and with it the need for political or critical activity.
20. It is worth recalling here Stonor Saunders's comment about the discovery of the absurdity of the Cold War in artistic work by Kubrick, LeCarré, and Heller. But the French realization of the absurdity of the old dream of a revolution to end all revolution was followed by the attempt to create a positive political project.
21. Ulrike Ackermann, *Sündenfall der Intellektuellen. Ein deutsch-französischer Streit von 1945 bis heute* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta Verlag, 2000). Citations are given in parenthesis in the text.
22. A more detailed discussion of the implications of this argument is found in Antonia Grunenberg, *Antifaschismus—ein deutscher Mythos* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Verlag, 1993).
23. The policy of *Wandel durch Annäherung* (Change through Rapprochement) was pursued by the SDP, which had abandoned its Marxist dogmas in

1959 at the Bad Godesberg Congress, when Willy Brandt became chancellor in 1969.

24. The *Livre noir du communism*e, edited by Stéphane Courtois, was published in 1997. Its sale of over one million copies world-wide confirmed that the debate about, and the reaction to, the totalitarian temptation remains actual. The editor's introduction tries to establish a parallel between "racial genocide" in the case of the Nazis and "class genocide" from the communists. His two principal collaborators publicly disagreed with this claim. On the same topic, c.f., the intervention of Jürgen Habermas in the *Historikerstreit*, in "Citizen Habermas," Chap. 8 above. With regard to the terrorist turn of some young German leftists, recall Habermas's critique of a temptation that he called "left wing fascism."
25. It should be said that this accusation does not hold in the case of Habermas, as I try to show in "Citizen Habermas," *op. cit.*
26. I should add that Ulrike Ackermann's political stance has changed in the years since her book was published. She has become a professor at the SRH Hochschule, a private university in Heidelberg, where she has since 2009 been the director of the *John Stuart Mill Institut für Freiheitsforschung.*
27. Schlesinger's book is subtitled "Our purposes and perils on the tightrope of American Liberalism." He writes in his Foreword that "The experience with Communism has had one singularly healthy effect: it has made us reclaim democratic ideas…".
28. The citation is from Sperber's *Anpassung und Widerstand. Úber den unvernünftigen und vernünftigen Gebrauch der Vernunft* (1994), cited by Ackermann at p. 242. (My translation, and my italics).
29. There were members of the Frankfurt School who did move from anti-fascism to anti-totalitarianism without accepting the totalizing pessimism of the "dialectic of enlightenment." Although he was not a direct heir to the Frankfurt School, Daniel Cohn-Bendit implicitly adheres to Horkheimer's 1939 imperative in an essay titled "Wer vom Totalitarismus schweigt, sollte auch nicht über die Freiheit reden." (Who says nothing about totalitarianism should also not talk about freedom), in *Kommune* 3/2000.
30. The citation is found, significantly, in the chapter on "The Activity Present in all Parts of the Political Body in the United States: The Influence that it Exercises on Society," which stresses the influence of the political republic on the social activity of the individual. The citation is found in *De la démocratie en Amérique, I* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1961), Volume 1, p. 254.

CHAPTER 17

What's New After September 11?

1 Introduction

Must the intellectual, or the leftist—who need not be identical—always adopt a critical position, declaring that the glass is half-empty? Must the intellectual, or the leftist, always oppose the government, or the imperial hegemon? Must the intellectual, or the leftist, always take the side of the minority, the underdog, the victim—even if this ignores any responsibility that might fall to that minority, underdog or victim? Is the intellectual, or the leftist, faced with choices that are morally clear-cut to the point that political choice and individual judgment are superfluous? Must the intellectual, or the leftist, always have a good conscience and opt always, if not for the side of the angels, at least for that of Historical Progress?

These are some of the questions I asked myself in the face of the *new* political landscape left by the terrorist attacks of September 11. But I realized that they address in fact old problems that go back to the origins of left-wing political movements—recall, for example, the polemics between Marx and Weitling, Marx and Proudhon, or Marx and Bakunin; think of the debates among reformists, revisionists and orthodox Marxists; remember the sad end of the promising "New Left" that shook the political culture of the established order in the 1960s and 1970s. But those debates took place in a landscape defined by the domination of the capitalist economy, and the need to overcome the exploitation and alienation that it reproduced. It was and remains an oversimplification to make political choices dependent on such economic conditions; it is more useful to recognize that

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D. Howard, *Between Politics and Antipolitics*, Political Philosophy and Public Purpose, DOI 10.1057/978-1-349-94915-1_17

modern politics has to take into account the emergence of *democratic* social relations that represent a challenge to *all* forms of social domination—as long as those democratic conditions are maintained. This suggests that the intellectual, and the leftist, should be arguing that the glass is half-full—and then show how it can be filled still further.

One further introductory remark leads me back to September 11. The critic Harold Rosenberg criticized a specific type of political activist as "an intellectual who doesn't think." This militant uses his mind, so to speak, only to try to adjust his vision of the factual world in order to fit it into the already existing "line" of the party. Such a militant is incapable of facing up to the *new*; he subsumes it under the party program, transforming its novelty into a confirmation of what he already knew. The terror of September 11 was a wake-up call, for the intellectual and for the left. The first step in facing up to the challenge is to look back at some of the old arguments that have again been recycled in order, then, to see what new issues have emerged. Against that background, the immediate political question facing the left is whether the attacks mark the beginning of something like a new Cold War that freezes the possibility of political innovation, or whether the recognition that the free market cannot prevent acts of terror will lead to a renewal of politics based on the understanding that what the terrorists attacked was democracy, and that *democracy must not only defend itself but must also take the offensive.*

2 Old Arguments

The old arguments are not false; the problem is that they can be used to criticize *any* action (or inaction) by the USA. Moreover, they don't consider claims that might be made *for* the choice of a given action. As a result, they are weak because one-sided, based on an either/or, forgetting that politics depends on judgments made in situations that are not defined by rational choice or zero-sum games. The centrality of judgment in politics does not, however, mean that politics takes place in a landscape governed by moral relativism. Values and moral standards exist; their rationality can be defended. For example, members of the Frankfurt School remained anti-capitalist even while they worked for the U.S. government's Office of Strategic Services, the forerunner of the CIA, because Nazism represented a greater evil and presented an immediate challenge. More generally, the enemy of my enemy is not necessarily my friend, as could have been learned already before the anti-fascist war, when progressive intellectuals were told not to criticize the Moscow Trials because America still lynches Negroes! This old argument remains valid still today. Others can be challenged profitably. Here are some examples.

The most general of the old arguments is the "root causes" thesis. It says that yes, terror is bad, but we have to understand that it is a reaction to something even more serious, more fundamental, and crying out for attention. Terror is so grievous that it must be the expression of something more fundamental, more profound, going to the roots of human being. While a root cause does not excuse the terror, it makes it comprehensible; the left then justifies its politics by this ability to pierce beneath the surface to uncover these hidden roots of evil which must first be uprooted for the good to triumph. This argument can formulated generally, and then translated into the particular language of international and domestic politics—each level points toward the others, promising a key to understanding world history.

The most basic form of the root cause argument serves to justify an anti-capitalist politics. Capitalist exploitation is destructive of both traditional life-forms and the physical environment. In its advanced form, capitalism introduces free trade, which has the effect of increasing the gap between rich and poor; at the same time what passes for capitalist culture destroys indigenous cultures. This, and more, is all true; but it is not clear how such a universal claim explains *this* particular terrorist response. One could react differently to each of these "products" of capitalism. Nor should it be forgotten that capitalism brings with it *also* new social and political possibilities which could, for example, result in rising expectations that awaken new hopes and suggest new projects rather than fuel an antipolitical, nihilistic terrorism.

A variant of the anti-capitalist root cause argument blames capitalism for various forms of imperial exploitation, in particular the control over natural resources even after the demise of direct colonial domination. This explains, for example, US support for corrupt Arab oil sheiks, its toleration of the Putin regime's terror in Chechnya … or perhaps even the intervention in Afghanistan said to be "really" motivated by oil and a pipeline project to transport it. Not only does capitalist-imperialism seek control of natural resources; it also monopolizes non-natural ones, such as the patents permitting it to sell anti-AIDS drugs at exploitative prices. Again, these general accounts are all true; but they don't explain *this* particular terrorist reaction to them. Why did the 9/11 terrorists not have recourse to guerilla war, or the symbolically powerful sky-jackings, as in days gone by?

Capitalism can also be denounced for its imposition of political control that denies democratic self-government and worker's rights while supporting corrupt oligarchies. While this criticism is also true, and is easy to illustrate in the mid-East, the fact that September 11 was also the date of the 1973 Pinochet coup in Chile (as well as the defeat of the Turks at the gates of Vienna in 1683) suggests the need to take into account the broader historical context in which events take place. The US backed coup against Allende took place in the context of the Cold War, when the "enemy" was a geo-political actor which was not simply a passive victim.[1]

In short, the "root cause" argument denounces an unnatural inequality marked by the growing gap between rich and poor countries and regions (as well as inequality within the poorer regions). Exploitation in international relations joins exploitation of domestic workers in a diabolical circle in which all the parts conspire to reproduce on an expanded scale the inequalities that were present at the (capitalist) outset. (In an updated version of the argument, proposed, for example, by Axel Honneth, this produces an asymmetry in which one participant denies to the other the "recognition" that is the natural right of humans and societies; radical politics, including terrorism, is the result of a struggle for recognition. This does not, however, explain the origin of capitalism, the original sin that starts the cycle.)

One difficulty with the "root causes" argument is that it attributes guilt to huge and seemingly impersonal forces over which individuals can have little influence. To remedy this, a modified version suggests: "the terrorists may be bad but we're worse." We're the original sinners, the first terrorists, who keep thugs in power while exploiting and humiliating the downtrodden. Worse, we do so in order to maintain an egoistic, drug-infested, sexually licentious society that needs to be made healthy and whole. The irony, of course, is that this is just what the American religious right claims … and it is what Bin Laden also believes.[2] What makes this into a *leftist* argument is the assumption that the real sin is that capitalism kills more people than died in the World Trade Center and at the Pentagon—*and* the assumption that we can, and therefore should (!), remedy our own wrongs. Nonetheless, the weaknesses of the "root cause" argument remain in this modified version, since it is assumed that once *we* heal ourselves, *they* will have no more grievances and we'll *all* live happily ever-after in a world that will have no need for politics and judgment.

A variant on this version of the argument is the so-called "blowback" theory often attributed to the political scientist Chalmers Johnson which condemns the USA for making deals with bad guys (or creating them, as with bin Laden who then turn against us when that suits their nefarious purposes. Thus, again, the attacks are deserved; they are the pay-back for immoral (or amoral) support of such evil-doers who are now asserting their independence.[3]

A peculiar inversion of the "root cause" theme denounces one particular policy option that is said to cause general hatred: unconditional support offered to Israel. None of the explanations for this policy seem convincing: sometimes domestic lobbies (AIPEC) are blamed, sometimes refusal to "recognize" Islam and its civilization are the cause, and at other times, a strategy aiming to divide-and-conquer Arab nationalism is imagined. None of these explanations is convincing, particularly since the Bush family tend to be pro-Arab (pro-oil), while their allies on the religious right are pro-Israel, and the George W. Bush administration—despite its passivity (or worse) on the mid-East—has recognized Palestinian rights to statehood.

This leaves a final set of old arguments that goes back to the fear on the democratic left that, because of the unique constitutional status of the President as commander-in-chief, the executive power will grow in times of war; and that this growth will come at the expense of individual rights.[4] This is why there was leftist opposition to US entry into both World Wars. Will the post-September 11 experience be comparable? This question takes us to the next phase of the argument.

3 New Questions

In the immediate aftermath, and still six months later (as I write these lines), the issue of individual rights, particularly for people of Middle-Eastern origin who are held in prison without formal charges is unresolved. On the other hand, President Bush and Attorney General Ashcroft have had to retreat on their intention to use military courts, for which final procedures have not yet been established.[5] There were rhetorical excesses, particularly by Ashcroft, whose regular TV appearances were sharply curtailed by the president's staff. Such excesses were to be expected from the Bush administration, whose penchant for secrecy and mania for control (in domestic as well as foreign policy) should not be underestimated. More striking is the fact that the civil-rights activists, whose protests explain the more cautious approach of the administration, are becoming more ambivalent. Racial profiling is seen by some as acceptable[6]; there is discussion of creating national identity documents as well as permitting tighter coordination of FBI/CIA/Immigration/Local Police. An important new political debate can be expected–a *political* debate, because these issues have not been posed in terms of the now worn-out moral-legal contrast between liberalism and communitarianism. This shift could be important since that moral-legal paradigm's absolutisms explain many of the ills justly denounced by E.J. Dionne's *Why Americans Hate Politics.*[7]

Are the place and role of dissent unchanged in times of emergency? There certainly have been grounds for criticism since September 11. Everyone will have their own list, ranging for example, from HEW Secretary Thompson's evident ignorance with regard to the anthrax attacks to the many public arrests of Middle-Eastern men that are supposed to give the public confidence that the government was alert to the danger. Other examples come from abroad, such as America's unsavory alliances with Russians, Saudis, Uzbeks, Pakistanis; at another level, what can be said of the way India and Israel use the "war on terrorism" for their own political purposes? Should these simply be swallowed, like bad tasting medicine needed to cure the new illness? Some journalists have admitted to self-censorship; others criticize government secrecy and attempts to control the press.[8] The early doubts about the appropriateness of the US response were eliminated by the measured build-up that preceded the military engagement in Afghanistan (and the well-executed Speech to Congress on September 24, 2001)—and even more by the apparently rapid and painless success against the Taliban that seemed to put an end to talk of a Vietnam-like "quagmire." On the other hand, the apparently unlimited extension of engagement to such countries as Yemen, the Philippines, Georgia—not to speak of the constant refrain calling for war with Iraq (or on Saddam)—could lead to renewed doubts.

It may well be the *hubris* that comes with high poll-ratings and quick military success that calls forth dissent from the public. An ill-elected President (the "resident of the White House," as some critics put it) has found a quasi-religious calling. The "war" on terrorism justifies his every action—and particularly those supporting his domestic allies, such as tax cuts, "fast track" authority to negotiate free trade agreements, budget deficits, military spending …. This will eventually prove too much for even politicians to swallow. But the Republican "patriots" will attack any critic for supposedly giving a "sign that we are losing [our] unity … [which] will be used against us overseas."[9] It is well known that the courage of politicians depends on the mood of their constituents, which is malleable.

In this context, the new face of globalization is no longer as simple as it was for the demonstrations in Seattle (November 1999) or Genoa (July 2001); finance capital and ecological destruction are joined in a more complex and fragile human tissue. On the one hand, people are now global. The *New York Times*' "Portraits of Grief," published daily for three months after the attacks, show the human face of globalization as it cuts across classes and nations in what Eli Zaretsky calls a de-reification or humanization of broad-brush categories.[10] On the other hand, terror is global too, and not just in its transnational reach and composition. For example, economic globalization means open borders, just-in-time delivery, and thus easy passage through customs of potential ABC (atomic, biological and chemical) arms.[11] Furthermore, the openness of democratic societies and their protection of individual rights provide a cover for terrorists (who would be more easily repressed in a dictatorship). In this sense, terrorism is an internal problem to democratic societies, especially when they are themselves *de facto* global.[12]

Is war itself now global? Indeed, what is the new face of war? Can you have war without an identified, and declared, enemy? What are the goals of post-September 11 warfare? The challenge is to give political form to a terrorism that does not declare goals while hiding the visage of its agents.[13]

A first model is provided by the experience of de-colonization, in which violent liberation movements were not declared outside-the-law but political and diplomatic attempts were made to find points around which negotiation could occur. But the al Qaeda group does not have the same kind of agenda as did, say, the National Liberation Front (FLN) in Algeria, which could eventually negotiate de-colonization accords with the French at Evian.

The lack of an interlocutor points to the "failed states" argument. Herfried Munkler[14] argues that modern warfare has been increasingly privatized. Privatized war becomes a self-reproducing industry since the warlords have no interest in stopping it. Hence, it is necessary to strengthen state in order to limit this self-reproducing cycle of war. While this may be true in Sierra Leone, Liberia or Congo, and despite the rapid disappearance of the Taliban "state," does the picture fit al Qaeda?

Searching for an adequate level of political exchange, some propose an international treatment. Michael Howard cautions against calling the terror an act of war, proposing instead a police operation by the UN to confront a crime against the international community.[15] But reducing the attacks to a simple crime (even if directed against "humanity") means one can only react after the fact. There is no possibility of a preventive political action; society remains defenseless before hand. However satisfying for the intellectual or the lawyer, no statesman could accept that risk.

However difficult for American optimism to admit, it may well be that the terrorists have to be understood as *sheer evil.* That inversion of the "root causes" argument faces similar difficulties to the earlier attempt: if true, it doesn't explain the particular case in question, or give a way of protecting against future threats. Its only advantage comes from the gigantic claim to offer a total explanation: this time *by the absurd* (which is no less real for that).

These difficulties suggest that it would be useful to return to an old concept that fell out of favor after it, too, had served as a global explanation of evil. T*otalitarianism* is not identical with the defeated regimes of Communism or Nazism; it represents a general reaction to the confrontation with both modernity and democracy which did not end with their demise[16] Whether one interprets the Islamic roots of the terrorists from a secular[17] or from a religious perspective[18], the same clash with modernity motivates their action. That does *not* make the "war" with the new totalitarian threat into a new Cold War, but it does help explain certain aspects of the behavior of the new enemy—for example, their need for a leader built up by myth (and who, for that reason, is both powerful and brittle); the fact that such a leader needs continued victories, a sort of permanent revolution against a polymorphous enemy; and as a result, that his movement will constantly find new enemies (liberal democracy, human rights, secularism…)—all of which leads to a situation that excludes the kind of goals that could open possibilities for political negotiation.

4 The Challenge of the New to Political Theory

We can start with the question asked by many Americans, "why would they do that to us?" The question has several implications.

The first is its sheer naiveté: Americans do not realize that they affect the lives of others in an increasingly interconnected global world. Loss of innocence can be a good thing—that was the itinerant book peddlers of the *Enlightenment* called the pornographic literature that was the mainstay of their sales "philosophy." For Americans, particularly since the "victory" in the Cold War seemed to put an end to the paralyzing Vietnam syndrome, the shock of reality is healthy. September 11 said (brutally) to America, "welcome to the world"; America will have to learn to reply with its own democratic and political form of welcome![19]

Second, the same naiveté is expressed also in the idea that they were not attacking us so much as they were attacking our democratic values. What is naïve here is not the values but the notion that because we claim that our values are universal, everyone could, should and would adopt them. The lesson to be drawn from the attack is that these values have to be fought for, defended, and they can also be lost. I will return to this point in my conclusion.

As a nation based on values, America is also founded on the free choice of its citizens to adhere to those values (hence its relative tolerance of immigrants). But for this very reason, those who do not accept American values are seen as sinners who need to be converted, punished or ostracized at worst. This dialectic of free choice applies not only to American attitudes toward foreigners; it is also applied to dissenters, particularly those on the left, who are labeled as "Un-American." A leftist reply to such attacks has to make clear that it is criticizing America for not living up to its *own* values. *And* one of those values, implied by the very freedom to choose but too often forgotten, is the principle of tolerance and respect for otherness.[20]

This stress on values points to the fact that what is challenged is not simply a system of electoral politics or even the protection of liberal individual rights; although it is both of these as well, its value is more fundamental than either. Democracy is a mode of life that rejects pre-existing certainties and is forced constantly to re-affirm the values that it chooses. For that same reason, democracy may make choices that others, within the body politic or outside of it, disapprove. That is why it is a pluralistic form of society, built on tolerance and open to critical debate. Perhaps most important, that is why it is a dynamic society, one that is constantly changing because it constantly puts into question and tests the very values on which it is based. As Paul Berman observed in a lucid essay titled "Terror and Liberalism,"[21] what George W. Bush called "the first war of the twenty-first century" resembles in many ways the great wars of the twentieth century that were fought against liberal democracies by militant movements and states seeking a return of national unity, purity and certainty that are constantly undermined by the dynamism and progress of democratic societies. These modern fundamentalisms were so powerful because there were always citizens within the democratic societies (on the left *and* the right) afflicted by doubt in the validity and viability of the self-critical democratic values who hesitated to defend that democracy or even joined with its enemies.

What then is the place of the critical intellectual within a democratic society? This is the problem of the half-empty glass from which this discussion began. The difficulty can be illustrated by the clash between the American rhetoric of multilateralism in international relations and its unilateralist practice. A critic could denounce that rhetoric as simply a ruse seeking to preserve American hegemony (which is not false[22]). Or the critic might argue that this is the tribute that vice pays to virtue, which can for that reason be seen as a first step toward strengthening what David Held calls a global civil society. It could as well be, as Robin Blackburn proposes, a first step not only toward reforming the UN but also for dealing with the problem and proliferation of ABC weapons that Jonathan Shell underlines as a task inherited from *The Unfinished Twentieth Century*.[23] The fact that these choices are not simply theoretical is seen when we return, finally, to the concrete political choices facing a contemporary American left that, for the moment, has had little to say about the post-September 11 world.

5 The Challenge of the New to Contemporary Politics

The promise of a "long war on terrorism," to be fought on many fronts, with any available weapons including those of the intellect (or "ideology"), recalls the good old days of the Cold War when there was a clearly defined enemy whose maleficent existence justified whatever actions were taken by the government. This Manichean mental universe assured popular political support for leaders who could also denounce critics as a subversive threat to the imperative of unity-in-war. It was in this context that the concept of "Un-American" was minted.[24]

But before denouncing this manipulation of public opinion, it should be noted that the old Cold War mentality was both familiar and also useful to critical intellectuals who wielded the arms of demystification, the critique of ideology, and a shrewd analysis of the misdeeds behind material profit to decipher the moves and interests of the enemies of the people at home as well as abroad. This congruence of the politics of left and right derives from the fact that neither took seriously the autonomy (and uncertainties) of *democratic* politics, which both political partisans reduced to its economic foundations. The result is a shared *antipolitics* which, in the case of the half-empty glass of leftist politics leads to the conclusion that the political system itself is corrupt, and that it is organized to frustrate possible change. This can give rise to a resentful populism which may even justify a recourse to terrorism on the basis of what Robin Blackburn—updating the old Socialist critique of anti-Semitism as "the socialism of fools"—calls the anti-imperialism of fools.[25] Blackburn's point is well taken: support for terrorism, of whatever kind, has never helped the left.

The September attacks can be seen as marking the end of a particular kind of economistic *antipolitics*: the right-wing version popularized by Reagan and Thatcher for which the role of the state must be reduced to a minimum while the development of a (supposedly self-regulating) capitalist market society is encouraged. Hope for a political renewal can be seen in critical commentary on phenomena as different as the folly of having left airport security in the hands of private airlines; the selfless courage of firemen and police which challenges the stereotype of the self-indulgent government employee; and the recognition that, like it or not, America is part of a globally interdependent world. Polls conducted in the year following 9/11 showed that for the first time since the 1970s a majority of Americans trusted Washington! This makes possible a social politics of the half-full glass.[26] But the democratic component, which should not be identified with the political party wearing that name, remains to be defined.

Electoral politics cannot be spurned—but electoral politics is not the center of democratic politics. Focus group studies by Stanley B. Greenberg prior to the 2004 elections showed signs of a possible Democratic Party win on the basis of four strategic points.[27] A new pride in national unity has overcome the Vietnam hangover, meaning that the national security issue will not hurt Democrats, who are no longer seen as unpatriotic. From this follows a new sense of community, based on the feeling of an obligation to help others and the sense that individual desires are less important than communal well-being. This suggests the chance for Democrats to mock Bush's implicit definition of patriotism as consumerism in the return to normality after 9/11. As a result of the new seriousness, private and public purpose tax cuts for the wealthy may not be so important in the eyes of the voting public. At a different level, the fundamentalism of the terrorists shows the import of the freedom to choose, which works against republican right-wing's appeal to the values of a religiosity that appears intolerant and dogmatic.

While this might bring the Democratic Party to power, and would in turn bring with it a much needed social reforms (health care, workers' rights, and environmental policy), what is (small-d) democratic about it? Stanley Greenberg's four points illustrate changed American attitudes toward the *values* that are fundamental to a democratic society. But the values of community (point 2) can come into conflict with the value of freedom to choose (point 4). This conflict is not a philosophical contest between liberal rights and community values; it is rather the expression of the dynamic that is typical of modern democratic society—a dynamic that cannot be reduced to a moral either/or. This in turn suggests that the need to maintain civil liberties while also protecting society cannot be reduced to a moral/legal version of that either/or. This is where a democratic left can find its place as a critic who neither insists that the glass is getting fuller nor revels in ascetic moral denunciations of a half-empty glass.

During the old Cold War, the left denounced the half-full glass because it was only able to react to events (since it could not defend the values of really existing socialism). The new Cold War against Terrorism has a different structure: not only can the left denounce terrorism (and its "root causes"); it can also argue that the roots of terrorism (at home as well as abroad) lie in its anti-democratic values. There are indeed root causes; but they must be fought because they are a threat to democracy, not because they are the cause of the terrorism that shocked America back into the world. What the terrorist attacks should have taught the left is the lesson learned from the critique of totalitarianism: that the threat to the established (dis-)order is the reality of a democracy whose self-contradictory political dynamic must constantly be refilled if its critical nature is not to become a fatal weakness. The same lesson implies that the left should not consider its successes—for example, a renewal of confidence in a state controlled by the Democratic Party—to be an end in themselves but rather a means to make more active and self-critical that democratic society. Even the glass that is being filled still remains partially empty; the critic cannot disarm, but the critic should beware of becoming a prophet of decline and doom.

Notes

1. The basic argument of this chapter was written in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks and the debates about how to react to and how to define the new threat. I have included it here even though political and geo-political conditions have changed in the years since it was written. The attempt to think politically about the new challenges to the Left, and to reject the old solutions, retains its usefulness. It illustrates the kind of questioning that underlies the arguments presented in this volume: challenging old assumptions and trying to understand the new questions that have emerged in the past quarter century by integrating them into the double framework created by the events of 1989 and September 11, 2001.
2. This was the position taken on September 12 by the reverends Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson; as for Bin Laden, c.f., the discussion below, as well as Paul Berman's "Terror and Liberalism," in *The American Prospect*, October

22, 2001, pp. 18–23. Do leftists believe it? The history of "left puritanism" is long and it continues in some circles.

3. There has some debate about whether to lift the Congressional ban on the CIA working with corrupt foreigners—as was done, for example, with the *Contras* in Nicaragua, or before that, with Noriega in Panama. Some even want to lift the ban on secret assassinations! As I suggest later, if the Bush administration (or any other government) uses the terrorist attacks to create a new antipolitical ambience, a sort of new Cold War against an implacable enemy, this shift can be expected, and should be the object of serious criticism.
4. Members of Congress fear that increased executive power threatens the rights of the legislature (and thus the division of powers). In the debates preceding the invasion of Iraq, Senator Robert C. Byrd published an op-ed explaining "Why Congress Has to Ask Questions," *New York Times*, March 12, 2002. I will return to the way Republicans have used this ambiguity to attack the Democrats as threatening American national unity.
5. The now-retired *New York Times* columnist, Anthony Lewis, weighs in on both issues in "Taking Our Liberties," March 9, 2002. A good summary of the legal issues in question, and a critique of such liberals as Lawrence Tribe, is found in George P. Fletcher, "War and the Constitution," *The American Prospect*, January 1–14, 2002, who points out that either the captured are war prisoners entitled to Geneva rights and not subject to trial; or they are accused of civil crimes, in which case they have a right to jury trial.
6. On the other hand, civil libertarians have pointed out that the only people indicted since September 11th—Zacarias Moussaoui and Richard Reid—were born, respectively, in France and England!
7. On Dionne' s book, and similar criticisms, c.f., my essay on " Le débat politique aux USA," translated as "Theorie und Praxis der jüngsten amerikanischen Politik," in *Aesthetik und Kommunikation*, Heft 78, Jg. 21, pp. 118–124. C.f., also Andrew Arato's suggestion that the American constitution needs to find a place for something like the "state of exception" analyzed by, for example, Carl Schmitt (in "*Minima Politica* after September 11th," *Constellations*, Vol 9, Nr. 1, pp. 46–52).
8. Vigilance among the press and public were responsible for the rapid disappearance of a Pentagon project to create something like an Office of Dis-Information in order to insure "correct" appreciation by the foreign press. The project was revealed at the beginning of March 2002; by March 5, it was officially dead.
9. C.f., for example, the article in the *New York Times* (March 4, 2002), "Daschle Wants President to Tell Congress More About His Plans for War."

10. C.f., Eli Zaraetsky, "Trauma and Dereification: September 11 and the Problem of Ontological Security," in *Constellations*, Vol. 9, Nr. 1, Spring 2002, pp. 98–105.
11. C.f., Stephen E. Flynn, "America the Vulnerable," in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 81, Nr. 1, January/February 2002, pp. 60–74.
12. C.f., Olivier Mongin, "Sous le choc. Fin de cycle? Changement d'ère?" *Esprit*, October 2001, pp. 22–40.
13. C.f., my first reaction to September 11, written two days after the attacks, "Quand l'Amérique rejoint tragiquement le monde," in *Esprit*, October 2001, pp. 8–14. German translation as "Krieg oder Politik," in *Kommune*, October 2001, pp. 6–9.
14. Note that "failed states" are not identical to "rogue states," which poses a problem for those who want to turn the post-September "war" against terrorism into a war against Iraq. For the present argument, c.f., Munkler's "The Brutal Logic of Terror: the Privatization of War in Modernity," in *Constellations*, Volume 9, Nr.1, Spring 2002, pp. 66–73.
15. C.f., Michael Howard, "What's in a Name?" in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol 81, Nr 1, January/February 2002, pp. 8–13.
16. C.f. Dick Howard, *The Specter of Democracy*, *op. cit.* especially Chap. 8, "From the Critique of Totalitarianism to the Politics of Democracy."
17. Olivier Mongin presents the secular version in "Sous le choc," *op. cit.* He distinguishes a first phase of state sponsored terrorism that was not necessarily religious (Syria, Libya); it was followed by a religious terrorism turned against the existing corrupt states (before being defeated in Egypt, and integrated in Algeria); the third stage was neither state nor anti-state action, but rather international terrorism, appealing to alienated youth who are products of modern society. This terrorism seeks neither state power nor revolution; it uses Islam as a tool in a nihilistic quest to harm the West–of which its activists are nonetheless a part.
18. C.f., Michael Doran, "Understanding the Enemy" in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 81, Nr.1, January/February 2002, pp. 22–42. Doran suggests that the terrorists are appealing to the *umma* against local rulers who don't apply shari'a and are thus like the Hypocrites of Medina who supported Mohammed during his exile from Mecca only in order to preserve their own positions and power. Such national rulers are seen also as polytheists who add a second law to god's law. This Salafist movement can ally with a secular force, for example when Bin Laden descries 80 years of humiliation which began with the defeat of the Ottoman empire by a "Zionist/Crusader alliance."
19. C.f., my above-mentioned article (n. 13), "Quand l'Amérique rejoint tragiquement le monde," *op. cit.*

20. C.f., Dick Howard, "L'anti-américainisme américaine," in *Esprit*, janvier 2002. German translation as "Der echte Antiamerikanismus entsteht in Amerika selbst," in *Kommune*, Januar 2002, pp. 10–11.
21. *The American Prospect*, October 22, 2001, pp. 18–23. C.f. also the discussion of Paul Berman in "The Anti-totalitarian Left between Morality and Politics," Chap. 4, above.
22. C.f., for example, Benjamin Barber's criticism of a pseudo-multilateralism which is willing to make "coalitions" (at its convenience) but rejects (political) "alliances" that would bind it, in *The Berlin Journal*, Nr. 3, Fall, 2001.
23. C.f. the articles by Robin Blackburn, "The Imperial Presidency, the War on Terrorism, and the Revolutions of Modernity," and David Held, "Violence, Law, and Justice in a Global Age," both in C*onstellations*, vol. 9, Nr. 1, pp. 3–34, and 74–88.
24. This concept, which does not exist in any other language testifies to the fact that the USA is founded on values. A person cannot be Un-French or Un-German, although he or she can of course commit *acts* that threaten the state in those nations.
25. C.f., Robin Blackburn, "The Imperial Presidency…," *op. cit.* The old slogan was coined by the German Social Democrat, August Bebel (1840–1913).
26. It also goes beyond the moral-legal paradigms of communitarianism versus liberalism that, as suggested earlier, have limited political discussion to debates about rights.
27. Greenberg's results are summarized in *The American Prospect*, December 17, 2001.

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[1] Note: Page number followed by 'n' refers to endnotes.

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D. Howard, *Between Politics and Antipolitics*, Political Philosophy and Public Purpose, DOI 10.1057/978-1-349-94915-1

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