AESTHETICS and MODERNITY

ESSAYS BY AGNES HELLER

edited by
John Rundell

Aesthetics and Modernity

Aesthetics and Modernity

Essays by Agnes Heller

Edited by John Rundell

LEXINGTON BOOKS
A division of
ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD PUBLISHERS, INC.
Lanham • Boulder • New York • Toronto • Plymouth, UK

Published by Lexington Books
A division of Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
A wholly owned subsidiary of The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc.
4501 Forbes Boulevard, Suite 200, Lanham, Maryland 20706
http://www.lexingtonbooks.com

Estover Road, Plymouth PL6 7PY, United Kingdom

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Information Available

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Heller, Agnes.
Aesthetics and modernity : essays / by Agnes Heller ; edited by John Rundell.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-0-7391-4131-1 (cloth : alk. paper) -- ISBN 978-0-7391-4132-8 (pbk. : alk. paper) -- ISBN 978-0-7391-4133-5 (electronic)
1. Aesthetics. 2. Postmodernism. I. Rundell, John F. II. Title.
BH39.H445 2011
111'.85--dc22
2010037457

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992.

Printed in the United States of America

Contents

Acknowledgments

The following chapters have been previously published and are reprinted here with the permission of the publishers.

"Autonomy of Art or the Dignity the Artwork" first appeared in *Critical Horizons*, Vol. 9, Issue 2, 2008, pp. 139–158 .

"The Role of Emotions in the Reception of Artworks" first published in *Pathos, Affect, Gef ü hl. Die Emotionen in den K ü nsten* edited by Klaus Herding and Bernard Stumpflaus (Walter de Gruyter, Berlin), 2004: 244–259. Additional editing by John Rundell.

"European Master-Narratives About Freedom" first published in *Handbook of Contemporary European Social Theory*, edited by Gerard Delanty (London, Routledge, 2005): 257–265.

"The Three Logics of Modernity and the Double Bind of the Modern Imagination" was first published in *Thesis Eleven*, Number 81, May, 2005: 63–79.

"The Absolute Stranger: Shakespeare and the Drama of Failed Assimilation" first published in *Critical Horizons* 1.1 (2000): 147–167. It is an edited extract from *Time Is Out of Joint: Shakespeare as Philosopher of History* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002). Editing by John Rundell.

"The Gods of Greece: Germans and the Greeks" first published in *Thesis Eleven*, Number 93, May 2008: 52–63.

"Self Representation and the Representation of the Other" first published in *Blurred Boundaries: Migration, Ethnicity, Citizenship*, edited by Rainer Bauböck and John Rundell (European Center Vienna/Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing, 1998): 341–354. Permission granted by the European Center Vienna.

"Where Are We at Home?" first published by *Thesis Eleven*, Number 41, 1–18.

I would like to thank Agnes Heller for many years of friendship across three continents. I would also like to thank David Roberts, Peter Murphy and Peter Beilharz for their support and assistance with this project.

For Danielle, again.

Chapter One

Agnes Heller

Modernity, Aesthetics, and the Human Condition: An Interpretative Essay

John Rundell

Aesthetics and Modernity brings together Agnes Heller's most recent essays around the topics of aesthetic genres such as painting, music, literature and comedy, aesthetic reception, and embodiment in the western tradition. The essays draw on Heller's deep love and appreciation of aesthetics in all its forms from the classical to the Renaissance and the contemporary period. This love spans her entire work from her unpublished dissertation on Aristotle, to *Renaissance Man*, and continues in her current voice with *The Time Is Out of Joint: Shakespeare as Philosopher of History*, and *Immortal Comedy: The Comic Phenomenon in Art, Literature and Life*, *The Concept of the Beautiful* as well as many other studies and essays.[1]

Heller's recent work on aesthetics concentrates on exploring the complex and fraught status of the artwork within the context of the history of modernity. One major and dynamic aspect of modernity is that it differentiates the traditional unity of the beautiful, the good and the true, so beloved by metaphysics since Plato. Heller addresses the question of whether we have to give up the treasured concept of the beautiful in order to live with and even embrace differentiation and complexity, or alternatively whether we have to give up complexity and differentiation in order to embrace the beautiful and, by implication, reinstate it in the trinity of the good, the beautiful and the true. For Heller, though, asking the question in this way is misconstrued. It is asked from within the trap of metaphysics. For her, not only does the relation between aesthetics and modernity have to be looked at anew, but also the way in which these terms are conceptualized, and this is the twofold task that

she sets herself in these essays. She undertakes this task not with an attitude of pathos towards modernity, but with a sustained, yet critical recognition of its possibilities and its pitfalls. The pitfalls include modernity's unfettered and omnivorous appetite for the accumulation and consumption of wealth, fame and power, and its creative inventiveness of new evils such as totalitarianism and fundamentalism. In the midst of a world where all "that is solid melts into air" (Marx) the question also emerges as to where moderns might find their home—their place for meaning. The restless condition of modernity need not result in one of generalized homelessness. Rather, as she argues contingent moderns can find homes in any of the sites that constitute modernity. For her, the most homely of modernity's homes are modern democratic culture, notwithstanding its faults, limitations, and "family" arguments, and high culture, not because it may promise an authentic experience, but because we can establish a different relationship with aesthetics and works of art than relationships dictated by function and role, the marketplace, and political argument. Each present different, yet positive possibilities, for Heller.

The essays published here highlight these pitfalls and possibilities. They also highlight four interconnected themes of her work that run through these essays on aesthetics and modernity and which also connect them to Heller's earlier studies—the modern condition, especially, for her, with reference to its two modalities of contingent multi-dimensionality and totalitarianism; philosophical anthropology, especially with reference to needs, emotions and feelings, their relation to values and forms of rationality; the concept of the beautiful with reference to aesthetic and literary genres; and fourthly, possible ethical locations or homes for men and women in the modern, alienated, or for her, dissatisfied world.

The task of this chapter is to show how these themes provide not only coherence to the essays collected here, but also how they relate to her broader project. In other words, this chapter aims to show how her recent work on aesthetics, especially with reference to the concept of the beautiful, artworks, and literary genres, and her continuing pre-occupation with modernity and its multidimensionality or plurality, are related to her philosophical anthropology, her theory of values, and her more recent pre-occupation with "homeliness" as a way of responding to the modern condition.[2]

TEMPORAL HORIZONS OF MODERNITY

It can be argued that, for Agnes Heller, there are two historical periods of modernity through which its unique characteristics can be reconstructed. For Heller, these representative periods are the Renaissance and the postmodern.

They are "out of joint," to use the phrase from *Hamlet* and the title of her book on Shakespeare, in that they exude the tensions, restlessness and paradoxes with which modernity is so often identified. These "out of joint times," though, are visited by her from two vantage points that indicate her own intellectual trajectory and transformation from one orientated towards western Marxism to one oriented towards post-Marxism. The latter is articulated by her through a very specific meaning of a "postmodern attitude."[3] Her first systematic encounter with the Renaissance occurs with *Renaissance Man*, which is written within the language of Marx's historiography of modernity but in a way that, for Heller, suggests two paths that lead beyond Marx's own interpretative horizon—one of history, and the other of culture. To be sure, in the opening pages of *Renaissance Man* the analysis of the Renaissance, especially Florence, is straightforward in terms of how Marx may have portrayed it. It was industrially well developed in that trade, handicrafts and commerce were advanced, and moreover, it was marked by constant, violent class conflict.[4]

However, there is much more to *Renaissance Man* than its very complex underlying relation to Marx's own oeuvre, as well as the view that the Renaissance signifies a particular birth of modernity. There are at least three additional dimensions that are emphasized throughout Heller's study, which are part of the horizons of her work as she investigates the philosophical and aesthetic landscape of the Renaissance. First, there is an interest in the democratic forms of the Renaissance. This was, as she notes, especially the case with Florence, which was democratic in terms of its formal criteria, and it also practiced a form of direct democracy in terms of its processes of participation, at least for its corporate entities.[5] Second, for Heller, the economic and political context was also accompanied at the constitutive level by a new image of humankind—a dynamic one. It is here that Heller's critique of Marx's materialism comes to the fore. For Heller, the image of dynamism is not simply an ideological reflex or representation; it is immanent to the process itself. Thirdly, this immanent dynamism is anything but teleologically driven. For Heller, the Renaissance is not one, but many stories or narratives, the result of which is a theme of uneven development, at least in the terminology of the book. In other words, there are at least three competing histories of the Renaissance; one revolving around the kingdom of Naples, another around the courtly-papal world of Rome, and a third located in the *poleis* of Siena, Florence and Venice. For her, this third history of the *poleis* is crucial, and the intellectual focus she gives it indicates her theoretical prejudice (in the Gadamerian sense)—dynamism and the historical formation of an argument concerning this new dynamism that swings between images of the subject as a human being as a whole, or as a specialist who participates in the early modern forms of social differentiation.

To put it differently, this third history involved an interpretative effort and the creation of new horizons, values and perspectives on the part of Renaissance social actors. This, for Heller, is the mainstay of the Renaissance, and one that is not found in its material life, but in its culturally articulated form of self-understanding, that is, its historicity. For Heller, this sense of uneven history and cultural articulation is expressed in the following formulation: "the most contradictory human ideals cannot themselves be interpreted except by means of a dynamic concept of man."[6] When read from the vantage point of Heller's intellectual project as well as the essays in this book, *Renaissance Man* indicates her abiding concern with the formulation of her anthropologically inspired image of the dynamic condition of modernity.

In her more recent work Heller draws on a second time that is "out of joint"—the postmodern—in order to heighten her sense of the dynamic image of modernity and the human self-image through which it is constituted. For her the postmodern is not an epoch, but rather a perspective from which questions can be asked about modernity in new ways that collapses a teleological image of history, and replaces it with one that emphasizes contingency. The notion of contingency now accompanies her image of dynamism. For Heller, what is attractive about the postmodern perspective is that the idea of historical truth imbedded in grand narratives has been given up. Rather, she posits her own version of the postmodern "as the self-reflective consciousness of modernity itself" that speaks about modernity in a Socratic way, in that "it [ ] knows very little, if anything at all."[7] This critical stance towards the idea of historically accumulated knowledge also entails, for Heller, that the teleologically construed relation between past, present and future is disaggregated. For her, we are left with a contingency in the present.

In order to capture the unique condition of the new contingent arrangements Heller invokes a distinction between what she terms conditional and absolute strangers in her studies of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* and *Othello*. These new arrangements are not simply postmodern ones in the historical sense, but also include the modernity of the Renaissance. For her, this distinction emphasizes their existential condition, and from the vantage point of their existentiality, conditional strangers can be viewed as outcastes from a home, a country, or a position to which they can potentially return. As she remarks in "The Absolute Stranger and the Drama of Failed Assimilation" their own centre of gravity, their self-identity, can be maintained as an existential voyage toward home, even if they are perceived as strange by others who either do not understand them, or do not participate in their voyage. It is this ontological certainty of a home once left, and to which the stranger may one day return, that gives security to the mutual self-perceptions of the host group and the conditional stranger.[8]

For Heller, the case is quite different with the absolute stranger, for he or she has no home to which to return. The absolute stranger's voyage is one of

disconnection from home and thus also the past. In this way, the absolute stranger's existential sense is orientated towards, and even defined by the host group to which they wish to belong. Heller's notion of the absolute stranger belongs to the specificity of the experience and attraction of modernity, because this experience is one of dislocation and diremption. Rather than viewing this experience as symptomatic of a cultural crisis, in the manner of Tönnies or even Simmel, in her view, the modern existential condition is a world of open possibilities in which destiny or a pre-described voyage home cannot be undertaken from birth.[9]

This kind of open contingency is also a type of freedom for her. However, this freedom is paradoxical in that it is the ground of modernity which, itself, cannot be grounded. It is also empty in the sense that it is created through its very actions. As she remarks, "if being free means being born socially contingent, it is an empty kind of freedom, freedom as nothing. Actually, being thrown into freedom or being thrown into nothing means exactly the same thing. But this nothing (our contingency) is, nevertheless, something because it promises that men and women can (equally) become free as no pre-set destination (teleology) bars their way from self-created freedom. Both logically and (onto)logically, the empty freedom of social contingency became the condition of those other freedoms, as much as the condition of self-created slavery."[10] It is also a freedom without illusions of grandeur, of redemption, of the restoration of lost hopes and dreams. In this sense, for her, it is post-utopic.[11]

Nonetheless, this "empty" concept of freedom did not come out of nowhere. If, as Heller argues in *A Theory of Modernity*, freedom is the "groundless ground" of modernity, that is, its major orientating value, which, nonetheless, cannot be grounded, then what is unique about the modern condition are the arguments about its meaning and its reference points—arguments that once gave the appearance of metaphysical certainty have now been abandoned. Rather, according to her in "European Master Narratives About Freedom," here, freedom functions as the shared cultural "arche" to which cultural memory returns. In other words there are only interpretations of freedom, which also encompass its own long history in the myths, stories and fictions that embody it. Whilst it been a long history that pre-dates modernity, and is located in the stories of the Bible and Greek and Roman philosophy, these myths, stories and fictions are drawn on by the present to construct its own narratives. From the perspective of a postmodern attitude to history, one reconstructs history as a narrative from the vantage point of the value of the story teller, rather than imputes a meta-narrative to it on the basis of an idea such as technical or moral progress, or genealogically reconstructs it as a history of bad mistakes.

And yet these narratives do not construct one version of freedom in modernity, nor are they confined to ones concerning freedom only. Heller's value

of freedom is part of a theory of modernity which emphasizes the contingency and complexity of modern societies in which membership to family, community, and status groups is subsumed to, or replaced by different and competing modern narratives, or what she has also termed "logics." As she spells out in *A Theory of Modernity* and "The Three Logics of Modernity and the Double Bind of the Modern Imagination" there are three such modern narratives—technology, social division based on functional allocation and the monetarization of wealth, and political power. The narrative of technology equates modernity with progress derived from the instrumental transformation of nature, whilst the narrative of social division based on functional allocation and monetarization emphasizes the specialization and differentiation of tasks and skills as well as the market as the wellsprings of modernity. Political power comprises both the institutions of freedom, and the institutions of government, including those of authority, coercion, and the invention of totalitarianism. These logics or narratives do not combine to form a totality, nor are they reducible to each other, and there is no ultimate determination. To return to a theme from *Renaissance Man* the contours of modernity are uneven. In Heller's formulation these logics compete and create tensions that often throw one or the other logics into relief. In her view, totalitarianism and fundamentalism are not only totalizing projects, but also ones that de-differentiate modernity's complexity.[12]

In addition, according to Heller, these logics or narratives are informed by two critical and dynamic cultures through which they cohere and gain purchase—technological culture and historical culture. In Heller's terms the blasé attitude of intellectualization, quantification and detachment is synonymous with technological culture so exemplified, for example, in Simmel's portrait in "Metropolis and Mental Life." It is one, albeit, overdrawn manifestation of the narrative of empty freedom in modernity. Historical culture gives meaning and depth to the logics of political power and functional allocation and monetarization by providing a resource on which cultural memory can draw for claims for legitimacy or justice. Nation-states and the political forms of democracy and totalitarianism draw on and construct historical narratives and stories, although not simply for legitimation. They do so as a way of understanding themselves. In Heller's view political power, like power generally, requires a hermeneutic sensibility—it requires a capacity for self-understanding, interpretation and narration.

For Heller, contingent, empty freedom entails that all freedoms can be created from aesthetic and cultural ones, to economic, technical, and political ones. Here freedom, because it is not prescriptive, and is without foundations, can only be an ontological condition. It provides no content, no transcendentally construed point of orientation, only interpretations through which one can become an artist, someone who establishes a relation to a work of art, a consumer, a technical expert, a capitalist, a democrat, a totali-

tarian or fundamentalist—and even some, but not all, of these.[13] Its content is filled by self-constructed narratives.

Whilst historically the contingency of the stranger has been an experience derived from and located in the metropolis, including the city-states of the Renaissance, this contingent condition is now the generalizable condition of modernity, irrespective of where one is located. In this sense, for her, we are all absolute, or more aptly, contingent strangers. The experience and position of absolute strangers is the experience of contingency in the context of the multiple narratives of modernity. When one narrates one's own story, one usually narrates at least one, and usually more, of modernity's narratives.

HELLER'S CRITICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

For Heller, world creation occurs in the context of interpretations and creations of needs and need horizons. For Heller needs are not "psychological"; they are socially interpreted and as such are socially hierarchialized or "clustered" in terms of those which may or may not be satisfied, or may or may not be prioritized. Each society will construct socially created clusters of needs, and its own ways of satisfying or not satisfying them.[14]

The modern contingency experienced by absolute strangers occurs through an openness and disaggregation of need horizons, and this can mean, for Heller, a heightened sense of nihilism, or even ceaseless restlessness. In other words, the contingent nature of modern contexts entails that need structures and interpretations, for example, of freedom become open.[15] This cultural openness is also reproduced at the level of institutions and social contexts, and entails that one can move from context to context in order to satisfy them. However, modern societies and their institutions cannot satisfy all needs, neither individual nor social ones. This means that, for Heller, modernity is a dissatisfied society.[16] The gap and the experience between needs and their possible fulfillment is heightened. Moreover, needs can also be imputed to social actors by agents or agencies who construct different totalitarian, terroristic, or fundamentalist modernities. In these contexts, modernity is constituted as dictatorships over needs, the aims of which are to take control of need interpretation and in so doing de-differentiate or singularize modernity.

There is, then, a sense that all is not well in our "Denmark" of a modernity, and this sense, for Heller, provides an impetus for this uneasy feeling of dissatisfaction. And here the sense of feeling is important and opens onto the second theme of Heller's work, critical anthropology. As indicated above, Heller's critical anthropology is geared towards the way in which subjects are conceptualized. The critique of the metaphysical tradition initiated by

Nietzsche entailed a critique of the priority of reason and its assumed purity which separated feeling and emotions from it, and made them secondary features subsumed to reason's law. The result of this critique, which Heller, in part, shares with Nietzsche, is that it lessened the weight of the metaphysical tradition and its preoccupation with first causes, transcendental signifiers, or the purity of categories. Heller, too shares this critique of metaphysics. However, her critique of metaphysics does not result in the death of the subject or subjectivity. Far from it. For her, the critique of metaphysics provides an opportunity to revisit the question of the subject and in ways that emphasize the complex and multi-various relations between others which cannot be fully encapsulated by language, role or phenomenological experience.

This critique of metaphysics is also accompanied by the critique of the assumed priority of reason (or soul or mind) over the body. Heller reconstructs three versions in her critique of the mind/body problem. According to her account all of these classical metaphysical versions subordinate the body to the soul, or to reason, with different philosophical priorities and outcomes. In the first version—"the body as the expression of the soul," which encapsulates the Platonic and Judeo-Christian traditions—priority is given to the soul, which is viewed as immortal, pure and rational. The body is viewed as mortal, impure, ruled by feelings and passions. The soul is elevated as a first principle, often transposed as Reason, which finds its way into modern consciousness as a transcendental claim (Kant). Alternatively, the soul disappears and one is left with the new metaphysics of modern materialism—neuroscience or genetic coding. In the second version, "the body in the prison of the soul," Heller concentrates on the image of imprisonment, where the body is viewed as unruly. In a reversal of the Platonic tradition, this version sees the body as something to be contained, trained, ruled and governed. This version has been transposed after metaphysics, so Heller points out, into a language of responsibilities and rights. The body is never responsible for wrongdoing, only an abstracted thought or law is. Or the body is disciplined or damaged, again, by an abstracted thought or law. In "the body as the expression of the soul," the third version, which originates from the Aristotelian hylomorphic tradition, the body is formed. It is something that is brought into life, sculptured, for example, in which an inner essence (the soul of the artist, the age, the subject) is revealed. In contemporary thought, this image has remained stubbornly dominant and transposed into the socialization thesis. We are born into this world and molded, not to reveal an essence, but our social environment. The shaping is functionalized.

Feelings, emotions and the body were all relegated to "second fiddle" within the metaphysical tradition, and it is this assumption that Heller questions, but in a different way to philosophers such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Michel Foucault, or Jacques Derrida. To be sure, and

similarly, for her the question of what constitutes a human being is in dire need of re-orchestration, and from outside the presumptions of the metaphysical tradition. However, according to her this question should be re-orchestrated not in terms of what it *is* (or is *not*, in the Heideggerian or Derridean sense), or as resistance (Foucault) but how the subject acts. In the context of *A Theory of Feelings* and "The Metaphysics of Embodiment in the Western Tradition" Heller has always shared this "post-metaphysical" attitude. Her attitude, though, is more socio-centric, actor orientated, and post-functionalist; less deconstructive or genealogical.[17]

For Heller, the question of embodiment is related to the problem of feeling and values from the vantage point of human dimensions that are not split off from one another including the subject's relations with others, and her social context. For Heller feelings not only denote the inner life of the subject; they are also the "first" point of contact with others and contexts *qua* socially constructed need clusters.

For Heller, a feeling state is a state of involvement in something by a self in ways that can be either active or passive, positive or negative, active or reactive, and involves a unity between feeling, thinking, perceiving, and being embodied.[18] Involvement is the inherent constructive factor of a feeling state. The "something" can either be in the foreground or the background. Moreover, feelings can only perform their function if they include their own evaluation from the point of view of social requirements, "of the system of customs of the concretely given culture."[19] In other words, feeling states, as they become more complex and increasingly differentiated from one another, are hierarchialized and contextualized. Emotions are a subset of feelings; they are cognitive-situational feelings in which the situation is always comprised by the moral evaluation of an emotional occurrence. This contextualization and hierarchialization occurs according to value-orientational categories that exist in all cultures, and without which feelings would not be able to function.[20]

Feelings may or may not be mobilized. They may remain at the level of passive feeling states, or they may be activated as gestures, articulated as arguments, or even as jokes.[21] In each of these feeling states a value (evaluative) perspective is created and drawn up, as much as drawn on, that gives content as well as succor to the initial sense of unease or dissatisfaction. Values are, to put it slightly differently, the imaginary horizons through which actions, which include feelings, are orientated and evaluated. For Heller, absolute strangers are neither empty nor without content, even if, as we shall see here, they may be without a home, a place to argue and jest, or rest and contemplate.[22]

Let's momentarily look at the constitution of value perspectives.

As Heller argues in *A Theory of Feelings* (First and Second Editions), *Everyday Life*, and "The Role of Emotions in the Reception of Artworks"

published here, a distinction should be made between the world of first-order values and second-order ones. First-order values provide a focus around which needs are clustered and hierachialized, and feelings, emotions and even hopes crystallize. They provide a bridge between an inner life and an outside world. First-order values are our "natural" home. We are thrown into values, and, in the first instance, they are, for Heller, our *social a priori*. Moreover, they do not emit an odor of sanctity that is derived from Weber's interpretation of them where they refer to ultimate ends that, to be sure, have cognitive and intellectual coherence. Rather, according to Heller, they are rational-pragmatic. Her version of value rationality does not refer to standards of cognition or an end that is internal to the value itself. Nor is rationality and embodiment separated from feelings. In her version, value rationality refers to the competence to observe the norms and rules of everyday life and has three constituents. These constituents are custom, everyday language, and human-made objects with their rules for use, including the use to which natural environments are put. Observing norms and rules of everyday life, in this instance, is not separate from observing them. Moreover, this is the world of "first" competency—we are adept at moving around the specific everyday life into which we are thrown. Everyday life is *Dasein*, our ontological condition. However, for Heller, unlike Heidegger, it is not inauthentic at all, it is orientative. Everyday life provides our initial context that we learn to pragmatically navigate in terms of its norms and rules. This pragmatic navigation entails that we learn three types of thinking in this context—repetitive thinking, inventive thinking, and intuitive thinking.

As importantly, everyday life provides, more properly, value categories with which we ethically navigate, and with which we make distinctions between good/bad, right/wrong, and so forth. These values provide life with meaning in a threefold manner; they, themselves, are meaningful; they represent the positive side of one secondary category of value orientation; and thirdly they take shape as "world pictures" and are carried as stories and narratives, which give legitimacy to the taken-for-granted nature of everyday life. In other words, they provide the orientative categories with which we navigate the world, and as such they provide life with meaning in both positive and negative terms. They provide the first public meaningful frames (in the Wittgensteinian sense) into which private imaginary creations can be placed and rendered intelligible, even if they do not exhaust these creations.[23]

Heller terms our capacity to pragmatically and ethically navigate our first world of everyday life *rationality of reason*. Rationality of reason refers to the competence to observe the norms and rules of everyday life, as well as the competence to observe norms and rules of other contexts or spheres in the same manner of observing, and deploying everyday norms and rules. It is rational in the sense that rationality of reason is coherent, and we are compe-

tent in the use of this coherence. In this sense, we are active, discriminating, intuiting, inventing, judging, but always from the perspective of *this* everyday life. In this sense, rationality of reason is particularistic, as our point of orientation for this type of rationality is everyday life. In summary, then, our first home of everyday life is not a world of in-action or non-thought. Rather, it is a combination of specific actions and specific patterns of feeling, thinking, evaluating and embodiment or comportment.[24]

However, this first-order world of value perspectives can themselves be abstracted from and criticized, again, from a position of value horizons that throw the first-order world of values into relief. There is another mode of rationality that Heller constructs, and which, she argues, is deployed as critical discrimination, whereby we judge or evaluate on the basis of a value not derived or located in everyday life, but in the cultural sphere. For Heller, culture—or the cultural sphere—provides human life with meaning over and above the meaning derived from everyday life, and this type of meaning orientates life towards homogenous, rather than heterogeneous, patterns of action and thinking such as religious devotion, art, writing a novel, or philosophical practice. In this sense, norms and rules are established to this particular sphere that are distinct from the ones deployed in everyday life. As importantly, for Heller, culture can also legitimate everyday life, or it can critique it. The type of thinking that it privileges here is, according to her, creativity, imagination, and good judgment, and these are gathered or deployed by her under her umbrella concept of *rationality of intellect*. In this sense, value orientation occurs in two places. We are thrown into values in the "first order" of our natural home of everyday life. However, we also have a second home, or point of orientation. The cultural sphere which provides the capacity for "second order" reflexivity in which everyday values or those values which have been appropriated in a taken for granted way are thrown into relief by other values.

The activity of value critique in the sphere of culture that deploys rationality of intellect can be either static or dynamic. In Heller's view, pre-modern societies are static in the sense that the ultimate values through which both everyday life and culture cohere and are given meaning are no less taken for granted than the norms and rules of everyday life—perhaps even more so. The modern rationality of intellect is dynamic in the sense that, for her, not only can everyday life be evaluated, but also the values themselves—they are no longer ultimate. Second-order value abstraction can throw the first-order values into relief in either particularistic or universalistic ways. From the vantage point of particularism, a value is privileged and deployed that is created from the position of exclusion and social closure and in effect folds critique back into everyday life and its affirmation. From the vantage point of universalism a value is privileged and deployed that is created from the vantage point of inclusion and a social openness to otherness. However, for

her this does not mean that they become relative; rather there are competing interpretations of universality. Different values emerge that have become universalizable and embedded in modern culture as empirical universals. As indicated above, Heller points out in "European Master Narratives of Freedom," as well as many other works, freedom became one such universalistically orientating second-order value that has its own interpretations that stem from the biblical, Greek and Roman traditions, and which compete as interpretations in the Western tradition. Modernity, including the modernity of the Renaissance, inherited and transformed this competing second-order value tradition as its ungroundable ground in the context of its multiple narratives.

For Heller, there is another universalizable second-order orientative value in modernity, that of life, of which she is more ambivalent. To be sure, under the umbrella of freedom the value of life equates to the equality of life chances, and this becomes the basis for claims for justice. In addition, for her, the values of freedom and life cannot be irrationalized. If they are, one steps from the value of freedom to that of unfreedom, and the value of life to that of death—or the annihilationist or holocaustal imagination. It is here that her ambivalence towards "life" as a robust universal category emerges.[25]

Critique is orientated *beyond* the experience of an existing everyday life, especially in the modern constellation. Values provide the point of orientation for modernity's reflexivity, and as mentioned above Heller's postmodern attitude entails that values are not dispatched or made irrelevant; rather for her "the self-reflection of postmodern thinking implies thinking through the paradox of freedom (and truth), carrying it out, never losing it from sight." She terms this postmodern second-order value reflexivity "the consciousness of reflected generality."[26] The dynamic second-order reflexivity of freedom can be articulated, according to Heller, not only argumentatively, in the way that Habermas proposes, but also in other modalities which, nonetheless, are as reflexive. For her, for example, the comic phenomenon and joke culture, rather than the ideal of rational public discourse can be a paradigm for the public sphere.

The joke is often viewed as literary sub-genre that is disconnected from the political sphere, except as a form of trivial diversion. In the light of her recent book *Immortal Comedy* Heller argues that it is anything but trivial, and should not be disconnected from the public sphere in the way more formalistic approaches detach it, such as in the Habermasian version.[27] In her exploration of this genre Heller explores the relation between the comedic in the form of jokes and the practice and nature of politics from the ancient Greeks, where comedy was self-consciously philosophical, to the modern period. Comedy and jokes provide a ground for an imaginary political community of citizens who not only feel jointly responsible for its continuity, but also deploy themselves as participants who learn to speak and to listen, to take turns, to appreciate others, and to integrate reasoning with emotion.

Jokes and the comic phenomenon develop a reflexive, distancing relation from everyday life and from one's self. For Heller, the joke is a form of reflexive reasoning, of the rationality of the intellect. As she says, laughing is a judgment and we laugh from a value position, even if we are unaware of it.[28] A good joke, as she puts it, unleashes the instinct of reason for the right reason.

Heller, thus, points to the deployment of jokes and laughter as important modes of second-order reflectivity through which the value of freedom may be mobilized. The comic phenomenon denotes an explicit or implicit awareness, frailty and openness. It is these characteristics through which it can establish elective affinities with the democratic imaginary. The democratic personality should be capable of laughter, which includes self-laughter and not only laughter at others, in other words the ability to laugh *at* oneself and *with* others. The comic is self-reflexive *qua* openness rather than self-reflexive *qua* closure or cruelty. This turns comedy into ridicule and laughter becomes cruel.

It is precisely at this point that a shift can occur that prioritizes the little evils of everyday life such as resentment, envy, jealousy, and lust and turns them into the possibility of a perspective, a mode of embodiment or comportment, and a way of life that turns the other into a mute object. This other exits in a closed world—a world made of only one point of view in which the other barely exists. To be sure, as Heller is at pains to point out, the human personality is a complex pallet of often competing emotional registers, most of which we experience and may articulate from time to time, as gestures and comportments, in words, or in deeds. In her view, the good person will either pull back, so to speak, or feel (and here the emphasis is on feel) ashamed or guilty and thus may apologize and re-evaluate her position from another value that includes the recognition of a possible hurt done to another.

When evil triumphs this recognition of a hurt done to another is not possible. This triumph is, in her view, more than simply a dis-recognition. It is an enclosing evaluative stance in its own right, and the contours of everyday life are replete with it. So, too are dramas, tragedies, and stories, where the characters become paradigmatic, and where often the little evils that they perform become radical evil or evil as an end in itself. However, it is not only in everyday life or the world of plays and fiction that little evils and radical evil exist. As Heller has pointed out on numerous occasions, radical evil, especially, can become invented and institutionalized in specifically modern registers, for example in the terroristic, holocaustal, genocidal and fundamentalist social arrangements that have also become part of the imaginary or logic of political power. The evils played out in everyday life, portrayed in dramas, tragedies and fictions, and instituted in totalitarian and fundamentalist social arrangements all remind us, as Heller notes, that "the world has always been a dangerous place, and it remains so."[29]

MODERNITY AND AESTHETICS, THE BEAUTIFUL AND HOME

What befalls the fate of aesthetics in the context of the complexity of contingent modernity, its differentiations and development of specialized spheres and particular ways of doing things? Is there a place for aesthetic experience in differentiated modernity and the lives of contingent strangers? This is particularly an issue when people's lives and patterns of action may or may not be orientated to the value of freedom. They may well be orientated towards modernity's evils and pitfalls and its omnivorous capacity to devour its people and its products in the pursuit of wealth, technical control, and power.

In addressing her answers to the dilemmas articulated above, Heller returns to two of the issues raised by the modern condition and their out of joint times—homelessness and home. In the light of the issue of modern aesthetics, the fate of the concept of the beautiful is for her a paradigm case of homelessness, and is internally related to arguments concerning the differentiation and specialization of spheres or worlds, in this instance the differentiation and autonomization of a sphere of aesthetics. Heller argues that the concentration on the topic of the autonomy of art disguises and minimizes this issue of homelessness. She argues that autonomy can be replaced with the concept of dignity, which could bring aesthetic experience "home" once again, but in a very specific way.

Heller directs her answers to these questions in the context of a contingent existence that is not simply the games of functions, power or even politics. Modern existence also attests to and requires some basic conditions of sociable sociability between contingent strangers who may interact with an attitude of "friendly regard" toward one other.[30] Heller's concern with this friendly regard towards others entails that both sets of answers are related to her critical anthropology. Apart from functional, non-functional and political interpretations, forms, and ways of life the contingent freedom of the absolute stranger's condition can also be constituted from his or her position as a person as a whole—as one who integrates emotions, feelings, perceiving, thinking, embodying and evaluating.

In contrast to the freedom expressed as a particularism through the accumulation of wealth, fame and power, for Heller, the universality of freedom and its accompanying image of the human being as a whole is bound to a relationship between self and other. This aspect of relationality has been expressed by Heller in the following way in *Philosophy of Morals*: "where one party gives and the other does not receive, there is no relationship. Where one party only gives, and the other only receives, there is a relationship, but no reciprocity. One of the most elementary ethical norms, if not the most elementary one, is that *reciprocal relationships are preferable to non-*

reciprocal relationships. If you take something, you should also give something. This is so within the framework of all social arrangements, without exception."[31]

This image of reciprocal reciprocity provides the backdrop for Heller's theory of aesthetics. For Heller, aesthetics does not refer to the nature of aesthetic creation or even reception as such. Rather, her emphasis is on aesthetic experience as this relation of symmetrical reciprocity. For Heller, aesthetics denotes the way in which the subject *qua* person as a whole may establish a relation with an "other," in this instance a work of art. In this way, aesthetic experience is not only located in the sphere of culture, it is also experienced as an attitude orientated by the rationality of intellect, that is, of second-order interpretations, narratives and stories, which on the one side may inform the creation of works of art, and as importantly, the way in which we relate and establish a relation with artworks and how they might establish a relationship with us.[32] In addition and drawing on the experience of painting and music, especially, Heller argues that emotions and feelings are internally related to the issue of experience and relationality in more general terms.

In order to develop her argument concerning aesthetics and how we might establish a relationship with works of art and they with us, Heller outlines a genealogy of the concept of the beautiful since its formulation in Plato as a part of the trinity of the good, the true and the beautiful. In this metaphysical tradition narratives of the beautiful and beauty are entwined. As Heller remarks, metaphysics began with the idea of Beauty and assumed that everything was beautiful in so far as it participated in something called Beauty.[33] In the metaphysical tradition this entwined principle was also orientated towards an idea of total experience, to experience oneself as a whole person, usually articulated through love or the Eros tradition, often in conjunction with *philia*. This idea of total experience also connected the cosmos with society, and with people. In other words, there was integration and continuity between the artist, artistic reception, society, and cosmos mediated by sacred institutions, from Antiquity to the eighteenth century, notwithstanding the dynamism inherent from the Renaissance onward. As Gadamer notes, "in order to understand the effective background of the problem of the beautiful, and perhaps art as well, we must remember that for the Greeks it was the heavenly order of the cosmos that presented the true vision of the beautiful. This was the Pythagorean element in the Greek idea of the beautiful. . . . In the *Phaedrus* Plato offers us a mythological description of man's destiny, his limitations compared with the divine, and his attachment to the earthly burden of the sensuous life of the body."[34]

In the wake of the demise of metaphysics and the triumph of an empiricistically orientated world this entwinement came undone.[35] Almost everything could become beautiful as there was no unifying idea of Beauty located in a

highest principle. A discrepancy emerges between the "heterogeneity of [the lived experience] of the beautiful [ ] and the total character of the (erotic—or quasi-erotic) experience of the beautiful."[36] The result was a spontaneous and initially slow deconstruction of the concept of the beautiful, which was also related to changes in both the content and structure of value-orientations related to the idea of the human person as a whole, value orientations that had come under critical gaze from the Renaissance onward. To be sure, even in the Renaissance the older Platonic version, including Plotinus' work, was articulated by such figures as Ficino and Michelangelo, for whom aesthetic experience was tied to the concept of the beautiful, which itself was bound to the idea of the whole person, at least in terms of the Trinitarian formulation of the good, the true and the beautiful. Within this metaphysical formulation the highest principle was Eros, or erotic love usually identified with the divine.

The loss of transcendence, of a transcendental point of reference in the Divine entailed that the concept of the beautiful became homeless. This problem, in the history of modern philosophy and aesthetics, was apparently solved through the idea of "art," which became the highest principle which bridged the gap between heterogeneity and unity. The "work of art" emerged as the "sole authentic embodiment of Beauty."[37] In other words, "art" emerged and split into two registers that appear related, especially if Kant's *Critique of Judgment* is taken as a reference point. The first register concerned the creation of a work of art, which addressed the problem of what the origin of this creativity was, usually through an aesthetically circumscribed idea of the creative imagination. The second register concerned the reception of the work of art, the development of the *sensus communis* where agreement on aesthetic judgments could be made by those who could combine imagination with understanding.

It is precisely along the lines of these two registers that *The Critique of Judgment* and the legacy that Kant bequeaths breaks into two.[38] After metaphysics, and especially in the wake of the differentiation of the good, the true and the beautiful put forward by Kant in his three critiques, both the source and the *eidos* or form of beauty, of love, were thrown into relief and into question. If both creativity and beauty are turned into human principles then it is unclear even in Kant's work, especially in his *Critique of Judgment*, what could ground them.[39] Once the true became true knowledge associated with empirical verification and correspondence theories from Descartes onward, and the good became associated with critique and negation or the delegitimizing of social norms, the beautiful was left to its own devices casting around for a possible home. The Romantic solution, which concentrated on the creation of art, poetry or music through the power of the imagination and within a specific sphere of aesthetics, appeared to offer one. The "work of art" becomes the recipient of the Romantic solution, where beauty

becomes an aesthetic category bound to an aesthetic sphere inhabited by those who have the genius and talent for aesthetic creation, as well as those with a disposition, a sensibility for aesthetic taste. Those who inhabit this sphere have either imagination or taste, or both. The deep irony of this solution is that, for Heller, beauty now resides in art, and the concept of the beautiful becomes redundant because another series of distinctions internal to the sphere of aesthetics begin to emerge, which are bound to creativity and taste. These distinctions are perfect or imperfect art, high culture/low culture, aestheticization/nihilism.

The result is not only the aestheticization of the concept of Beauty, but also the emergence of the idea of the autonomy of art. This made the concept of the beautiful, so Heller agues, irrelevant in relation to the idea of an overall experience. In addition, the sphere or world of art becomes increasingly differentiated from other spheres such as religion, the court and the state, and the market, and it follows its own norms and rules.[40] According to Heller's critical reconstruction autonomy means two things, especially if Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory* is the point of reference. Art as a sphere *is* autonomous and distinct from other spheres. This is a strong claim that protects art, for example, from the market or the emergence of new mythologies and, thus, defines what a work of art is, and what it is not—entertainment, vulgarity or pornography. Second, works of art are autonomous in that they exist as solitary works, separate not so much in terms of an autonomous sphere, but in terms of their unique individual existences. The defense of the autonomy of the sphere of art or high culture emerges at precisely this point, defended in quite varying ways by Goethe and Humboldt, Nietzsche and Adorno.

In contrast to both of these arguments concerning autonomy, Heller argues that there is no realm or sphere of art today, just a realm of separate and different artworks.[41] Aesthetics is in fact not included in her logics or imaginaries of modernity. The question for her is not one of how works of art co-exist and "speak" to one another within a logic or a sphere, for this would reduce art to the logic of functional differentiation, and those who inhabit the sphere of art to specialists trained in the technique of art, or to consumers of taste instituted by the art market.

Heller's analysis and re-positioning of aesthetics does not wish to follow either of these two registers or paths outlined above, that is, aesthetic creation, or aesthetic reception. Heller argues that there is another response that does not rely on the idea of the autonomy of art. She lays down another path entirely. The question for Heller is how we construct a relationship with works of art, and how they might reciprocate.

Heller follows Lukács' recommendation stated in his "The Transcendental Dialectics of the Idea of Beauty" (1914), that the beautiful should be removed from the realm of art, that art and the beautiful should be divorced from one another.[42] Offering the beautiful a foster home in aesthetics has

only caused damage to both art and the beautiful. Heller, in arguing against the ideal of autonomy, does not return to Lukács' emphasis on life and authenticity so redolent in his *Soul and Form*. This emphasis has been observed by Markus when he states: "if . . . authentic life, as an active manifestation of the soul, means the development to its full potential of a unique personality that expresses itself in actions and wields all life into a single entity, then this development transcends what is purely individual. This process of self-realization is the transformation into action, into fact, of a way of living, a possibility of human life, that cannot be duplicated but can be normative and serve as a model for everyone."[43] For Heller, this is no solution, and undermines the possibilities present in the contingent condition of complex modernity. Rather, in a critical discussion of Gadamer's essay on the relevance of the beautiful Heller argues that Gadamer's insight is less about art and more about how a possible bridge might be constructed between our sometimes inexplicable encounter with beauty and the empirical or real world of disorder, errors of judgment, evils and extremes.[44] As Heller remarks, this comment by Gadamer does not refer to art but to our lived lives, and thus refers to the problem that Lukács posed of providing the beautiful a possible home.

The moment of transcendence is not, for Heller, bound to an ideal of the work of art, or life as a work, or a social movement (which it was to be for Lukács after he embraced Marxism), but replaced by the more relational categories of friendship and love—the context saturadedness (for want of a better term) of a life with others. Or to put it slightly differently and in the language of *Beyond Justice*, aesthetics or more properly the beautiful is formulated by her through the incomplete and thus open and dynamic concepts of friendship and love.[45]

The experiences and relationality of friendship and love provide Heller with a solution to the problem of the homelessness of the beautiful, through which her own version of the human being as a whole can be mobilized. Friendship is geared to the dignity that is inscribed to each artwork and our relationship with it, whilst love is geared to the total affect that the artwork has on us. To be sure, Heller wishes to remain "post-metaphysical" and work with the contingency and dynamism that an open-ended "gap" between real experience and an Ideal might offer. Or to put it differently, these two poles or sides of the gap are not articulated by her in this way. Heller has a particular response to the question posed by Lukács during his Heidelberg period: "works of art exist—how are they possible"? Heller answers this question not from the vantage points of either creativity or form, but from the vantage point of the relations that humans establish with the work of art, and by implication with one another—it is relational. This is for her what gives life depth or emotional intensity, rather than authenticity, and connects it with feelings and values. Feelings and values are not only requisites for

judgments; they are also requisites for being with others in all of their nuances and imperfections. According to Heller, we can establish a different non-functional relation with a work of art, be it painting, music or an installation, which opens a space for fuller emotions and sensibilities to appear.

Heller had already discussed friendship and dignity in *Beyond Justice* in her analysis of Rousseau's ideal of Clarence in his *La Nouvelle Héloïse Julie, or the New Eloise*. As she states,."[*La Nouvelle Héloïse*] is a credo against perfectionism. . . . All of the characters of the novel are righteous, but none are 'perfect.' All have faults and weaknesses. They are sometimes carried away by false ideas and passions. But if this is so, why do they not commit wicked acts? The answer is straightforward: because they all belong to a 'network,' the network of friendship . . . Rousseau's model is utterly modern. It confronts us with the very question we must still raise: how is a world of *Sittlichkeit* possible if the good life is pluralistic? How can we listen to each other's arguments if our ideas differ? How can we come to a rational understanding and co-operation while preserving our uniqueness, freedom and disagreement?"[46] Good friendships are homes in a homeless world.

These two sets of issues of rational understanding, and uniqueness, freedom and disagreement can be transposed into the register of aesthetics that Heller addresses. For her, no artwork is perfect, nor should it be seen as perfect. It portrays its perfections, imperfections and passions for us to see, to hear, and to touch. Artworks, too, are persons, and as such are unique in a world of other unique and plural artworks. In addition, they (and us) also integrate sensuous embodiment, feeling and thinking. And yet as persons, artworks are not righteous, nor do they commit injustice. We do not feel that an artwork has been unjust, or take offence if an artwork portrays or plays something that is unfamiliar or strange. The unfamiliarity and the strange, like absolute strangers, themselves become part of our vocabulary, our attempts to move outside our own particularity. We abandon ourselves to them—even for a moment—to try to see, listen or hear what they are trying to say.[47]

According to Heller, we first approach an artwork with a regard and interact with it with a contemplative yet friendly attitude. We stay with it, muse and reflect over it. It is in this sense that the artwork speaks to us and we to it, sometimes changing our perspective. In addition the regard contains a value perspective—we simply do not come to the artwork empty-handed, so to speak. The regard is constituted through a value perspective that shifts our gaze away from the heterogeneity and fast pace of everyday life in order to obtain a new experience and perspective.

In this context, there is another Kant in the background, but, for Heller a different one to the one who differentiates the three faculties of reason, understanding and the imagination. Heller takes the Kantian imperative of not using another as a mere means as the central orientating one when we

interact with works of art. They are ends in themselves. To be sure, Heller acknowledges the difference between an artwork and a person, and this difference is bound up with the imperative of the "should." One should recognize the dignity of persons for they are also moral characters who live in the context of social norms and concrete customs and who have a reflexive relation to these norms and customs. Sometimes they are moral, sometimes they are not. In contrast, for Heller, the recognition of a particular artwork is provisional and it has no moral character. Here, the "should" is replaced by a more contingent "could" or "can." And this, for Heller, is the specific content of the gaze of friendly contemplation—we do not use the artwork; rather we suspend our use of it time and time again. We suspend everyday time, everyday space and make our senses available to it without purpose—sight, sound, touch, smell. By singularly giving our senses, emotions and contemplative attitude or value over to the artwork we implicitly pay tribute to its dignity. It is, as she says, paraphrasing Kant, "disinterested pleasure." There is no "*sensus communis*" here. No debate about "taste," only a relationship. The dignity of the artwork and our friendly regard towards it belongs to the work and our singular contemplation of it. We engage with it in a contemplative way, rather than an illocutionary one. In this sense, they are not persons—for we do not judge them or them us. We only judge persons, for it is persons who offend, not artworks.

It is precisely here that Heller also revisits the category of love. Heller revitalizes love or the Eros tradition and interprets it from the vantage point of human wholeness and the concrete unexpected singularity of erotic attraction and relationality, which can throw evil, error, cruelty and extremes into relief. Internal to the slower pace of contemplation is the possibility of establishing a singular relation with the work of art, and for Heller this singular relation is constituted as an erotic one as long as the gaze lasts—a minute, an hour, a lifetime. It is in this moment of the gaze of the lover that an artwork becomes singular amongst other artworks, and thus becomes a person. As one cannot explain or argue why one loves another in all of his or her singularities, one cannot explain why we love a work of art. And this takes place across all genres and media.

The emotions constituting love are involvement for its own sake, which has the specificity of "a mutual engagement and attraction between two people."[48] We abandon ourselves without interest to the relationship which is established with the work of art, the musical score and its performance (either "live" or on CD or as a download), and suspend everyday emotions. Likewise, the artwork abandons itself to us. There is, in this state of involvement, an open emotional relationship to the work of art where the ego situated in everyday life is absent or has been suspended for the time being. In this sense, Heller's combination of the dignity and love shared between the person and the work of art is not a cold detachment, something held in regard

from a respectful distance, but a warm involvement that maintains a sense of self-identity and self-possession from both sides.

For her, this double-sided sense of maintaining, yet expanding self-identity or subjectivity is, thus, not a phenomenological experience of mergence, in the sense often portrayed by Romanticism, for example in Werther's imagined (non-)relation with Lotte.[49] Nor is there seduction, suffering, idealization and the ideal of perfection and authenticity in the manner of Kierkegaard or Lukács. In *Soul and Form* Lukács, in fact, has a critical yet sympathetic eye on Kierkegaard's relationship with Regine Olsen, when he states that "an incorporeal sensuality and a plodding, programmatic ruthlessness are the predominant features of these writings. The erotic life, the beautiful life, life culminating in pleasure, occurs in them as a world-view—and as no more than that; a way of living which Kierkegaard sensed as a possibility within himself, but which not even his subtle reasoning and analysis could render corporeal. He is, as it were, the seducer *in abstracto*, needing only the possibility of seduction, only a situation which he creates and then enjoys to the full; the seducer who does not really need women even as objects of pleasure."[50]

And yet, what Lukács finds attractive in Kierkegaard is an honesty in search of the Absolute, where he states "Kierkegaard's heroism was that he wanted to create forms from life. His honesty was that he saw a crossroads and walked to the end of the road he had chosen."[51]

Whilst Kierkegaard (and Lukács) might think or portray the whole affair between Cordelia (Regine Olsen) and Johannes (Kierkegaard) as a relationship of love it is anything but love. It is not a relationship in which Regine Olsen exists; Kierkegaard only has a relationship with himself. The eroticism travels within an interpretation of the search for form in the Platonic tradition, overlaid with the imagined eroticized, sexualized encounters of an Ovid, without the humor or the burlesque. Rather, Kierkegaard replaces love with the category of "interesting," a second-order value of cognition, of detached observability, even if this is described as "close at hand," or in a combatative style, at close quarters, in the manner of a joust, less like a troubadour, in Lukács' interpretation, and more like a strategy, in the manner of de Laclos' Vicomte de Valmont.[52]

Heller views Lukács' assessment of Kierkegaard's relationship with Regine as an idealization which concentrates on the search and the pursuit of form. And in a similar way, Heller assesses Lukács' relationship with Irma Seidler as one that touches one-sidedly on the double-sidedness that relationality entails. As she says of Kierkegaard, "Kierkegaard exits, but Regine Olsen does not."[53] Commenting ostensibly on both Kierkegaard *and* Lukács, she further and insightfully suggests "Georg Lukács recreated his relationship with Irma Seidler," as a way of interpreting both himself and Kierkegaard." In none of the essays [in *Soul and Form*] can we discover even a

single objective similarity between the real and the fictional Irma. The recreation of the relationship consists of the exploration of its own *possibilities*, which Lukács thought (and lived out) according to the rules of authentic 'Platonic' conduct. They are daydreams of, or more accurately, rational visions, the dreams and visions of 'what could be if . . . ,' what could have been if. . . . In these daydreams and visions, however, the other is only a vague shape, an amorphous object; *the only real thing is the one who dreams*. The rational visions are addressed to Irma, but Irma is not present in them."[54] Each of these modalities of love portrayed by both Kierkegaard and Lukács are resonant with one-sidedness where no relationship could exist and where even the minimal conditions of reciprocity remain absent.

In Heller's view there should be no seduction born of contempt, arrogance and the cruelty of melancholic singularity or narcissism (Kierkegaard), no one-sided idealization (Lukács). As she comments, "if the creation of a relationship with the other is addressed only to oneself, if it is painful or beautiful only for oneself, then the forms of recreation are infinite and its colors and composition innumerable. But if someone creates his relationship with the Other for the purpose of articulating a truth, which is not painful or beautiful for himself alone, which is not addressed to himself alone, then the forms of recreation and the colors and compositions are finite," and they are imperfect.[55] The relationship with a work of art is like that of love, it is a relationship that is receptive on both sides to nuances, changes and the expansion of emotional registers and colors, or the creation of new ones. It admits the possibility of imperfection. In this sense the work of art becomes beautiful and we delight in it, take care of it as well as our own emotional pallet.[56] In so doing we, too, can become beautiful characters.

The relationship that is established between the person who contemplates a work of art and the work of art is separate from the artist or the performer. If the performer is a "star" and part of the "star" system, for example in the constellation called Hollywood, and thus reliant on fame, this reliance belongs to one of the particularisms of modernity—money and the market. For Heller, this means that it is not art. It is entertainment, and it can be either good or bad entertainment judged according to the technical rules of expertise such as film craft within the entertainment industry, and the market. If a piece of entertainment crosses over, so to speak, and becomes art, it loses its relationship with the creator-artist and/or performer, and begins to "speak" to us on its own terms. It assumes a character which we approach with dignity and love, rather than with awe in the manner of a starstruck fan.

The work becomes an end-in-itself, and the emotions change from those associated with, or rather constitutive of, entertainment—excitement, interest, or boredom.

From the techno-functionalist perspective, if we become interested in the technical aspects of the artwork—the nature of the color, of the brushstrokes,

of form, of the presence or absence of musical harmonies or dissonances, we reduce the work of art to an object and once again become a specialist, perhaps with a heart, but one who is now detached from the work, less engaged and more orientated to the technical imagination so central to one of the predominant conditions of modernity. And more often than not this is the usual fate of the work of art. The work of art is usually caught between the gaze of the technician or the applause of the fan as she enthusiastically participates in the star system generated by the market.

The specific relationality that is established between the work of art and the subject is constituted in value rational terms, for Heller. It has an abstract value orientation geared to dignity, and a concrete specificity or individuality expressed as love and its affinity with the concept of the beautiful. If, as Heller notes, one of the issues of the modern period is the disjunction between aesthetics and the beautiful, then one of the results of this disjunction has been the sense of the homelessness of the concept of the beautiful. For her, this disjunction may not be a disaster. Rather, for her the beautiful may in the end reside in the possibilities of the human condition itself. It is here that a home may be built.[57] The home for the beautiful may not be found in an autonomous *sphere* of aesthetics, that is, not in the creation or reception of art works, but in the relations of contemplative friendship, dignity, and intimate sociability that social actors experience with them, with themselves, and with one another. In other words, for Heller, home is a human condition viewed as the possibility of relationships beyond metaphysics and pure form, beyond aesthetics, beyond function, power and wealth, and in the depth, corporeality, value saturadedness, beauty, pain, laughter and surprise that relationships, themselves, entail.

NOTES

1. Heller's work is, in part, contextualized by her relation to Georg Lukács, the formation of the so-called Budapest School, and the work of her late husband Ferenc Feher. The essays published here were written well after the Budapest's School's informal dissolution, in part due to migration—George and Maria Markus went to Sydney, Australia, where they both still live, and Agnes Heller and Ferenc Feher went to Melbourne, Australia, where they lived until 1987 when they moved to New York in order for Heller to take up the Hannah Arendt Chair in Philosophy and Politics at The New School for Social Research, now The New School University. After the "anti-totalitarian revolutions" of 1989 Agnes Heller and Ferenc Feher returned to Hungary, thus establishing two homes—one in Budapest and one in New York. The more important point about these current essays though is that they belong to what might be termed Heller's "postmodern" turn, a turn that can be traced in the essays collected in *The Grandeur and Twilight of Radical Universalism*, and finds full voice in *A Philosophy of History in Fragments* and *A Theory of Modernity*. See Agnes Heller and Ferenc Feher, *The Grandeur and Twilight of Radical Universalism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1991); Agnes Heller, *A Theory of Modernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999); Agnes Heller, *A Philosophy of History in Fragments* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993); Agnes Heller, *Lukács Revalued* (Oxford: Blackwell,

1983). See also Fu Qilin, "On the Budapest School Aesthetics: An Interview With Agnes Heller," *Thesis Eleven* 94 (August 2008): 106–112; Agnes Heller's "Preface" to Fu Qilin's *A Study of Agnes Heller's Thoughts on Aesthetic Modernity* (Chengdu: Bashu Press, 2006, 3–4); Agnes Heller, "A Short History of My Philosophy," unpublished manuscript, 2009. See also, John Grumley, *Agnes Heller: A Moralist in the Vortex of History* (London: Pluto Press, 2005); Simon Tormey, *Agnes Heller: Socialism, Autonomy and the Postmodern* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001); János Boros and Mihály Vajda, eds., *Ethics and Heritage: Essays on the Philosophy of Agnes Heller* (Budapest: Brambauer, 2006); Katie Terezakis, *Engaging Agnes Heller: A Critical Companion* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009); John Rundell, "The Postmodern Ethical Condition: A Conversation With Agnes Heller," *Critical Horizons* 1.1 (2000): 135–148. There have also been two special issues of the journal *Thesis Eleven* on Heller's work: *Thesis Eleven* 16 (1987) and *Thesis Eleven* 59 (1999). This introduction will highlight her work on aesthetics and her theory of modernity, and concentrate less systematically on her ethical and political philosophy and her and Feher's political interventions.

2. Heller's critical theory of modernity is also accompanied by a philosophical anthropology grounded in needs and feelings, of which *A Theory of Feelings* (1979, 2009) is central. Heller's philosophical anthropology also opens onto a paradigm of social action articulated in terms of ethics, morals, and the self-responsibility of the reflexive or self-authoring subject. Each aspect of her work is underscored by her own project of value rationality, which is spelt out in "Towards a Marxist Theory of Value," *Radical Philosophy*, or "Everyday Life, Rationality of Reason, Rationality of Intellect." Kant's clarion calls of the Enlightenment—having the courage to use one's own reason, and not to use another as a mere means—are her guiding stars, but ones that cannot shine transcendentally. They can only shine as second-order reflections articulated by social actors who are orientated by values. In Heller's terms, values are social and historical creations into which these actors are contingently thrown. See Agnes Heller, A Radical Philosophy, trans. James Wickham (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978); *A Theory of Feelings* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1979; 2nd ed., Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009); "Toward a Marxist Theory of Value," *Kinesis*, 5 (1972): 6–72; "Everyday Life, Rationality of Reason, Rationality of Intellect," *The Power of Shame* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), 71–250. See also John Rundell, "Heller, Agnes," *Encyclopaedia of Social Theory*, Volume 1, ed. George Ritzer (London: Sage, 2005), 360–362. This part of her work will be discussed here.

3. I am suggesting that these two "out of joint" times go somewhat against the grain of Heller's own work. And yet, if one reads *A Theory of History* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982) and *A Philosophy of History in Fragments* it can be suggested that a space opens up between these two works in which the idea of "stages" of historical consciousness that Heller posits recede, and is replaced by a general recognition of the plurality of histories, and within this the possibility of reconstructed ones. It is this space that I wish to explore here. I will discuss Heller's notion of a "postmodern attitude."

4. Agnes Heller, *Renaissance Man*, trans. from the Hungarian by Richard E. Allen (New York: Schoken Books, 1981), 6.

5. See also Weber, "The City," in *Economy and Society*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, Vol. 2 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978). To be sure, Florence is not the basis of Heller's model of democracy. In many ways her model is closer in form to the Habermasian version in its critique of Arendt, direct democracy and the separation between the social question and questions that are supposedly determined as political ones. This is notwithstanding other criticisms of his work, for example, "Joke Culture and Transformations of the Public Sphere." See also "The Great Republic" in Ferenc Feher and Agnes Heller, *Eastern Left, Western Left* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), 187–200.

6. Heller, *Renaissance Man*, 20.

7. Heller, *A Theory of Modernity*, 4; see also *History of Philosophy in Fragments*, vi–x, "Preface," and 2–35, "Contingency."

8. See Agnes Heller, "The Absolute Stranger: Shakespeare and the Drama of Failed Assimilation," here, first published in *Critical Horizons* 1.1 (2000) and as part of *The Time Is Out of Joint: Shakespeare as Philosopher of History* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002). I

have also discussed Heller's distinction between conditional and absolute strangers in "Strangers, Citizens and Outsiders: Otherness, Multiculturalism and the Cosmopolitan Imaginary in Mobile Societies," *Thesis Eleven* 78 (August 2004): 85–101.

9. See John Rundell, "Strangers, Citizens and Outsiders: Otherness, Multiculturalism and the Cosmopolitan Imaginary in Mobile Societies," 85 ff.

10. Agnes Heller, "Modernity's Pendulum" in *Can Modernity Survive?* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1990).

11. This contingent and post-utopic dimension of the postmodern attitude is explored in "The Historical Novel."

12. The experience of really existing socialism, analyzed by Ferenc Feher, Agnes Heller and György Markus in Dictatorship Over Needs (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), contributed to an understanding and critique of one version of modernity. This first experience was subsequently accompanied by the liberal-democratic one, first in Australia and then the United States. Heller's experience of two these modernities culminated in her *A Theory of Modernity*. See *A Theory of Modernity*, chapters 1–7. "The Three Logics of Modernity and the Double Bind of the Modern Imagination" published here is a summary of the position articulated in her *A Theory of Modernity*. A first version of her theory of modernity *qua* modernity is articulated by Heller and Feher in their essay "Class, Modernity, Democracy" first published in *Theory and Society* 12 (1983), and re-published in their *Eastern Left, Western Left*, 201–242. On the creation of totalitarianism see "An Imaginary Preface to the 1984 Edition of Hannah Arendt's The Origins of Totalitarianism," in *Eastern Left, Western Left*, 242–260. Heller's theory of modernity stands within contemporary social theorizing that conceptualizes the modern period as one of multiple irreducible dimensions and contours including regional and historical ones. This theorizing of multiple modernities includes the works of Schmuel Eisenstadt, Charles Taylor and Johann P. Arnason. See Schmuel Eisenstadt, *Comparative Civilizations and Multiple Modernities*, Vols. 1 and 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2003); Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007); Johann P. Arnason, *Social Theory and the Japanese Experience: The Dual Civilization* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1997); *The Future That Failed: Origins and Destinies of the Soviet Model* (London: Routledge, 1993).

13. Heller, *A Theory of Modernity*, 54–63.

14. See Agnes Heller, *Beyond Justice* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), especially 180–204 on "Distributive Justice." Heller makes a crucial distinction between drives (for example hunger) and needs, which one can hunger for. These needs are hierarchialized in terms of clusters or systems of needs, which exclude other needs. Because of this activity of hierarchialization needs are also defined by a social context, that is by the norms and rules of the social unit that the human being is born into. In this sense, needs are also social facts into which we are thrown—in other words, there is also a social system of needs. As such, for Heller, there is a point of tension between needs formulated at the level of the individual and social needs created, interpreted and institutionalized at the level of society.

15. In pre-modernity, so Heller argues, a homology was constructed between the two versions of needs—the personal and the social—because of the context into which one was born. As needs always carry an interpretative dimension, in pre-modernity the context into which one is born is the constant position from which needs are interpreted and understood. For her premodern societies are static.

16. See "The Dissatisfied Society," *The Power of Shame*, 1985, 300–315. See also "On Being Satisfied in a Dissatisfied Society Part I and II," in *The Postmodern Political Condition* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), 14–43.

17. See Heller's own self-assessment in her "Introduction to the Second Edition" to *A Theory of Feelings* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), and her reply "Reflections on the Essays Addressed to My Work" in *Engaging Agnes Heller*, where she addresses the issue of her formulation of the existential choice, pp. 241–245.

18. Agnes Heller, *Theory of Feelings*, 1978, 7–9. For Heller's analysis of the embodied dimension and its relation to feelings and thinking see, for example, "The Power of Shame," in *The Power of Shame*, 1–56.

19. *The Power of Shame*, 135

20. *The Power of Shame*, 136.

21. According to Heller, human beings do not come into argumentation on the basis of testing a prior validity claim of the right to argumentation. As she says, "readiness for rational argumentation [ ] presupposes the involvement of the human being as a whole, as a needing, wanting, feeling being," "Habermas and Marxism," in *The Grandeur and Twilight of Radical Universalism*, 463.

22. See Agnes Heller, *Everyday Life*, translated from the Hungarian by G. L. Campbell (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), and "Rationality of Reason, Rationality of Intellect," in *The Power of Shame*. On her responses to the purported death and/or emptying of the subject see "Death of the Subject" and "Are We Living in a World of Emotional Impoverishment?" in Agnes Heller, *Can Modernity Survive?*

23. Peter Murphy, "Meaning, Truth and Ethical Value" especially part II, *PRAXIS International*, 7, 1.53.

24. See *Everyday Life*; "Everyday Life Rationality of Reason, Rationality of Intellect," *The Power of Shame*, 71–250. These two works constitute the more formal theoretical core of her work through which her paradigm of value rationality is articulated.

25. In "The Gods of Greece" published here Heller also portrays the long history of the values of life and freedom with their historical memories and histories of reception, this time in relation to German Romanticism. Heller argues that the modern German relationship to the ancient Greeks was central to the self-understanding of German Romanticism, in particular, and the way it manifested its ambivalence to the value categories of freedom and life. According to Heller, German identity was defined culturally through the exclusion of democracy from the idealized image of Greece and through the emphasis on Greek originality that served to devalue the Roman, Latin and Renaissance translations of the Greek heritage. These German fictions about the Greeks were closely linked to rise of Romantic reflections and critiques of modernity, Nietzsche's ambivalence over "the death of God" or the end of metaphysics, and Heidegger's anxiety about Cartesianism that were voiced in its wake. See also Heller's "Biopolitics versus Freedom" published here, as well as Ferenc Feher and Agnes Heller, *Biopolitics* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1994) and Agnes Heller, "Has Biopolitics Changed the Concept of the Political" in *Biopolitics. The Politics of the Body, Race and Nature*, ed. Agnes Heller and S. Puntscher Riekmann (Aldershot: Avebury, 1996), 3–16. In these works Heller addresses the issue of life *qua* embodiment as one that concerns politics and the politics of representation under the term "bio-politics." In her critical analysis of bio-political arguments in contemporary political culture, Heller argues that the concept of bio-politics both does and does not address issues of the body and concerns with embodiment. It does when one politicizes the body from the perspectives of either nature or life and asks important questions concerning instrumentalized interferences. In a more contemporary vein, form example, "gene" corporeality has developed, based on a biologistically imputed universalism of the human species. This latter current can swing between developments in legislative regimes in the form of the right to the sovereignty of one's own genes, or the technical manipulation of the gene pool. However, biopolitics does not address the body and embodiment when a second strategy identifies and merges the biological and the political. As she points out, especially with reference to the work of Carl Schmitt, embodiment becomes a metaphor for identity—of the group, the nation, the community. Biopolitics represents, for Heller, a clash and an entanglement of the values of freedom, life and the body in modernity, but a clash and an entanglement that has a chequered history in political discourses from the Enlightenment, to Romanticism and postmodernity. Heller's critique of biopolitics not only is a critique of contemporary left political culture, but also, and more importantly, a critique of one of the dialectics of modernity that places its second-order value orientation on the ideas and images of the body, life, and territory, and from which images such as racism or "identity" can be developed. In this way, racism and identity politics both belong to the dialectic of modernity, which in this instance deploys "race" or identity particularistically, often in the guise of the body, either as an empirical referent, or as a territorial metaphor.

26. Heller, *A Theory of Modernity*, 15 and 3, respectively.

27. Heller, *Immortal Comedy: The Comic Phenomenon in Art, Literature and Life* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005).

28. Heller, *Immortal Comedy*, 25.

29. Agnes Heller, "Radical Evil in Modernity: On Genocide, Totalitarianism, Terror and the Holocaust," *Thesis Eleven* (May 2010): 101, 106; see also "On Evils, Evil, Radical Evil and the Demonic," *Critical Horizons* (forthcoming).

30. See Agnes Heller, "The Beauty of Friendship," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 97, 1 (Winter 1998): 5–22. The friendly regards will be discussed here in the context of our relationship with artworks.

31. Agnes Heller, *A Philosophy of Morals* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 53. The following discussion is based primarily around "The Autonomy of Art or the Dignity of the Artwork," "What Went Wrong With the Concept of the Beautiful?" and "The Role of Emotions in the Reception of Artworks," all published.

32. See Agnes Heller, "The Death of the Subject," in *Can Modernity Survive?* where she discusses the narrativized version of the subject.

33. Heller, "What Went Wrong With the Concept of the Beautiful?"

34. H.-G. Gadamer, "The Relevance of the Beautiful" in *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, trans. Nicholas Walker, ed. with an introduction by Robert Bernasconi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 14, see also 3–53.

35. See also Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*.

36. Heller, "What Went Wrong With the Concept of the Beautiful," this volume.

37. Heller, "What Went Wrong With the Concept of the Beautiful," this volume.

38. See for example, William von Humboldt, "On the Imagination," in *German Romantic Criticism*, ed. Leslie Willson (New York: Continuum, 1982), 134–161; Friedrich Hölderlin, "On the Process of the Poetic Mind," in *German Romantic Criticism*, 219–237. On the problems in Kant's formulation and the split between creativity and reception see John Rundell, "Creativity and Judgement: Kant on Reason and Imagination," in *Rethinking Imagination. Culture and Creativity*, ed. Gillian Robinson and John Rundell (London: Routledge, 1994), 87–117.

39. See also David Roberts, "Between World and Home: Agnes Heller's the Concept of the Beautiful," *Thesis Eleven* 59 (November 1999): 95–101.

40. See for example, Max Weber, "Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions" in *From Max Weber*, edited with an introduction by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), 323–361; and Niklas Luhmann, *Art as a Social System* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

41. To be sure, Heller's analysis of aesthetics stands within her critique of the modernity of meta-narratives. Nonetheless, as will be outlined here, a postmodern dismantling of the categories of aesthetics and judgements of taste is not what she has in mind, even though she is open-minded about open interpretations of art. Rather, her own approach is orientated towards the way in which art assists in giving meaning, and the way in which this is constituted is, for her to establish a relationship with a work of art. See her essay dedicated to David Roberts, "What Is 'Postmodern'—A Quarter of a Century Later," in *Moderne Begreifen. Zur Paradoxie eines Socio-Ästhetischen Deutungsmusters* [Comprehending Modernity. On the Paradoxicality of a Socio-Aesthetic Paradigm], ed. Christine Magerski, Christiane Weller, and Robert Savage (Wiesbaden: DUV Deutscher Univeritats-Verlag, 2007], 37–50.

42. Lukács' "The Transcendental Dialectics of the Idea of Beauty" was written in 1914 as part of his Heidelberg aesthetics, and only published posthumously. See György Márkus, "Life and the Soul: The Young Lukács and the Problem of Culture," in *Lukács Revalued*, ed. Agnes Heller (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1983), 1–26; Katie Terezakis, "Afterword the Legacy of Form," in György Lukács' *Soul and Form*, ed. John T. Sanders and Katie Terezakis with an introduction by Judith Butler (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 215–234.

43. György Márkus, "Life and Soul: The Young Lukács and the Problem of Culture," in *Lukács Revalued*, 9.

44. Heller argues against Gadamer's ontological hermeneutics of art where he states, "the work of art does not simply refer to something, because what it refers to is actually there. We could say that the work of art signifies an increase in being." As such, and following Heidegger's work, for Gadamer, the work of art reveals and conceals a truth about our fundamental existence in the world. Because of this ontological specificity, the work of art, for Gadamer, is

irreplaceable. This is so, for Gadamer, even when we recognise art's own historical horizon as tradition or festival. "The Relevance of the Beautiful" in *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, 35 and 49–51.

45. See Agnes Heller, *Beyond Justice*, 220, where we can take our lead from Heller's formulation of "the incomplete ethico-political concept of justice," which seeks to establish a common normative foundation for different ways of life. It does not "intend to mould ways of life in a single ideal pattern. It does not recommend a single ethics (*Sittlichkeit*) intrinsic to such an ideal pattern. It posits the simultaneous existence of ways of life all bound together by ties of symmetrical reciprocity." See 316–317 on symmetrical reciprocity, mutuality and love.

46. Agnes Heller, *Beyond Justice*, 82. See also Agnes Heller, "The Beauty of Friendship," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 10, where she states "the beauty of friendship is the unity of possession and desire. For this and only this kind of love is love in freedom and reciprocity. There is a freedom in every kind of beauty—the free play of the imagination, the free handling of artistic material, and so on. Friendship is the most beautiful emotional attachment because it is freely chosen, freely cultivated; it flourishes in reciprocity, mutual possession, and mutual self-abandon."

47. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *La Nouvelle Héloïse* [Julie, or the New Eloise], trans. and abridged by Judith H. McDowell (University Park: The Pennsylvania University Press, 1987). See Heller, *Beyond Justice*, 83–87. Tzvetan Todorov also views Rousseau along similar lines in his *The Imperfect Garden: The Legacy of Humanism*, trans. Carol Cosman (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

48. See "The Role of Emotions in the Reception of Artworks," published here.

49. J. W. von Goethe, *The Sufferings of Young Werther*, trans. with an introduction and notes by Michael Hulse (London: Penguin, 1989).

50. György Lukács, "The Foundering of Form Against Life," in György Lukács' *Soul and Form*, 53.

51. György Lukács, "The Foundering of Form Against Life," in György Lukács' *Soul and Form*, 56.

52. See Søren Kierkegaard, *The Seducer's Diary*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, with a new foreword by John Updike (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 107. See also Chanderlos de Laclos, *Dangerous Liaisons*, trans. with an introduction and notes by Helen Constantine (London: Penguin, 2007).

53. Agnes Heller, "Georg Lukács and Irma Seidler," in *Lukács Revalued*, 27.

54. Agnes Heller, "Georg Lukács and Irma Seidler," in *Lukács Revalued*, 27.

55. Agnes Heller, "Georg Lukács and Irma Seidler," in *Lukács Revalued*, 29.

56. See also Agnes Heller, "Are We Living in a World of Emotional Impoverishment?" in

57. See Agnes Heller, "Where Are We at Home?" here. See also Maria Márkus, "In Search of a Home. In Honour of Agnes Heller on her 75th Birthday," in *Contemporary Perspectives in Critical and Social Philosophy*, ed. John Rundell, Danielle Petherbridge, Jan Bryant, John Hewitt, and Jeremy Smith (Leiden: Brill Academic, 2004), 391–400, and "Lovers and Friends: 'Radical Utopias' of Intimacy?" *Thesis Eleven* 101 (May): 6–23.

58. Can Modernity Survive?

Chapter Two

What Went Wrong With the Concept of the Beautiful?

Something went very wrong with the Concept of the Beautiful. This may astonish non-philosophers, for we use the terms "beautiful/ugly" unproblematically in everyday life. We speak about beautiful pictures and ugly buildings, we understand how to distinguish between beautiful decorations and ugly ones. Everyone knows what we mean when we say, just as we used to say from times immemorial, that this girl is beautiful whereas another is plain. Thus we employ in everyday speech—as we always did—the category-pair "ugly/beautiful" as a category-pair of value-orientation.[1]

Category-pairs of value-orientation belong to the fundamental conditions of human life. Where there are customs, there are also categories of value-orientation. The general category of value-orientation ("good/bad") in its unspecified, undifferentiated way stands for "according to the rules of the customs" and "contrary to the rules of the custom," respectively. This category-pair can replace all of its differentiated and specified sub-forms in common parlance because of its general character. Such sub-forms are "sacred/profane," "good/evil," "beautiful/ugly," "useful/harmful," and "pleasant/unpleasant." But the specified, differentiated categories of value-orientation cannot replace each other. More precisely, they can never fully replace each other without a slight modification of meaning. For example, everything pleasant can also be called good, but not everything we call good can also be called pleasant. I cannot replace the value "beautiful" with value terms such as "useful" or "sacred" without changing the meaning of the description (if I am referring to a building, for example).

However, the *concept* (or the idea) of the Beautiful and that of Ugliness or Deformity is not an everyday concept but a philosophical one. In Walter

Benjamin's formulation the Beautiful is one of the main idea-stars of the philosophical firmament.[2]

The Concept of the Beautiful was born with philosophy, and more specifically, with metaphysics. It does not originate in the reaffirmation of the category of value-orientation "beautiful" ("this is beautiful"), but in the negation of the truth of the affirmative sentence. The philosopher insists that "this is not beautiful, but something else is" or "this is only seemingly beautiful, but something else is really beautiful, and I will show you what Real, True Beauty is." Just as the Concepts of the True and of the Good are born through the negation of everyday "opinions" concerning truth and goodness, so is their fellow-idea, the Beautiful. Philosophers locate the Real, True Beauty in a world higher than our common world, a different world.

We do not only live in one world, but in many. We at least live in two.[3] The myths and fairy tales have always offered us a second home. The Idea of the Beautiful (and the Idea of the True and the Good) is the chief vehicle by which we substitute the world of metaphysics for the world of myth. However, no metaphysics will ever get entirely rid of myths and fairy tales. Metaphysics thrives on the constant differentiation of two worlds. The second and highest world is to be understood as the total negation of the first world, or at least as the essential correction of the first world.

The two worlds are different but connected. This is our view in retrospect. All the major types of the concept of the Beautiful are intrinsically connected to the contents and structures of the common categories, the value-orientation groupings which they constantly negate. The general belief that "this is beautiful" is negated. In negating *this* or *that* general belief the intrinsic connection between the two worlds is reinforced. What had been negated shapes the character of the new affirmation.

Something went wrong with the Concept of the Beautiful after Hegel. One can assume that the spontaneous and initially slow deconstruction of the concept is related to changes in both the content and structure of the value-orientation category "beautiful/ugly" in modern daily life. The drastic shift in the understanding of the other guiding philosophical stars (the Good and the True) is also related to the modification of "good/evil" and "true/false" in modern life. The latter modification followed the continuous devaluation of the "sacred/profane." Taking all this together provides a point of departure from which to approach the strange but by now familiar phenomenon of the destruction or deconstruction of metaphysics in general.

Although the True, the Good, and the Beautiful simultaneously become problematic (insofar as all three undergo substantial changes from the deconstruction of metaphysics), the relation between the three Ideas and their respective everyday counterparts will essentially become different. With the triumph of the new mechanical, scientific worldview and the correspondence theory of truth, the ancient Idea of Truth is transformed into the Idea of True

Knowledge. As stated above, the philosophical ideas were constituted through negation. However, the victorious modern concept of Truth—true knowledge—negates neither the content nor the structure of "true/false," but merely "purifies it" through methodological and procedural rigor. Truth in science is considered to be similar to the truth of the sentence "the cat is on the mat."[4] Thus, the element of negation disappears from the concept of truth. When Heidegger conjures up the Greek concept of *aletheia* (in his interpretation) he resuscitates the element of negation (*a-aletheia*) in the Idea of Truth, among other things. As the new concept of the Truth became stabilized in the correspondence theory of true knowledge, the concept of the Good simultaneously became destabilized. Whereas the structure (obviously not the content) of the new concept of the Truth eliminated negation, the converse happened to the idea of the Good. Negation became inherent not just in content, but in the structure of everyday ethical attitudes and everyday moral utterances. Everyday discourse on what is "good/bad" revolves around the delegitimizing statement "this is not good, but something else is." This has been the case since the dawn of modernity. Hegel reflects upon this development when he discusses the fundamental dynamism of modernity in his *Phenomenology* under the heading of "morality."[5] Hegel's "morality" is not morality in a Kantian sense, for Kant preserved the old recipe with absolute strictness. That is, Kant's world of *noumena* (transcendental freedom, moral law) remained absolutely different from the world of nature (phenomena). Freedom determines nature by negating it. In order to be true to himself, Kant could not place morality at the centre without removing the traditional idea of the Good from the centre place of morals. This centre place is now occupied by the Moral Law (which is the Sacred) and it is this moral law that constitutes the moral concept, the Good.

But let's return to the chapter on "morality" (of moral rights) in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. As mentioned, Hegel describes the dynamics of modern society under the heading of "morality." To assume the attitude of morality means to say "no" to the institutions, laws, and ways of life which cross our interests, limit our self-development, and reject our conceptions of the good. Contrary to the world of *Sittlichkeit* and alienation, the modern world is not shipwrecked by negation. It rather maintains itself; it grows just by saying "no." The modern world lives from constantly negating every current concept and description of the "good." It can "incorporate" the "evil" and thrive on it.

Despite Hegel's rescue operations, the concept of the good entered a state of demise. It never celebrated a resurrection similar to the concept of Truth, although utilitarianism and even pragmatism tried to achieve something of the kind. Philosophy gained more by choosing alternative avenues. The most viable alternative resulted in the enthronement of the concept of Justice in place of the idea of the Good. Another avenue was opened by replacing the

notion of the Good with the category of Value in general. There was still the option to maintain the centrality of the Concept of the Good, but not in the form of the universal Idea of the Good. Rather, the concept of the Good was maintained as the moral quality of the single person, the goodness of "good persons." This became a kind of decapitated metaphysics. Kierkegaard's maneuver of the existential choice of oneself is as alien to everyday wisdom and common opinion as the Platonian ideas were once upon a time.

The Concept of the Beautiful has another, entirely different history. It is neither an ambivalent success story as in the case of the Concept of Truth, nor is it the story of transformation as in the case of the Concept of the Good. It is rather a story of a seemingly unmitigated demise. If we accept the metaphysical starting point—and we must accept it whenever we point at the concept of the Beautiful in its splendor—we must begin the story with the Idea of Beauty and assume that everything is beautiful only insofar as it participates in "something" that we call Beauty. There is something in common between everything termed "beautiful"—and precisely this is Beauty.

Prior to the emergence of Cartesianism the same could be said about all goods (they all participate in the Good) and about everything true (they all participate in the True). On one hand, the Cartesian *cogito* and the new rationalism of the seventeenth century in general construed the *epistemological subject*. On the other hand, it eliminated the *lived experience of the singular human being* from metaphysics,[6] unless the experience could be thought as merely cognitive or could be replaced with a functionally equivalent mental event (and made thereby adequate knowledge, as in Spinoza).[7] Lived experience, after having been eliminated from metaphysics, took the Concept of the Beautiful to its early grave. There is no place of honor for the Concept of the Beautiful in Descartes', Hobbes', or Spinoza's world.[8] British empiricists forged a post-metaphysical concept of the beautiful while taking for granted that the Concept of the Beautiful had fallen apart, even without spelling it out. They also contributed to its demise.

The problem which no empirical approach could neglect resulted partly from the increasing difficulty in coping with *heterogeneity*. All things which have a share in Beauty are beautiful according to their share. But these things are heterogeneous. All the goods and truths which are good and true because they participate in the Universal Idea of the Good and the True can be homogenized, at least to a manageable limit. But no such even approximative homogeneity could be achieved where the Beautiful was concerned. There are at least four major difficulties that the Concept of Beauty confronted. They are the following: 1) what is, or what can be, beautiful (what can participate in Beauty)? 2) What is the experience of the beautiful like? (What is the effect of Beauties; how does Beauty affect us)? 3) What is it that Beauty effects in us whenever Beauty affects us? 4) What is the source of

Beauty, the sole, common source of all things beautiful and of all their effects?

WHAT IS OR WHAT CAN BE BEAUTIFUL?

What is or what can be beautiful? No one can even think of presenting an approximately full list. That which is beautiful can be the shapes and the forms, the things of nature, artifacts, men and women, the soul, deeds, characters, states, states of mind, friendship, love, propositions, gestures, behavior, expression works of art, and so on. The list is heterogeneous because almost everything can be beautiful. Only as long as there is one single Idea (Deity) at the top of a hierarchically ordered Universe, and everything is supposed to ascend from the order created by one single source, can this heterogeneity be unified through the unifying Idea of Beauty. Yet, when there is no One from which everything emanates then the traditional Idea of the Beautiful cannot be meaningfully employed. The latter is the case when there is no God, the ultimate Creator of all things, the single and the absolute Beauty, the source of all beauties, of all the heterogeneous things that can legitimately be called beautiful. When Divine Beauty becomes an empty metaphor, the ultimate source of the beauty of all beautiful things must be sought in the world down there, especially in the faculties of the creature—in human judgment, convention, and taste. This shift from God to human faculties anticipates the coming demise of the Concept of the Beautiful.

WHAT IS THE EXPERIENCE OF THE BEAUTIFUL LIKE?

Beauty enchants us, troubles us, appeases us, and causes joy and rapture. It is revealing, captivating, and gives us pleasure. We enjoy it; it elevates us and makes us ecstatic. Even if all our encounters with beauty do not trigger a holistic effect, they can. The experience of Beauty is never a merely mental experience; it is the experience of emotions, passions, desires, senses—of feelings. When we experience beauty our senses are also normally aroused. We hear the beautiful sound, we see the beautiful sight, and sometimes (although rarely) we also touch and smell beautiful things.[9] Our body always participates in the experience of beauty. This is so even if the *what* of the experience is purely spiritual. A kind of rapture, strong or mild, desire (*Eros*) and satisfaction are ineliminable elements of the experience of the beautiful. The beautiful is erotic.

It is the heterogeneity of the objects of *Eros* that prohibits modern rationalist metaphysicians from taking the Concept of the Beautiful seriously. *Eros*

is suspect. The early modern "grand" rationalists dismiss the suspect Beauty from the Pantheon where for a while the True remains in place and the Good lingers. Just like the ten little Indians in Agatha Christie's tale, the first day on which Beauty is killed, the Good will come so that Truth (as a methodologically trimmed, everyday concept) can finally commit suicide. Before the empty stage the curtains will be drawn, at least for the time being.[10]

WHAT IS IT THAT BEAUTY EFFECTS IN US WHENEVER BEAUTY AFFECTS US?

What is affected? The whole person. The experience of the beautiful is a total human experience. This makes things even worse for the Concept of the Beautiful. On the one hand, the beautiful things are entirely heteronomous among one another. No method can make elementary order among them. On the other hand, the *effect* of these *heteronomous* things, relations, occurrences is a *total* one. It is not just the mind that is affected (as, at least allegedly, in the case of truth). It is not just the bodily senses (as allegedly in the instances of taking mere pleasure). It is not mainly the "soul" (as in the case of the good). There is, I repeat, a total all-encompassing effect. The experience of the beautiful remains the total experience of mortals—of single mortals, of each one separately.

WHAT IS THE SOURCE OF BEAUTY?

What can be the source of this elevating, splendid, and still disquieting experience? The traditional (Platonian, metaphysical) answer is straightforward and makes everything clear. The source is the Highest Principle. If one dethrones the highest principle and still insists that there must be a single source for every experience of the beautiful, one can still detect such a source in the world of our unconscious desires. After all, in both cases—in metaphysics and in its radical reversal—it is *Eros* who conducts the orchestra, be it the Heavenly *Eros* of Plato or the Under-worldly *Eros* of Nietzsche's Dionysius and Freud's libido. But it is very difficult and requires the employment of fantastic tricks and handstands in order to detect one single unconscious source behind all the kinds of love of beauty. During the first phase of the deconstruction of metaphysics, convention applies to the empty place of the supreme Principle seemingly successfully. After all, it makes (common) sense that convention is the source of beauty of all the beautiful things. We learn which things are beautiful, and then we perceive them as beautiful. If this is so, we have no headache in giving an account of the heterogeneity of

beautiful things. All of them are beautiful because there are conventions everywhere. Yet how can we explain the effect of those things? Why the pleasure, why the excitement? Is the internal experience itself a convention? Is *Eros* a convention? The conventions cannot "explain" the so-called "motivations."

One can also try to detect certain anthropological constants behind the conventions. One can ask why this or that thing is considered beautiful in all known cultures, that is, in all "conventions." One can take recourse, for example, to the genetic constitution of *homo sapiens*. We can say that beautiful forms are limited in numbers, and this in itself is an indication that the combinations of these forms in human imagination are finite. If beauty is the offspring of imagination, and imagination is finite, beauty also has anthropologically definable limits. If the limits are anthropologically definable, so are the sources and recourses of beauties of all kind.

None of these answers satisfy the moderns, but they are repeatedly explored.[11] I would add that all the philosophical proposals to locate the source of beauty in our unconscious desires and/or in conventions are essentially post-Hegelian, even if some of them were proposed before Hegel. But one avenue was still left open.

The four questions concerning the beautiful boil down—with some simplification—to the discrepancy between the heterogeneity of the beautiful on the one hand, and the total character of the (erotic or quasi-erotic) experience of the beautiful on the other. The concept of the Beautiful, as we have seen, originates from the negation: "this is not beautiful, but something else is." How can we arrive at an authentic concept of the Beautiful if we accept that there is and remains an unbridgeable gap between the total heterogeneity of the beautiful things and the total homogeneity of the experience of those (beautiful) things? The concept of the beautiful requires first that we exclude every heterogeneous thing that cannot be homogenized with all others from the sources of the *authentic*, *real* concept of the Beautiful, *and that we juxtapose this newly found real concept of Beauty to all the heterogeneous everyday perceptions, judgments and interpretations*. This new concept, as I said, must have a *homogenizing power*; it must cling to very specific structures, entail very specific requirements, and embody *very specific kinds of things*. It must embody those things which can become the homogenizing carriers of everything Beautiful. But this is only the first chapter of the story. The new concept ("this is not beautiful, but that is") has to take the *total effect into account* also. Everything that is "really" beautiful, that participates in Beauty, must have a total effect since it concerns the whole human being.

And there is an answer that takes care of both problems. There is a kind of thing that bridges the seemingly unbridgeable gap, for it has the power to homogenize everything that is heterogeneous and can also affect the "whole human person." This thing is Art, or better yet the Work of Art. The work of

art emerges as the sole authentic embodiment of Beauty. The works of art are beautiful insofar as they participate in Art, that is, in Beauty.

This looks like a perfect, and perfectly modern, solution. The One, the Idea, and the Christian God are all dethroned—long live Art, the sacred!

Since Art takes the place of the One, the homogenization of all different things that are called (and are thus perceived as) beautiful by the common mind will be carried out *aesthetically*.[12] *Homogenization will be tantamount to aestheticization*. What are those different beautiful things? Deeds, men and women, souls, propositions, the laws of nations, sounds, geometrical figures, voices, living things, etc. All those heterogeneous things are presented and represented in works of art without a single exception. They participate in beauty insofar as they are "incorporated" by the evocative power of the work, insofar as they are properly formed.[13]

The "aestheticization" of the concept of the beautiful began with the religious cult of the works of art and with the cultivation of "aesthetic taste" in the service of this newly founded quasi-religion. As a result, aestheticization expands—it encompasses the way of life, the emotional household. The "beautiful soul" is no longer a simple and virtuous soul, but the soul of emotional over-refinement, receptivity, and good taste.

Heterogeneity and homogeneity, difference and total effect, are now brought together under a single constellation where each main star has its own planets. The jigsaw puzzle is put together and the jackpot won. But winning the jackpot also became downfall of the Concept of the Beautiful.

If Beauty resides in art, if the Beautiful is the beauty of works of art and if the good work of art is the beautiful work, then Beauty must have a specific standing in the world of artworks. It must occupy the highest place there. Beauty must then be the criterion that orients us in telling the better from the worse, in establishing the hierarchy between genres and artworks. Beauty must be the guiding quality that grounds the artistic character of the artworks. But Beauty cannot perform this task. Moreover, the services of Beauty for performing this task are not really needed. If we distinguish between better and lesser art, we can do this by using the yardsticks "completion," "perfection," "perfect form," "the disappearance of the content in the form" and others. We do not need the quality "beautiful" at all.

The concept of the beautiful paid a heavy price for having received a comfortable abode in the world of artworks: it became redundant. Beauty became just another word, an addendum, a synonym for perfection or "fitting form" (*Stimmigkeit* by Adorno). The Moor did his service; the Moor can leave.

What is worse, even the total internal experience argument backfired. One can easily have a total experience in enjoying "bad art," for example, in the experience of kitsch.[14] Experience itself is not the criterion of the greatness of art. One must first determine what is perfect and imperfect artwork to be

able to develop artistic taste and the appreciation of pure forms, that is, the readiness to enjoy the more perfect rather than the imperfect work. Even in this last sentence I had no need to employ the term "beauty."

The total experience in our encounter with an artwork can also be called "happiness" or "felicity." Happiness, felicity, is the state of requited love. But does a work of art requite our love? One searches for the love of God, *agape*, in vain in the work of art. It is an artifact that elicits felicity; an artifact does not requite love. It is a substitute, a make-believe, or at its best a floating, noncommittal promise. Where has the love of Beauty gone?

It did not take long for philosophers to detect that something went very wrong. At first they believed that the sickness could be cured if one strongly distinguished between art and "aesthetics."[15] Actually, this distinction had already been made in the classical period, and Hegel, the one who put the work of art radically on the pedestal of Beauty, apologizes that he listed his lectures on the Philosophy of Art as "Lectures on Aesthetics." Kierkegaard has linked the experience of the beautiful to the aesthetic stage (the first stage) of the exister's experience.[16] This aesthetic stage encompasses different kinds of creative activities. The creation of works of art and the creation of an aesthetic lifestyle are both such activities. When B. (Judge William in *Either/Or*) insists that beauty also has its place in the ethical phase, a highly seated place at that, he speaks about the *aesthetic* (and not the artistic!) aspect of the ethical.

Kierkegaard's concept of the beautiful is generally shaped by the concept of the "aesthetical," rather than that of "art." The aesthetical position negates the attitude of ordinary life within life itself by "forming" life according to the yardstick of beauty. Ordinary life which is, after all, entirely heterogeneous and full of contingencies will appear as the birthplace and the playground of the Beautiful. But the attempt to homogenize life aesthetically—through beauty—turns out to be a failure. Not just because it is unethical, but because it is impossible.[17]

Hence the escape into the "aesthetics" of life also leads to an impasse, although into a different impasse than "philosophy of art." If aestheticization of life requires homogenization, beauty escapes daily life. The beauty of daily life is too transient to offer a solid ground for philosophical speculations. Poetry, of course, embraced the aestheticization of life abundantly (from Baudelaire to Proust), but philosophy abandoned it.[18] This is true even for Nietzsche who—in spite of his great love of Beauty—advocates life's aestheticization in contrast to nihilism and decadence.

Let me return to an earlier thought. The concept of true knowledge (the correspondence theory of truth) is the enlarged, methodically purified, everyday concept of truth. Since it is the everyday concept the move of negation is canceled. Why can't we do the same with the beautiful? So what if there is nothing left to ground the beauty of the beautiful in the traditional sentence:

"this is not beautiful, that is beautiful," "this is only seemingly beautiful, something else is really, truly beautiful"? What if Disneyland is beautiful? What if the beauty queen is the truly beautiful? What if the television advertisement is the really beautiful? And after all, who cares? Similar voices can be heard from many quarters. My answer to them is that I do care. And this essay addresses those who—just like me—do care. The concept of the beautiful fell apart after Hegel. Yet, there was still a rescue team at work. The members of the rescue team include Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Freud, Benjamin, and Adorno. But mostly the rescue attempts were abandoned.[19]

True "beauty" has remained a venerable category of the philosophy of art, although not necessarily a major one. Since Hegel the philosophy of art has introduced a few new categories to substitute "Beauty." "Aesthetic value" (taken over both from Nietzsche and from neo-Kantianism) was one of the most popular among them. In this scenario beauty is one of the so-called "artistic" or "aesthetic" values. Roman Ingarden, for example, enumerates beauty, charm, coherence, and perfection as categories for the "evaluation" of a work of art. He then writes that aesthetic value is not the pleasure but rather "a peculiar synthetic qualitative moment or approximately selected multiplicity of special value qualities inhering in the aesthetic object."[20] He throws a life preserver out to beauty by saying that beauty is something "phenomenally given."[21] In Giovanni Gentile's *Philosophy of Art* the concept of the beautiful appears for the first time in chapter five, following the discussion of art, form, feeling, love and speech and preceding the discussion of genius, taste, and immortality.[22] Gentile also speaks about beauty as a *value* and interestingly adds that because value implies freedom, the freedom of choice, we never choose the ugly. This is an attempt (perhaps an involuntary one) to fuse the everyday category of value-orientation ("beautiful/ugly") with the concept of the beautiful, that is, to eliminate the essential move of negating the everyday "opinions" concerning beauty. Benedetto Croce attributes both value and anti-value to feelings; he defines beauty as "successful expression" and ugliness as an "unsuccessful expression."[23] (Unsuccessful expression is an anti-value that elicits negative feelings.) This conception is a fairly incoherent admixture of everyday concepts and of the ideal in Hegel.

Hegel remains the towering figure even for those who reject his work. Heidegger, for example, speaks about the beautiful as the "outward shining of truth."[24] To understand the beautiful as the *Scheinen* of Truth is clearly a Hegelian concept. The difference is (and it is not a minor one) that the concept of Truth is entirely new in Heidegger. However, if it comes to the *connection* between the True and the Beautiful, Hegel and Heidegger remain in unison.

Simultaneous to the elaboration of the new strategies in philosophy of art, a new inquiry, the psychology of art, proposed to approach art from a differ-

ent angle.[25] The psychology of art puts the emphasis on the creation, and particularly on the reception (experience), of art. The psyche is affected. But what affects the psyche and how? The source of rapture can again be located in the beautiful. Rollo May, for example, writes, "Beauty is the experience that gives us a sense of joy and a sense of peace simultaneously."[26] He adds that most people in our culture suppress their reaction to beauty. May attributes the demise of the beautiful to the emotional impoverishment of modern men and women, to the loss of the promise of happiness. Ozenfant on his part links the loss of the Idea of the Beautiful directly to the loss of happiness (in an authentic understanding). He writes, "And our acts are the preface of what we shall never realize: our Ideal . . . there is no . . . happiness but what we experience . . . and yet, nothing is as precious as certitude, and that we have lost. Anxiety has possession of us."[27] The preservation of the concept of the beautiful normally resulted from a compromise. This was not a compromise of the mind, but a compromise of the heart. No logic of the heart can dismiss the beautiful entirely, for the beautiful is indeed the carrier of the promise of happiness. However, the logic of the mind can be radical. Among the spokesmen for this logic, R. G. Collingwood expressed himself with utter radicalism. According to Collingwood "beautiful" means admirable, excellent, and desirable. Yet beauty has no aesthetic significance, for "there is no such quality."[28] The word (beauty) is now used by all of us in a way similar to its old (pre-Platonian) Greek usage. This means that for us things like the beauty of the Idea or the One does not make much sense, for we do not love those abstractions. Beautiful is the wine or the particular food that we love.[29] The aesthetic experience is an autonomous experience; it has nothing to do with loving a wine or a particular food. Aesthetic theory is not the theory of beauty but the theory of art. If you still want a theory of beauty, it belongs to the theory of love.

I would not protest too vehemently against the idea that the theory of beauty belongs to the theory of love. Yet when love is exemplified with loving a wine or a particular food, we will not get very far. We will just go back to the observation of the heterogeneity of beautiful things, back *before* the question "what is *really* beautiful?" (what, or who, is really *worthy of love*) had been asked. This philosophical regression is tantamount to exiling the Idea of Beauty from the philosophical universe altogether, the philosophy of love included. Collingwood's challenge can be rejected as much as it can be taken. We owe our thanks to György Lukács for the most remarkable summary of the fate of the concept of the beautiful. His work, "The Transcendental Dialectics of the Idea of Beauty," written in 1914, can contribute to the discourse on beauty only now because it was not published until the 1970s, after the author's death.[30] It can indeed contribute to the discourse now. For, perhaps astonishingly, very little has changed in the philosophical concerns that interest us here between the beginning and the end of the

twentieth century. More precisely, it seems as if the philosophical concerns of the *fin de siècle* would have returned in our world for the second time at the end of the millennium, and at the beginning of the new one.

Lukács' study on the beautiful remains seemingly unfinished. The author promises us at the beginning of his ruminations that he will discuss three very distinct concepts of the beautiful, but he actually discusses only two of them. The work is still finished, for the conclusion is stated at the end, and it is crystal clear. Lukács claims it is for the sake of the dignity and might of the Concept of the Beautiful that it has to be removed from the realm of Art. The message formally resembles Collingwood's proposition that beauty has nothing to do with aesthetics as the philosophy of art, yet Lukács appears here as the spokesman of beauty rather than that of art. He writes, "And we cannot express our respect for the grandiose speculative depths and consistency of the idea of the beautiful better than by trying to find its real systemic place and by severing it from its contingent and thus confusing connection with art, with this transcendentally peculiar and independent thing, *if we liberate it (the idea of the beautiful) from its burden*."[31] Although in Lukács' mind both parties can only benefit from divorce, he still says that it is beauty which should be relieved from the useless burden of art and not art from the useless burden of beauty.

Lukács opens his analysis with the remark that a well established concept of the beautiful must lead to metaphysics, to transcendence. This is why it threatens, or rather annuls, the autonomy of the aesthetic sphere, particularly of the work of art. Lukács adds that the Concept of the Beautiful has lost its (transcendent) home and become a *homeless* concept. Offering it a foster home (in aesthetics or in the philosophy of art) causes confusion and damage. Yet it does not suffice if aesthetics is to point out the ineliminability of transcendence and metaphysics in every consistent concept of the beautiful, and if as a result it liberates itself from heteronomy. Something more is required, namely "that it also designate a place for the methodically homeless concept."[32]

After having sketched his program, Lukács distinguishes between three different philosophical interests in the foundation of the concept of the beautiful. These are the logical-metaphysical motive, the speculative-developmental-philosophical (*Entwicklungsphilosophische*) motive, and the substantial-ethical motive. Among the three, Lukács discusses the first two in detail. Lukács never comes to discuss the third kind, the substantially ethically motivated concept of the beautiful. This must have been, above all, the Kantian concept. I doubt whether the unfinished character of the whole *Heidelberg Aesthetics* explains this absence in full.

Lukács promises to live up to the obligation of a modern aesthetics in pointing out the proper place where the homeless concept of the beautiful can dwell. What Lukács really demonstrates is the historical fact that the concept

of the beautiful was at home in the metaphysical-logical systems. It had also received a home in the substantially "development-philosophically" motivated systems. But what about the third home? Was the concept of the beautiful not at home in the so-called substantial-ethical systems? Was it not "at home" in Kant? If the answer is yes, then it may be possible to find something similar to a proper home, if not an absolute home, for the homeless concept of the Beautiful in our (modern) world. It might at least be possible to find a refuge where it could survive in a state of hibernation. Lukács does not exclude this possibility, but he does not make an attempt to explore it either. I will attempt it now.

I do not pretend to be a loner who undertakes an entirely new adventure. On the contrary, I am accompanied by those who in the last few decades have taken the demise of the concept of the beautiful more seriously than before. The spirit of our times which we sometimes call "postmodern" blames the homelessness of the Idea of Beauty on the radicalism of modernism, particularly on modernism's predilection for grand narratives. There must be a home for the concept of the Beautiful—here and now. There must be not just because philosophy cannot afford to lose one of its major characters, but also because value-orientative categories (such as "beautiful/ugly") are empirical universals and no single *universal* can remain unreflected in philosophy as long as there is philosophy.[33]

The latest major proposition to reintroduce the Concept of the Beautiful into contemporary philosophy can be found in Gadamer's essay on the relevance of the beautiful.[34] The title is polemical, even provocative. It speaks about the *relevance* (*Aktualitaet*) of the Beautiful. If something is relevant (has *Aktualitaet*) in our world, then it cannot be described as a "homeless" thing. Yet what is the relevance of the Beautiful now and where can we find its home?

I have suggested that the decline of the Concept of the Beautiful began when Beauty was attributed chiefly to works of art and the Concept of the Beautiful was allocated to the world of art as to its proper and perhaps sole habitat. The German expression, *die schöne Kunst* (beautiful art), stood for "high" art and has established its identity as something self-evident. We briefly discussed how this identification was self-defeating for the concept of the beautiful. But now, making a claim for the relevance of the beautiful, Gadamer takes up the game which was once lost. The first question he raises (in the first sentence of his essay) is: how can art be justified?[35] This is an old question, yet an ever appropriate one. If one begins one's plea for the relevance of the beautiful with the advocacy of the justification of works of art, one has the presentiment that the author is returning to a pre-modernist (albeit already modern) perspective in his understanding of the beautiful. Here one is not entirely mistaken.

Gadamer introduces certain new perspectives into the theory of art, or rather into philosophy of art. His distinction between art as play, as symbol, and as festival is not just a novel recommendation for classification; it also broadens the content of the category "art." However, the Concept of the Beautiful which had been so courageously and provocatively placed directly in the title and had been declared "relevant" still ends up as a loser.

We saw that the concept first appears in Gadamer in and through the interpretation of *die schöne Kunst* (why is art termed "beautiful?"). It lingers for a while only to disappear again as if it had never occupied any place. Gadamer does not relocate the concept of the beautiful, but merely emphasizes its relevance. The beautiful is relevant because (high) art (and the distinction between real art on the one hand and kitsch on the other hand) is relevant. Insofar as this is the case the aspect of negation warrants the authenticity of the Concept of the Beautiful (for example, kitsch is not beautiful, but Bach's music is).[36]

I would not say that Gadamer is "mistaken" in pushing away all the modernist objections against the inclusion of the loaded theory of beauty in philosophy of art. In philosophy nothing is outdated; one can return to old ideas and make them new. I have no objection to his cultural conservatism unless it blinds him to the degree in which he fails to notice any contrary phenomena. Moreover, I also believe that "high art" is one of the niches where homeless beauty can find a foster home. Still, it is not by sheer accident that Gadamer has somehow lost the concept of the beautiful in the middle of his study. One might say that high art can offer niches where beauty now dwells (that here the beautiful is indeed relevant). But this is not to say that *die schöne Kunst* as such is Beauty's chief or sole territory, because, so I believe, it is not, and many of the modernist's arguments still ring true.

In the middle part of his study, in the explication of traditional, particularly Greek, interpretations of the Beautiful, Gadamer makes a few very important remarks which are not carried through. He thus interprets *kalon*: "some things are worth seeing or are made to be seen."[37] Later on, he continues, "we learn that however unexpected our encounter with beauty may be, it gives us an assurance that the truth is not far off and inaccessible to us, but can be encountered in the disorder of reality with all its imperfections, evils, errors, extremes, and fateful confusions. The ontological function of the beautiful is to bridge the gap between ideal and real."[38] Beautifully said, except this is not being said about art, not about all kinds of art and not just about art. The message of Gadamer's remarks cannot be deciphered if we linger on in the realm of the philosophy of art. This leads us back to Lukács' concerns. Can the concept of the beautiful be rescued from the deadly embrace of the concept of art, of an already shaky concept of art? Or can the concept of art be rescued by being eased from the dead weight of the alien

concept of the beautiful? Is there still a place for beauty? Is there still a niche for the promise of happiness? These questions are not problems and since they are not problems, they cannot be solved. But one cannot avoid raising the questions if one listens carefully to the spirit of Gadamer and Lukács.

I also ask the reader to listen to a few voices, a few suggestions coming from men and women of our times who still put their stakes on the idea of the beautiful as an ontological wager. All of these different voices designate a place for beauty, for the concept of the beautiful in a post-metaphysical universe. They point at the abode where beauty still dwells: in friendship and love, in nature, art (but not the beautiful "form"), in the human character, and finally, in the sacred.

NOTES

1. I have discussed the category-pairs of value-orientation in detail in *Radical Philosophy* (Blackwell: Oxford, 1978).

2. In *The Origin of the Trauerspiel of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (Verso: London, 1977).

3. See Paul Veyne, *Did the Greeks Believe in Their Myths?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

4. This is no longer the case in the post-positivist philosophy of science, for example, in Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd enlarged ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970).

5. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of the Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller with an analysis of the text and forward by J. N. Findlay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979). See Part C/BB/c, "Spirit that is certain of itself. Morality," 364–409.

6. By "lived experience" I do not mean *Erlebnis* in the sense of *Erlebnisphilosophie*, but the experience of the not exclusively cognitive aspect or "parts" of the psyche, love among others.

7. Spinoza writes in *Ethics* IV, Proposition 59: "In the case of all actions to which we are determined by a passive emotion, we can be determined thereto by reason without that emotion." See Benedictus de Spinoza *Ethics*, translated by Andrew Boyle, and revised by G. H. R. Parkinson, with an introduction and notes by G. H. R. Parkinson (London: Dent, 1989).

8. There is in Pascal. I may add that the concept of the beautiful (as much as that of the sublime) in the eighteenth century had been prepared in the seventeenth century. In Platonism, whether orthodox or unorthodox, Beauty has always occupied a pride of place (as in Leibniz's vision of the universe). Yet this was in itself nothing radically new. Since I do not write the history of philosophy of beauty, I feel justified to give seventeenth century thinkers a summary treatment.

9. In a metaphor of Cusanus we feel the presence of God like the fragrance of the flower (although we do not see the flower, we feel, smell, its presence).

10. Agatha Christie, *And Then There Were None* (Macmillan: London, 2001 [1939]). Also published as *Ten Little Indians*.

11. Kant refers to such anthropological explanations in the "Analytics of the Beautiful" in the *Critique of Judgment*. They are empirical, and as all empirical explanations they are also fragile, contingent, and falsifiable. See Kant, *Critique of Judgment Including the First Introduction*, trans. with an introduction by Werner S. Pluhar, with a foreword by Mary J. Gregor (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), 43–96.

12. In his university lectures on Nietzsche ("Will to power as Art") Heidegger discusses six stages in the development of aesthetics. Actually, it is only from the time of the "Copernican

turn" towards the faculty of taste, that is, from the third stage in Heidegger's story, which we can speak about aesthetics in the modern sense at all. See Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche. Volume 1, The Will to Power as Art*, trans. from the German by David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991).

13. The hylomorphic (Aristotelian) concept of individual substance which, if we think in terms of *techné*, describes sculpture alone has been applied metaphorically on all branches of art—until our very days. See for example Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.

14. This explains why simultaneous to the aestheticization of art, thinkers began to protest against the emotional outpourings, frenzy, and ecstasy of the recipient affected by works of art. For example, Nietzsche, for whom there is no art without Dionysus, made vitriolic attacks against the emotional effects of Wagner's music on the audience (first of all, a female audience).

15. This was, according to Lukács and the Viennese art historian Alois Riegl.

16. This occurs in both Either/Or and in Stages on Life's Way. Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, Volume 1, trans. David S. Swenson and Lillian Marvin Swenson, with revisions and a foreword by Howard A. Johnson (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1959) and Volume 2, trans. Walter Lowrie, with revisions and a foreword by Howard A, Johnson (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972); *Stages in a Way of Life*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1945). See also Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety: A Simple Psychologically Orientating Deliberation on the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin*, ed. with an introduction and notes by Reidar Thomte, in collaboration with Albert B. Anderson (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980).

17. Lukács referred both to the unethical character and to the impossibility, the homogenized life as a work of art in his essay "Sören Kierkegaard and Regine Olssen," in *Soul and Form*.

18. Poetry preserves a more variegated concept of the beautiful than modern philosophy. The sacred and the beautiful were not divorced in poems. For example Paul Verlain chants in his *La mer est plus belle*: "La mer est plus belle—Que les cathedrales;—Nourrice fidele,—Berceuse de rales;—La mer sur qui prie—La Vierge Marie."

19. The most important things that Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Benjamin wrote about beauty are to be found in their early works.

20. Ingarden, *Ontology of the Work of Art* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1989 [1928]), 234.

21. Ingarden, *Ontology of the Work of Art*, 234.

22. Giovanni Gentile, *The Philosophy of Art*, trans. with an introduction by Giovanni Gullace (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972).

23. Croce, *The Aesthetic as a Science of Expression and of the Linguistic in General*, trans. by Colin Lyas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

24. Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art" in *Basic Writings* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977).

25. It is not by way of a stylistic error that I speak here of "strategies," for they are strategies.

26. May, *My Quest for Beauty* (New York: Saybrook, 1985), 20.

27. Ozenfant, *Foundations of Modern Art* (New York: Dover, 1957), 181–182.

28. Collingwood, *The Principles of Art* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1938), 38.

29. Collingwood, *The Principles of Art*, 41.

30. György Lukács, "A szépségeszme transzcendentális dialektikája" from Lukács György, *A heidelbergi müvészetfilozófia és esztetika A regény elmélete* (Budapest: Magvetö, 1975), 377–467.

31. Lukács, "A szépségeszme transzcendentális dialektikája," 466–467.

32. Lukács, "A szépségeszme transzcendentális dialektikája," 378.

33. In my book *Philosophy of History in Fragments*, I described philosophical systems as systematic and narrative worlds where "categories" play the role of dramatic characters. The Beautiful is certainly one such major character.

34. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays* (Cambridge: University Press, Cambridge, 1989).

35. Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, 3.
36. Bach is Gadamer's own example, see Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, 50.
37. Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, 13–14.
38. Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, 15.

Chapter Three

Autonomy of Art or the Dignity of the Artwork

It is a commonplace that the terms autonomy and dignity are central categories in modern moral philosophy. Although the terms are not introduced by Immanuel Kant, it was Kant who lent them a specific moral flavor. Autonomy was identified by him as acting with the guidance of pure practical reason, that is, with morality as universality. Dignity, however, was attributed to the single person as the individual carrier or embodiment of this universality, that is, humanity. While autonomy has been expanded from the moral field to include the field of art since the early twentieth century, the concept of dignity was pushed into the background. More precisely, the "idea" behind the concept of dignity was frequently taken up, especially by Walter Benjamin, and sometimes even identified—in my view falsely—with autonomy. Yet it has not been given special attention. In this essay I want to pay special attention to it. I want to show that whereas the concept of autonomy, which became blurred in its application to art, can hardly make a meaningful contribution to the understanding of contemporary artworks, the concept of the dignity of artwork can make such a contribution.

The concept of autonomy of art is blurred from the beginning, first, because it is sometimes applied to Art with a capital "A," and sometimes to single works of art. This looks the same, yet it is not. If one speaks of the autonomy of Art with a capital "A," one refers to a separate sphere in the same way that Max Weber does, that is, you make a case for the independence of this sphere from all the other spheres and you are obliged to enumerate, or point to the norms and rules that should be followed within this sphere in distinction to other spheres. It follows from this that works can claim to be artworks on the condition that they follow the norm and rules of the sphere. The sphere of Art needs to have common norms and rules, irre-

spective of to which branch or genre the work belongs, that is irrespective of whether it is a building, a painting, an opera, a song, a novel or a poem. The concept excludes and includes. Thus Art viewed as a sphere works as a normative concept although it is not ethical; far from it, since ethics is just another sphere, independent from the sphere of Art. Still, this interpretation of the concept of Art has a weak, or not so weak, aspect of moral normativity. Single artworks, and single artists, irrespective of the medium or genre in which they create, should live up to the norms of the aesthetic sphere, the sphere of Art. Otherwise these artworks are not worthy of recognition as artworks or of artists, nor are the artists who create them recognized as artists.

Let me offer some examples from Adorno's posthumous *Aesthetic Theory*, given that Adorno was perhaps the most ardent warrior of the concept of autonomy. At first he says that autonomy means that Art has shed all cultic functions. This remark refers, of course, to Art as such. Adorno also describes this development as emancipation, and again, of course, this description also refers to Art as such. He speaks also definitively about an autonomous empire (*autonomes Reich*). As an aside, the same development, emancipation, is also attributed to post-Renaissance Art by Georg Lukács in the last chapter of his *Die Eigenart des Aesthetischen* (1963). The history of Art, as Adorno also states, is the progress in autonomy. Yet, as both Adorno and Lukács state, without heterogeneity, there is no autonomy. For both of them, the realm of heterogeneity is so-called empirical life.

However, while discussing autonomy in other places Adorno refers (this time in polemics against Lukács), to the solipsistic character of works of art. The concept of solipsism, however, does not make sense if applied to the so-called "empire of Art"; it can refer only to the single works of art. While putting emphasis on "solipsism" Adorno defends the dignity of artworks, yet he does this by using the vocabulary of autonomy, for only this vocabulary allows for normative judgment. Had he remained with the dignity paradigm, Adorno could not have dismissed the works of Wagner, he could not have demanded from all works the "disenchantment of the world" (*Entzauberung der Welt*), although, if we take the concept in the Weberian understanding, as Adorno does, his claim annuls the autonomy of art rather than confirms it, for it describes the common feature of all spheres in modernity in a normative manner.

These were only random examples to stress the difference between two claims: that Art as such is autonomous, and that works of art are autonomous. Yet to obscure the difference made much sense, because by doing so Adorno and others could satisfy two different theoretical needs. The first need was to protect all artworks from cultic uses, be they political or religious, while the second was to formulate certain quite concrete norms that should determine whether a work is really a work of art, whether it is really autonomous or just

a work of entertainment, pornography or suchlike. This is, in itself, still a relevant approach. The problem becomes serious when all kinds of media, genres and works are judged by the same norms and standards. And this in fact is what happened in times of high modernism.

Many contemporary artists speak with resentment of the theorists of high modernism as well as their art institutions, curators of museums, orchestras, publishers and all those who were led or misled by their judgments. It is said that they have terrorized the artistic scene, excluded many deserving artists from recognition and included less-deserving ones, while being motivated by their ideological pre-judgments or even prejudices. There is some truth in these accusations. The reason for such a terror of taste was not simply just one or other pre-judgment or prejudice; it was the circumstance that the measure of judgment passed on single genres or works had to be dictated by the allegedly highest authority, namely the autonomy of art. There were times when a novel or, rather, a text in prose was not allowed to tell a story or to present a character, when a painting was not allowed to be figurative, when a piece of music had to avoid the common chord at all costs, when a statue was not allowed to have a center, and verse rhyme. Works by Bartók, Stravinsky, Lucien Freud and many others became suspect. True, music and literature could not fare as badly as the fine arts, given the greater say of public taste in their reception. Art theories could blame the corrupt taste of the culture-loving public, but their taste could not entirely be neglected.

The normative terror was, however, also practiced by artists, especially those associated with particular schools. There was a normative tendency towards universalization rooted precisely in the ideology of the autonomy of art. What was considered the latest and the best in one genre of creative arts also had to be accepted and practiced in others, irrespective of the circumstances, or whether these practices were sympathetic towards other media. For example, minimalism has worked quite well in painting, and also to a lesser degree in music. However, minimalist literary production was meager and unpersuasive, even though some writers tried to follow this "trend" because it was supposed to be the trend in Art.

One could remark that similar tendencies can also be observed today. For example, painting is not on display at the "documenta" exhibition of modern and contemporary art in Kassel, Germany, and only irregularly at the Venice Biennale contemporary art exhibition. Whatever our explanation may be, however, no one could make us believe that painting, any kind of painting, is excluded from the art world nowadays because it is regarded as old-fashioned, uninteresting or of low value. In fact galleries continue to hold exhibitions of paintings of all kinds, and the Prague Biennale of 2005 centered almost exclusively on paintings: paintings of any sort.

The central question raised by modernism—to decide what art as such is—has lost its relevance and motivating power in the contemporary world of

artworks. There is no realm of art nowadays, just a realm of separate and different works of art. It occurs to no one to superimpose one and the same criterion on all of the works of art in order to judge them, to determine whether they belong or do not belong to the world of art. There are just single works created in traditional and untraditional genres, in traditional and non-traditional media, multimedia, with sacred or profane topics and gestures, with strong political messages or without any reference to the empirical world. They can be populist and homeless, stabile or mobile. Yet, as Adorno once said, they are like monads, although not necessarily windowless ones, even if several monads can make up a common and single compound.

What makes these works artworks if there is no realm called Art with common standards? This old question can be reformulated, perhaps through one of the interpretations of Marcel Duchamp's famous *Fountain*, in the following way: it is our regard that makes a work an artwork—the contemplative regard. The thing that one contemplates is no longer the thing that was used in an everyday way, if it ever was. The toilet bowl in the museum is on display: one cannot use it; one can only contemplate it. Thus, it is not a toilet bowl but a work of art. This is not to say that it is a good work of art. There are good and bad works of art, just as there are good and bad constitutions. There are innovative and non-innovative works of art just as there are innovative and non-innovative scientific propositions or discoveries.

What distinguishes artworks from all other works or institutions is their individuality. On this count Adorno said something important when speaking of the solipsism of artworks in *Aesthetic Theory*. Works of art are persons. However, it is not the idea or the norm of Art in general that decides whether or not they are persons. The moment the toilet bowl became a "fountain" for an exhibition it became an artwork and as such a person. Perhaps it never occurred to us, since we have taken it for granted, that when we look at things used in an ancient culture, for example, a comb from ancient Egypt or an Indian garment from pre-Columbian Mexico, we see them as artworks if displayed in an exhibition or a museum. We see them as beautiful, although perhaps not all to the same extent. In the eyes of the beholder, for us, they are artworks. Single artworks, all of them singular, all of them are persons in their own right. Of course, we need to train our eyes in order to distinguish one from the other. If one practices this kind of discernment one begins to see the singularity of each artwork, and grasp their spirit. In his wonderful study "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man," Walter Benjamin tells us that all things are endowed with spirit, yet they are mute, they cannot speak. Works of art, single works of art, the persons, can speak. They can address us; we need only to look, read and listen.

Let me return to Kant. The work of art, the single work of art is not just a thing, it is also a person, it is has a soul. Kant argues that to respect the dignity of a person, she should not be used as a mere means, but is an end in

itself. If a work of art is also a person, if it is ensouled, then the dignity of a work of art can be described in the following way. The work of art is a thing that cannot be used as mere means, for it is always also used as an end in itself. The difference, the essential difference between the dignity of a person and that of the artwork is clear if one pays attention to the formulations. The recognition or the acknowledgment of the dignity of a person is a "should," an imperative. It has a moral character. In contrast, the formulation about the recognition of the dignity of the artwork has no moral connotations. It is just the definition of artwork, it tells you what a single artwork is. No thing is an artwork that is just used. Yet things of use can also be artworks if they are not only things of use but are also imbued by their spirit that makes them persons and as such we contemplate them. Contemplation includes at least the temporary and repeatable suspension of use. "Suspension" of use is mostly entirely spontaneous. In an exhibition space we are all eyes; in a concert hall we are all ears; if we read a novel or a poem we do not want to be disturbed by anything that might divert our attention. We spontaneously pay tribute to the dignity of an artwork for it is only by paying this tribute that we can get pleasure from that very work. This is a type of pleasure that is essentially different from the pleasure of use. To paraphrase Kant, it is disinterested pleasure.

I suggested at the beginning of this chapter that the dignity of artworks is as modern a concept as the autonomy of art. It goes back perhaps to the European Renaissance. It has been suggested many times that the individuality of artworks emerged simultaneously with modern personal individuality. Kant could not suggest that a person should never serve us as a mere means without also saying that everyone is born free. Something similar could be said about the personality of the artwork. The so-called emancipation is art is nothing more than the provision of the equal opportunity of artworks in proportion to their personality. When Adorno distinguishes entertainment and pornography from artworks he applies a similar standard.

Let us see what is at stake here.

The dignity of humankind, of persons, is somehow related to the dignity of artwork. It could be said that artworks no longer exist because where there is no human dignity, there is no artwork in the modern understanding of art as we have known it since the fourteenth century, when what we know as Europe was born. If the dignity of works of art does not make sense after the demise of high modernism, which is sometimes erroneously called postmodernism, then there is little hope to maintain the standards concerning the dignity of humankind. These standards are not applied, yet they are upheld. And although the respect due to the dignity of artwork is hardly an imperative, it still allows a better, or at least easier, insight into ourselves.

Apart from the invention of the modern concept of human dignity, Europe also provided a context for the development of cosmopolitanism. As such,

artworks also became cosmopolitan. While it is popular to speak of culture wars or the clash of cultures or civilizations, nothing like a culture war has made its appearance in the world of arts. Just the opposite occurred. Individual visions, habitual or new technologies emerged and cultural traditions merged. The contemporary art world is a shared world populated by individual works. Japanese composers are on the repertoire of American orchestras; Indonesian, Chinese, Iranian, Indian and European paintings and installations can be seen beside one another in museums all over the world. All the works stand on their own, as individuals, and are respected according to their dignity. The art world is also cosmopolitan in the cases of novels and poetry, although language barriers make the recognition more difficult than in other arts.

I want to make my own conception clear. Nowadays we respect the dignity of artworks, that is, we can make the distinction between artworks and non-artworks on almost the same and sometimes the same grounds that our forebears have done since the Renaissance.

In what follows, and to initiate a debate, I shall scrutinize the arguments or rather the moods of two different kinds of cultural criticism, abstracting from their internal hues, in order to make my point. Both kinds of criticism are indebted to negative histories or grand narratives of modernity in which modern culture is seen to have become a desert.

The first kind of cultural criticism expresses serious doubts as to whether one is entitled to speak of the dignity of artwork at all since the commodification of art has stripped works of their dignity. Whatever is bought and sold as a thing is nothing but a thing. Indeed, there can be some doubt whether the autonomy paradigm can be upheld if non-personal (market) dependency is substituted for personal dependency. According to some it can, and according to others it cannot. Yet, if one speaks about the dignity of the artwork the issue of commodification loses all its relevance, even in a strict Marxian sense because even if works of art are bought and sold their value cannot be identical with the number of working hours spent in their production. The exchange value of a work of art does not depend on its "labor-time," but on its internal spirit or worth, or at least the internal spirit and worth attributed to it, rightly or wrongly, by the recipients.

Since arts are different, so is their relation to the market. The most problematic case is that of painting. Paintings are indeed bought as investments, yet rarely only as an investment. Normally the buyer also has an artistic taste, and buys one painting instead of another not just because of its market value, but also because she enjoys looking at it, she loves it. There might also be cases where, as an investment, an artwork is only used as a means and not, simultaneously, an end in itself. For example, the buyer keeps the painting in a bank vault where no one has access to it in order to look at it. In this case, according to my definition, the work ceases to be a work of art, or at least its

being a work of art is suspended. It is suspended, its spirit is sleeping, up to the moment, if there will be such a moment, when someone gets the opportunity to look at it and contemplate it. Nothing similar can, however, happen with works in other kinds of art, such as architecture, music or poetry.

Another argument against the "dignity" thesis is connected to the possibility of mechanical reproduction. Since the famous essay by Walter Benjamin, mechanical reproduction has expanded in scope and importance beyond expectation. Fine arts, music and literature are mechanically reproduced in several and different ways. Even mechanical reproductions are mechanically reproduced (for example, a postcard of a photograph of a painting). However, I want to discuss mechanical reproduction from one particular viewpoint: whether it destroys the dignity of an artwork or makes it obsolete.

In the case of literature new ways of mechanical reproduction do not introduce additional problems since those works have been mechanically reproduced for a long time, from Gutenberg's printing press onwards. This is also the case with music scores, as well as with prints. The problem starts with fine arts in general and becomes seemingly more striking in the case of music—not the reproduction of musical scores, but music for listening. Does the reproduction of a work of art in the area of fine arts share the dignity of the "original," and does its practically infinite reproduction destroy this dignity? According to the concept of artwork developed here, the work is like a person, imbued with spirit. Let me ask, then, whether taking a thousand photographs of a person destroys the personality or the dignity of the person. There is always an "original," in Aristotelian terminology, an "arche," from which all the copies result, and that, in the second meaning or sense of this word rules over all the reproductions. Moreover, the more an original is reproduced, the more its dignity is reconfirmed, for all mechanical reproductions live on borrowed spirit. Their spirit is ruled by the original.

Mostly, though, mechanical reproductions of an artwork in fine arts are not artworks in their own right. To avoid misunderstanding: photography cannot be termed mechanical reproduction. Thus a photograph of an artwork, for example, of a church, can be as much a work of art imbued with its own spirit as a painting of the same church. But what about the postcard? Mechanical reproduction is reproduction without reinterpretation. Manual reproduction can be bad, but can never be void of interpretation. The postcard of the photograph of the church is void of interpretation. One can use it as mere means or throw it away. Yet, as I hinted above, even a mechanical reproduction can have a borrowed spirit. The moment one puts a postcard of a church on one's bookshelf, looks at it, contemplates it, would never throw it into the bin, then this mechanically reproduced thing gets imbued with the spirit borrowed from the church as presented by the photographer through the eye of the beholder.

And what about music? Music is in the score, but it lives in the performance, that is in the performative art. Nowadays, very few people can hear the music just by reading the score. The performance is interpretation, but contrary to the example of the photograph taken of a church, it is auto-interpretation rather than hetero-interpretation. The score is the artwork, it is an end in itself and interpretation is not just a means as it shares the personality of the work. Since there are as many interpretations of a work as there are musicians who play it or occasions when it is played, every interpretation that is an auto-interpretation is artwork in its own right. A recording is the reproduction of one performance. One can listen to it a thousand times and one will hear the same interpretation. Of course, one can listen to several recordings with different performances of the same work. The question is, is my recording of Beethoven's *Piano Sonata Number 31 in A flat major, Opus 110*, played by Glenn Gould, which has been reproduced many thousand times, an artwork or not? Do we also use it as an end in itself and not just a means?

This is not the same question as the one we asked in the case of the postcard with the photograph of a church, and it cannot be asked with reference to a film of a performance of a Shakespeare tragedy in London. A recording, as the mechanical reproduction of an auto-interpretation, has more in common with a photograph (an interpretation) taken from a painting, than with a postcard. One could say that a work of art on CD is a work of art. But has it individual personality? How can a personality exist in many thousands of copies as it exists in many, many performances? The personality is in the score. As every performance, that is, every interpretation shares the score, so does every copy of the same performance.

I dwelt on mechanical reproduction to show two things simultaneously. First, that no mechanical reproduction hurts the dignity of the artwork and that one can easily identify the artwork among its infinite copies, and secondly, that arts are different, and mechanical reproduction plays a different role, raises different problems in each of them. For example, there are essential differences in the cases of reproduction between autographic and allographic arts for the simple reason that autograph arts have a high market value only if they are "original." This brings us back to the issue of commodification, and to the diminished market value of mechanically reproduced works. One needs to mention that there are arts that in principle cannot be mechanically reproduced, for example, buildings of creative architecture. The panel houses prepared in house factories are not works of art; nor are they reproductions of artworks. They have no personality, no dignity; they are just for use.

In addition to this type of general cultural criticism, a type of partial cultural criticism developed in the last quarter of the twentieth century. I have in mind essayists and critics who held high modernism in great—almost religious—esteem, and who confronted "postmodernism" as the expulsion of

fine arts from the artistic paradise. As I have already mentioned, I do not share their view and taste. Let me put my cards on the table. In my view the past few decades have seen an unparalleled flourishing of fine arts, not only in its traditional branches such as architecture, sculpture and painting, but also in is less traditional and new branches such as photography, installation and video arts. Likewise in music significant, remarkable and great compositions have been created, using traditional and non-traditional instruments in all musical genres, opera included. I do not see, however, similar creative output in the world of words without music. Good, sometimes very good novels have been written; new authors have made their appearance. However, there are limits in all genres of art, and perhaps the genres of the novel and poetry tried to cross the limits in times of later high modernism, but they now need to withdraw within limits. A novel is both art and entertainment. If it bores even intelligent and patient readers it is not a novel; if it only entertains, it is not art. Maybe the only medium where one can speak about decline is the cinema. It is supposed to be, just like the novel, entertaining and art at once, like the films of Chaplin or even the Italian and French "alienation" films of the 1960s. Nowadays, art films are placed in museums rather than played in movie theatres.

To avoid misunderstanding: as there is bad art there are also good, even excellent works of entertainment. And we need both good art and good entertainment. And sometimes one cannot tell one from another. As Ernst Gombrich wittily said, no single works satisfies entirely the criteria of a genre. Interestingly, people, especially the young, have developed a strong taste towards the newest tendencies in contemporary fine arts, whereas they show less enthusiasm for contemporary serious music. Contemporary art galleries and museums of contemporary art—very new types of museums—are full, yet concerts with only contemporary composers on the program leave the concert hall half empty. The explanation may be that the differentiation between so-called serious and entertaining genres, so obvious in music, is absent in fine arts. There used to be kitsch in both, yet whereas pop art soon ended up in galleries and museums, pop music took its place in stadiums and clubs entirely dependent on the performer and the delivery. Some of these performers are genuine artists, others just skilful singers; again others are bad clowns (circus clowns can be great artists!). Yet all of them must be so-called cult figures in order to attract an enthusiastic following. What they perform is rarely a work of art because the work is dependent on the performer and has no independence, no worth of its own. In this case, the human person carries the work rather than the work carrying the person, the performer and thus the performance.

Obviously the "artist" and the "creator of an artwork" are not identical, for the first is a broader category. An opera diva, a conductor and a violinist can be artists of the highest quality, and so can a jazz musician or a chanson

singer. I also want to mention as a side remark that cult figures also used to play a role in the fine art scene. Let me mention only Jackson Pollock, Andy Warhol and Joseph Beuys. These days, however, the celebrities of fine arts and literature are no longer cult figures. They do not need to be alcoholics, mad, cross-sexual, eccentrics or self-destructive in order to be lionized by the crowd, especially the crowd of young men and women. They can say, with Daniel Libeskind, that art is optimistic. However, things have not really changed in the case of popular music.

Even if not all artists create artworks, although they participate in their spirit through auto-interpretation, all artworks are created by artists. This I need to emphasize. It is a grave misunderstanding to think that today everything qualifies as a work of art, that no skill, craftsmanship, enthusiasm, ideas or even artistic high ambitions are needed to create them. It is a total misconception to think that artists of today are greedier, that they flatter the audience, that they are more subservient to their patrons, less involved in their work or suffer less in creating works of art. There are different artists with different characters. There are more or less talented artists just as there always have been; some are more vain than others, some greedier, some less so.

However, what matters is not their greed, vanity, asceticism nor humility, but their work and their relation to their work. Let me quote randomly confessions of artists about their own art. Paul McCartney: “I became more interested in mimicry, appropriation, fiction, representation, and questioning meaning.” Mike Kelley: “I desire to live forever. This is what art is all about.” Tony Oursler: “I work from a conceptual base, but when art is successful it’s magic. You can try to explain it but if you could explain it wouldn’t be magic. It’s what artists are doing there in the studio, struggling to make the impossible happen.” Maurizio Catellan (an artist with a political agenda): “To be defeated, power must be approached, re-appropriated and endlessly replicated.” Gary Hume: “I want to paint something that’s gorgeous, something that’s perfect, so that it’s full of sadness.” Jeff Wall: “A picture is something that makes invisible it’s before and after.” I quoted visual artists, because they are the ones mostly accused with vanity, play and greed.

Even if acknowledging the “goodwill” and honesty of the artists, cultural critics can still maintain that the works that these artists create is inferior in principle to what went before. They sometime blame the times instead of the artists. I used the term “honesty” in the spirit of Quentin Bell’s book *Bad Art*. Bell writes that there is an inward censor in the artist’s heart that asks her the question “Are you being honest?” Obviously only honest artists can create works of dignity, yet not all works created by honest artists, not all kinds of works of dignity, are good artworks, just as not all persons have a character, since there are insignificant persons without substance. Yet they are still

persons and should not be used as mere means. Bad art is like a characterless person, but it still remains art.

We are under the wrong impression that in earlier times there was no bad art. Of course there was, only we do not see it in museums, nor hear it in concert halls. Nor is it staged in the theater or the opera houses. Contemporary arts, as long as they hit the standard of craftsmanship, mostly remain unselected. Moreover, although there is still serious art criticism that assesses the quality of works with expertise, there are not the art critics today who could enjoy the authority (the often well-used and often misused authority) of art critics in times of high modernism. Today's art critics offer a yardstick rather than a verdict and do not put a heavy strain on the process of selection.

The accusations against contemporary arts are manifold. Yet they can perhaps be summed up in the following way, using my own terminology even if I disagree with them: there is no dignity in contemporary artworks, at least in some popular genres such as installations or video work, or in the music opuses that incorporate popular music, for example, jazz. They make too many concessions to the public or in satisfying trustees when the work is commissioned.

The cultural critics I have in mind (who include most members of the gallery-visiting middle classes, as well as some members of concertgoing middle classes) define the "dignity of the artwork" in substantive terms. This is exactly what I avoided with my formal (Kantian) definition. Let me mention a few substantive qualifications of the dignity of an artwork: serious artwork cannot include jazz quotations; a serious opera work cannot be composed on a libretto dealing with contemporary political events such as Nixon in China; installations are not artworks but jokes, and bad jokes at that; only a fake drive for creating sensation makes buildings look like statues; "interesting" is not an aesthetic category. Taking my definition, though, all these objections are of no importance. There is, however, one objection that may affect my formal definition, and this refers to film music or commissioned works for certain occasions (such as the Olympic Games). However, being commissioned does not influence the character of a work. The fresco of the Sistine Chapel was commissioned, as was Philip Glass's commissioned work, *Orion*. In fact, most serious musical works are commissioned by orchestras, music schools and ensembles. Although this particular work by Glass (whose early compositions, operas and even later symphonies I highly appreciate) is too obviously politically correct, this is not the point. That a work should not be political or should be without any religious or political references is a substantive definition that belongs to the heritage of the autonomy paradigm.

To repeat, when speaking of the definition or rather the identification of a work of art from the position of the spirit of Kant's categorical imperative—and just as in the case for a person—the work of art is an end in itself.

However, it is not exclusively an end in itself. Works with political (as in the case of "action direct") or religious agendas are typical in contemporary art; these make them no less dignified, unless a work serves only as a means for political persuasion.

Let me address those arguments that can be taken seriously. True enough, the first reaction to some contemporary artworks, especially in fine arts, as well as music or literature might be the exclamation: "How interesting!" Yet "interesting" is in fact not an aesthetic category. However, it does not follow that a work that is found "interesting" cannot be a work of art. Many things can be interesting, such as entertainment, food and gossip, as well as human characters and works of art. If the human-made "interesting thing" is not used, consumed, but contemplated, if one tries to make out its essence, its meaning, or tries to translate its magic into ordinary prose without success, then it is an artwork. In addition, what we found "interesting" at the first encounter no longer remains simply "interesting" after we have encountered the same work or style several times. Minimalist music might have hit the listener as interesting at first, but after they have become familiar with the minimalist language, sheer aesthetic pleasure can take the place of the impression "How interesting!"

True enough, contemporary works such as installations and video art confront us with so-called aesthetic problems, which were not entirely unknown before now, although rarely encountered in a museum or gallery. These works cannot be taken in by the eye all at once. In this respect they lose their "holistic" character, termed in traditional aesthetics as "totality," or in high modernist aesthetics also as "self-reference." The situation was always like this in architecture, as well as in all "temporal" genres such as music. But here we speak about contemporary galleries. One can surely give a traditional aesthetic name to this phenomenon, such as "sublimity," referring to Kant's concept of the sublime or to Lyotard's insistence that modern art is not about the beautiful but the sublime. I do not think that naming helps much. I only remark parenthetically that sensual beauty is not alien in contemporary art, especially if we look to photography and see, for example, Andreas Gursky's magic photographs or various works by Cindy Sherman. Moreover, the contrast between sublimity and beauty, especially in video art or in the case of installations, does not reflect experience, at least not mine. In video art one encounters sometimes-unparalleled beauty, perfect abstract paintings or landscapes.

To be sure, video art is difficult and, perhaps, installation the most difficult among contemporary art forms. Along with the new media goes the temptation to realize all ideas and experiment with all conceptions. This is why there are, indeed, many mediocre video artworks and many bad installations. There is a lot of bad art, yet it is art all the same. But when there is success—to quote Oursler again—it is magic. The difficulty with the new art

media lies in dealing with heterogeneity so as to create something with a unifying conception, with an idea and with a meaning.

As far as I see, those installations I judge as significant (and I have not seen that many significant installations), use an interpretandum as a kind of quotation. Yet, strictly speaking, this is not a quotation because the interpretandum for the installation is not a work done in the medium of the installation. It has been pointed out several times that quotations play a significant role in contemporary art. One speaks about exploitation of the old masters, about the pillaging of their works. Exploitation and pillaging, though, are misnomers, because if one appropriates certain ideas from the ancient masters one does not exploit them. On the contrary, one reconfirms their grandeur, and recognizes their ipseity. The same occurs in cases of parody. Students perform parodies of teachers with personality and, similarly, painters and composers also parody works with personality. In his playful and appealing work *Arachnophobia* the young composer Kenji Bunch plays tribute to jazz while inserting jazz quotations into the fabric of his composition. As is well known, music sometimes quotes popular themes and kitsch. However, the issue at stake in the composition is not that they quote them, but the way in which they make use of them, which is mostly ironically. Painters have also had favorite works of artists to pillage for quotation. Caravaggio, for example, is one of the favorites if we think of Fernando Bottero or of Tibor Csernus. But one should not think that pillaging is the main preoccupation of painters and composers. It has become less and less frequent. Great contemporary composers such as Pierre Boulez, György Ligeti, Sofia Gubaidulina, Arvo Pärt, Toru Takemitsu or György Kurtág do not pillage, and most visual artists have never done so, yet almost all of them are influenced by some of their high modernist predecessors.

But let me return to the so-called aesthetic problems of installation and video screening. Cultural critics have a point. If an installation moves from one gallery or museum to another it needs to be shipped in bits and pieces; it is not a whole anymore, that is, it ceases to be an artwork. And this is not the same thing as repainting a part of a painting, cheating with photography, or moving a statue from the square into a museum for safekeeping. Yet even a dead person should be treated with respect, and the installation in question can be resurrected. Let me refer to an installation by Oursler, to whom I have already referred. It is a translation of *The Studio*, a painting by Courbet, into the language of installation. I shall call this move "hetero-interpretation" to distinguish it from auto-interpretation, which is the case if someone quotes or interprets a work in the same medium. For example, Courbet's *The Studio* has already been reinterpreted by the contemporary painter Bruno Civitico in his *Allegory of the Senses*, an auto-interpretation of representative character. In Courbet's painting the painter himself and his model, a nude, are in the middle, surrounded by famous persons. In the installation a video screening

is in the middle without a strict distinction between the painter and the models, whereas the center is surrounded by contemporary works of art, some done by others, some by Oursler himself in his own style or by him as mimicry of the styles of others. Not all the mini-installations are of equal beauty or even interest, yet this could also be said about Courbet's portraits in the "original" picture.

Hetero-interpretation in fine arts (as also in literature and music) is in fact very traditional, beginning with the visual retelling of biblical stories and myths and continuing with the reinterpreting of other works into another medium. What is not traditional here is the medium to which the interpretandum is translated. Philosophical conceptions are rarely reinterpreted into the medium of art, although it occurred, for example, with Richard's Strauss's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. The new artworks, such as installation and video art, are not just extremely suitable for translating philosophical concepts into their medium, but they somehow even call out for this kind of translation. Not all of those attempts are, in my mind, successful. For example, if in a video presentation, which can also be a display of an installation, someone talks and, thus, the idea is expressed directly or indirectly in speech, in the text spoken, in the relation of picture and speech, the work becomes less impressive. This may be just the expression of my personal taste and of my limited experience, but I think it superior if one hears only voices, and perhaps some music, and the image itself talks to us. The philosophical ideas that are spoken in the new art are usually inferior to those presented for the eye.

Let me briefly mention about an astonishingly beautiful work full of wisdom and rich in meaning as one of the prototypes of the successful reinterpretation of a philosophical concept in video art. I refer to the work *The Way Things Go* by the Swiss artists Peter Fischli and David Weiss. The philosophical problem of the "chain of causality" is presented on the screen. Those who meditate on this screen will come to see (not know, but see!) that the chain of causality is the chain of mere contingencies, that there is no first mover nor is there a final cause. One thing hits another thing, which again hits something else and so on until everything that occurs is finally determined. Yet nothing means anything. The moving things are not specific, such as a glass, a ball, or a jug of milk, yet the movement of the things, their "fate" keeps us in suspense. The milk gets spilled, the water runs, fire breaks out, yet nothing is final. And the colors! The shades of red, of blue and of white are pure sensual delight. They are not just there, they also happen, as discussed by Aristotle or Wittgenstein. It is hard to resist the wish to return, to look at it again and again, as is normally the case if confronted with such a work of art, as is also the case of the video-screening compositions by Bill Viola. In his works the religious ideas are also philosophical ones, for his creation (birth), deluge and redemption are so strongly reinterpreted, staged

in a mystical present, that it is the new and very unique vision, as too its sensual delight in beauty, that one will never forget. The usual contrast between the beautiful and the sublime hardly works in these modern artworks.

I now want to turn from my defense of contemporary art to the main theoretical or rather aesthetic agenda. My starting point was that the autonomy of art was not a mistaken idea. However, I also noted that the indecision about whether art as such should be autonomous, or that autonomy should apply to single works of art caused great confusion. In contrast to the concept of autonomy I suggested that another Kantian category, that of dignity better helps us to orient ourselves in the world of arts than the category of autonomy, provided that we do not apply it in a normative, but in a descriptive manner.

Autonomy of art served as a battle cry to preserve some normative principles of judgment, with the help of which one could defend high modernism against the onslaught of popular culture: defend it from being affected or spoiled and destroyed by vulgar taste, by compromise and by the lures of entertainment. The defensive task has been performed, and is no longer needed. Kitsch and evergreen melodies are gone, as is the "bourgeois" (or social realist) taste that favored even the mediocre works of the nineteenth century against the best works of high modernism. Replacing the slogan of "autonomy of art" with the "dignity of artwork" hurts neither Wozzeck, Moses and Aaron, Kasimir Malevitch nor Kandinsky. They are already classics and the dignity of this work is highly respected, and they can share this dignity, which is no longer a privilege, with Bartók and Stravinsky, with surrealists, with Francis Bacon and Frank Gehry.

Moreover, while the "autonomy of art" promoted high modernism, other aesthetic concepts also started to play a normative role in aesthetic theories. I am referring specifically to the concept of self-reference and the prohibition against representation. Although these aesthetic categories or rather aesthetic norms are coeval with the quest for autonomy, they in fact survived the latter, and made themselves comfortable with so-called "postmodern" theories. However, the contemporary art world does not follow these prescriptions. More precisely, some artists do follow them while others do not, and it would be very hard to make evaluative judgments about their work on such slippery ground.

Let us look at the category of self-reference. It can mean very different things. For example, in the spirit of the traditional requirement of holism, perfection and completion one could say that in a work of art everything needs to be related to everything else; nothing, that is, not a brushstroke, no musical note, no sentence, can stay there in vain. One could also say that an artwork needs to be understood on its own. It should not refer to anything

outside the work. There is, in fact, nothing outside. The "monad" of the artwork has no windows.

One can understand these meanings in a weak or in a strong sense. If one understands "self-reference" in a weak sense one will say that, of course, there are several things outside the work that are absorbed by it, such as social or very personal experiences, or the unconscious or conscious soul, that the work may express. Yet one does not need to know what is expressed by a work of art in order to be touched by, and to contemplate it. Moreover, it is quite undetermined what has inspired the artists. Even self-interpretations need to be taken with a grain of skepticism. If one relies on this weak interpretation one can agree that most works of art can be understood "out of themselves," irrespective of their fuel, which is taken from "outside." However, one can add, it does not harm the work of art if the artist makes explicit how and by what the work has been inspired "from the outside" and is cognizant of this outside referent. The strong interpretation of self-reference, however, disallows the inclusion of any outside reference in the appreciation, understanding, of a work.

That a work should be a world of its own without qualification, a world one steps into, and that one can step out of, is attractive, however. Perhaps, when Libeskind says that all buildings should tell their own stories, he means something like this. Yet one has to first define what this world could mean. For example, the Dalí Museum in the north of Spain, a museum that shows only surrealistic paintings and other artifacts, is itself surrealistic. What is the world here: the whole museum, the single paintings, the arrangement? This is, of course, not a modern phenomenon. One can say similar things about several churches. But when Romanesque or even Baroque churches were built no one experimented with the idea of self-reference, because, let us admit, using Benjamin's category, self-reference is a post-auratic concept. Nothing that is sacred can be interpreted in the strong meaning of self-reference. What is now called "postmodern" includes the tendency of re-enchantment and as a result does not exclude an open admittance of inspiration from the "outside," nor the intention of perlocutionary effects, for example in the case of a political poster or a religious hymn.

The issue of representation is connected with that of reference, yet it is not identical with the latter. In the case of self-reference the question about objective or subjective conditions or the effect of the artworks cannot be raised; in the case of representation the "What about?" question is excluded. Moreover, it is not excluded as a question, for the answer is present already: a work of art is about nothing except the work of art itself. Painters do not paint a pipe or a landscape or a portrait of a friend, they just paint a painting. Arthur Koestler wittily unmasked the self-delusion behind the "non-representation" paradigm. What does it mean that the painter just paints a painting, and not a house, a portrait or even a square in white? If you want to get

rid of representation, you cannot say that the painter just paints a painting, for when you say so, you are already referring to representation. If you want to get rid of representation you cannot speak of painters or of paintings, but of a person who puts brush strokes on a surface. When you say "painting" you also say representation, and it can be a representation of anything.

A painting is also "about" something. I think that this is true about all kinds of art. Yet if one accepts my definition of artwork as an ensouled thing that is not used as means only but also as an end in itself, then it becomes irrelevant whether one says that an artwork is about something or denies this. Perhaps not quite. For a few brushstrokes on a solid surface in itself does not deserve to be treated as an end in itself. It must be a painting, and thus about something. This does not mean, however, that one has to return to the traditional concept of reference, where veracity was identified with likeness, except for music and architecture.

Since the concept of the dignity of artworks in contrast to that of autonomy is not aesthetically normative, not even in a weak sense, it does not offer a criterion for distinguishing good and bad works. It does not provide an answer concerning the genesis of works of art; nor does it answer the question of the young Lukács in his so-called 1912–14 "Heidelberg Aesthetics": "works of art exist. How are they possible?"

For me the statement "works of art exist" is what matters, not the question concerning their possibility. The worth of works of art is in their existence. All kinds of aesthetic judgments presuppose this worth. What I have tried to do is write about the worth of works of art that rests on their very existence, on the existence of each and all of them. This is a worth that cannot be explained or interpreted, only pointed to. This was a minimalist approach. For me this minimum is also the maximum. The opposites, perhaps, coincide.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adorno, T. W. *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. C. Lenhardt, ed. G. Adorno and R. Tiedemann. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984.

Bell, Q. *Bad Art*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1989.

Benjamin, Walter. "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man," in Walter Benjamin *Selected Writings*, Volume 1, 1913–1926, ed. M. Bullock and M. W. Jennings. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008, 62–74.

Gombrich, E. H. *The Story of Art*. London: Phaidon, 1967.

Heller, Agnes. "The Unknown Masterpiece," in *The Grandeur and Twilight of Radical Universalism*, ed. A. Heller and F. Feher. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1991, 211–246.

Kant, Immanuel. *The Critique of Judgment*, W. S. Pluhar (trans. and introd.). Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1987.

Lukács, György. *Die Eigenart des Aesthetischen*. Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1963.

Lukács, György. "Heidelberger Philosophie de Kunst (1912–1914)," in *Georg Lukács Werke*, vol. 16, Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1974. Translation by Agnes Heller.

Lyotard, Jean-François. *Lessons of the Analytic of the Sublime*, trans. E. Rottenberg. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994.

Chapter Four

The Role of Emotions in the Reception of Artworks

Emotions, as feelings in general, were regarded as always suspect in the metaphysical tradition from Plato to Kant. Like every thing in motion, transient and contingent, emotions, too, had to be overcome by things eternal, immortal, or necessary. Although emotions could become objects of philosophical inquiry, they could become so only in relation to mere opinions. If one casts only a cursory glance on the oeuvre of Aristotle, one will immediately perceive the difference in his the treatment of emotions and feelings in *Ethics or Metaphysics*, on the one hand, and his *Rhetoric*, on the other. Something similar can be noticed in Kant's *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*.

There is, however, one exception from the general rule, which is the phenomenon we have since termed "art." In his *Poetics* Aristotle secures a pride of place for tragedy and its reception right beside philosophy. In *The Critique of Judgment* Kant relates the faculty of pleasure/displeasure to *a priori* reflective judgment, and it is as such inserted as an equal player into the system. It is presupposed, although not always spelled out, that the delight experienced by the sight of beauty, including the beauty of art, is somehow miraculously exempt from the low and blameworthy character of sensuality and feelings. While in the quest for truth in the world of knowledge, as well as in the realm of practical and pragmatic action, goodness and even usefulness, feelings play allegedly, at least, a problematic part and should be as a result subjected to the governance of spirit or reason. However, in the delight taken at the reception of works of art and beauty, just the opposite is the case. Emotions and feelings elicited in works of art make it possible to overcome our particularity, contingency and limitedness, and lets us turn towards the Eternal, the Highest. I must add that the subtle emotions, as they

appear in, or are constituted by the presence of artworks, are attributed from Aristotle to Kant solely to the recipient. The attitude of the recipient is contemplative, immobile, all ears and eyes, above and beyond pragmatic and practical ends, actions and choices. It is only in the state of pure reception that sensuality can become the trigger towards the development of higher, subtler and more spiritual emotions.

It happened fairly late in the nineteenth century that the role of feelings and emotions also became systematically addressed in the process of creativity. Surely, there were forerunners such as Plato's remarks on poetic madness, or Ficino's interpretation of the holiness of the possessed poet. Yet the increasing domination of non-mystical rationalism marginalized the early approaches. At the time when the relation of emotions and creativity became systematically scrutinized, it turned out that there was something in our mental or psychological make-up that was crucial in both reception and creation, and this was imagination, fantasy.

I need to confess in advance that I will not even try to offer an answer to the question of the relation between emotional life and creativity, for at least one reason. The question cannot be answered in a general philosophical theory, given that the interplay includes psychological considerations, and these are differently orchestrated in the different schools of psychology. However, what is more important, to my mind, is that the emotional input in creativity is idiosyncratic and unique in each and every case. Whether great passions, madness or a cold eye are the conditions for innovative creativity cannot be decided. The question, in this generality, is simply futile. In what follows, then, I will bypass the emphasis often placed on the imagination or fantasy for the creation of artworks, and instead concentrate on asserting the central importance of feelings in their reception. My concern here is not the idiosyncratic nature of creativity, but the interactive mutuality of reception.

FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS

In referring to "simple" feelings one has already simplified the issue of feelings, and yet one cannot help to begin with simple feelings. As I argue in my *Theory of Feelings* I call feelings simple if they are genetically programmed, if their presence or absence is not dependent on concrete situations or provocations, even in cases when they answer to concrete stimuli. Such so-called simple feeling-qualities are the "substrates" the raw materials of all complex feelings, emotions and emotional dispositions. There are two kinds of such simple feelings. The first type are feelings of pleasure-displeasure, or pain, in other words of good or bad feelings. Most philosophies begin the analysis of feelings with such simple feeling-qualities. In addition to the

elementary feelings, there are, secondly, a few genetically programmed affects like fear, anger, shame and disgust, or innate drives, like hunger, thirst, sexual drive or libido. The simple feelings begin to differentiate and combine right after our birth, and they soon establish feeling chains and begin to be transformed into emotions and emotional dispositions through the use of language, the integration of cognition and situation—through experience and education—into the raw material of elementary feelings.

In everyday life, all emotions, drives as well as all emotional dispositions—love, hatred, jealousy, envy and the like—are ego-centered, at least insofar as they orient our ego in the world. They are judgments and road signs. For example, I am not afraid in general, I am afraid of something, and I must find out what I am afraid of. Fear as an emotion assesses or judges the situation and orients our ego. Such a judgment and road sign is not a combination of a feeling and a cognitive assessment, for the emotion itself judges and is the road sign. This means that the situation and the cognitive assessment of the situation, the values, and the drive co-constitute the emotion. Fear of the wolf is not the same fear as fear from the examination or fear of the loss of honor. The emotion of fear itself is different in each of these cases. This is why it is so difficult, or rather, impossible to describe or to define singular emotions. Aristotle, being aware of the difficulty, supported all his definitions or descriptions with the presentation of several paradigmatic cases. "*Paradigmata*" are representative expositions which accompany his analysis of single emotions in his *Rhetoric*.

To cut a long story short: all everyday emotions are complex combinations of simple feelings, so that cognition and situation, that is, knowledge and beliefs, judgments concerning true and false, right and wrong, inhere in the emotions themselves. All everyday emotions and emotional dispositions, which orient us in practical situations, are directly ego-related: either to our personal ego, that is our self, or to our broader or enlarged ego, that is, the "we." Thus, all pragmatic and practical emotions, especially emotional dispositions such as love and hatred represent the Ego-interest, irrespective of whether it is egoistic or altruistic in its orientation, since this does not make any difference from this angle. Nor does it make any difference either whether the feeling makes good or bad, useful or harmful judgments. Everyday emotions or emotions in everyday life are thus neither universal, nor general; they are to be understood under the category of particularity, that is, of mostly un-reflected difference.

EMOTIONS AND WORKS OF ART

What happens with our emotions when we contemplate a work of art? What happens if we face a work of art while assuming the attitude of a recipient? We abstract from our everyday situation, we suspend our pragmatic and practical interests, we abandon ourselves. Self-abandon is an erotic gesture. The erotic attraction, which appears in practical and pragmatic everyday life, mostly in heterogeneous fragments—with the sole exception of passionate love—will be concentrated at one single point, and one single experience. As in cognitive tasks, concentration is accompanied by intensification. I am simultaneously all eyes or all ears, and I expose myself to the provocation of erotic attraction—so to speak—naked, without reservations. This means that I let myself be provoked by the work and this is what we call Beauty. When the lovers establish a reciprocal relation, the erotic contact will also become a mutual, reciprocal engagement and attraction between two people. If it does not come to a mutual erotic attraction, one can hardly speak of delight in the strict meaning of the word.

Experiencing delight in art is thus a mutual erotic relation, where the work of art abandons itself to the single recipient. The work of art acts as if it were a person, for only souls can reciprocate our love. When we fall in love with a work of art and it reciprocates our feeling, there is a relation. When the work of art leaves us cold, there will be none. This means that a work of art cannot harm us, it never hates us. It will not promote its own interests against ours, will never steal our beloved, nor destroy our country. In the state of receptive orientation we can suspend all our concrete emotions, which would otherwise orient us in our everyday practical and pragmatic activities. Although they are only suspended, they vanish insofar as they get decomposed into original simple feelings. They fall back into their original simplicity in this state of unique self-abandon, precisely because they get disconnected from all life situations, all knowledge- and belief-dependent evaluations, that is, from their ego-relatedness. They become free-floating feelings. What remains preserved in those free-floating feelings, since they are human feelings, is the openness, the readiness to reconstitute themselves again into concrete emotions or emotional dispositions. The readiness to emotion-constitution is preserved not only because this readiness inheres in human feelings, but also because the disconnection from everyday emotions is triggered by an emotion, the sudden infatuation with a work of art. This love is not related to the pragmatic-practical ego, but to the contemplative ego, the ego of the spectator. This love does not serve interests. Among all the emotional dispositions love alone is here preserved because all the other emotional dispositions, such as hatred, envy, jealousy have been suspended and as a result they vanish as long as the ego-orientation remains contemplative. Love

does not appear only directly as an occurrence, an isolated event. It is also preserved in several and different concrete emotional occurrences. All these emotional occurrences are the indirect situation-dependent manifestations of the direct situation-independent disposition: love.

Emotions, as I have pointed out in *A Theory of Feelings*, are also judgments. All the concrete emotional occurrences are thus judgments triggered by the presentation of a work of art, and all of them inhere in the mutual love between recipient and work. Very similar things happen here as in everyday life. We see how the simple free-floating feelings become co-determined through situations and cognition. However, those situations and meanings are presented not by the everyday context of action, but by the work of art itself. I would dare to say that even the Kantian norm of aesthetic judgment, which should be "without interest," can be interpreted in the spirit of this formulation. In their readiness to reception, in their openness and love for a work of art, the emotions in the situation of the absence of situations are no longer ego-related and, in this sense, are free of interest. One can also describe the situation of no-situations where all the cognitively co-constituted emotions are simultaneously suspended. What remains here are just simple feelings without concepts. Yet, as already mentioned, exactly these free-floating, undetermined, interest and concept-free feelings will be transformed into new kinds of emotions in the process of the reception of a work of art. Those emotions, albeit not ego-related, are self-furthering all the same. Without self-furthering there is no delight. Yet this kind of self-furthering essentially differs from the ego-relatedness in daily life, for it is not egocentric. Delight felt in experiencing a work of art is not a kind of moral praxis, and has nothing to do with the egoism of altruism.

The new emotions which emerge from free-floating feelings after the recipient has assumed the situation of contemplation will be different, and be constituted in different ways dependent on the kind or character of the work of art that she contemplates. These new emotions will appear in different orchestrations whether she reads a novel, listens to music, looks at a painting and so on. Because of the different orchestrations I find it problematic to speak of works of art, as such, in general. The different kinds of arts are also essentially different in this respect. Yet, and this chapter is chiefly about this "yet," it is still meaningful to refer to art as such. The original disconnection of feelings from all the egocentric emotions of everyday life and from their cognitive co-determination and emotional re-arrangement in reception happens in all kinds of artworks, whether it is, for example, a drama, a concerto, a statue, a building, an opera, or a poem. The sole relevant analogy to the re-arrangement of free-floating feelings in the reception of art would be the case of religious contemplation or mystic experience.

In what follows I will discuss briefly—too briefly!—the specificities in the re-arrangement of emotions in the reception of literature, arts and music separately, notwithstanding the dangers of overgeneralization.

Since language is the medium of literature, the cognitive moment must remain an unavoidable aspect of the reception. When one listens to the recital of a poem in a foreign tongue, one can enjoy the music of the verses, but this is by no means identical with the reception of the poem as a poem among others in one's own language because the free-floating feelings that music releases loosens the specific cognitive crutches which could serve as the vehicles of their re-arrangement into emotions, and as we shall see, are less dependent on them. As far as a drama or a tale is concerned, there is also the similar lack of musical quasi-reception. The assessment of the situation plays an important part in the new constitution of emotions or emotional dispositions in genres like the drama or the novel. We must, for example, understand the situation where Richard the Third hires the murderers to kill his brother to get to know his character and develop emotions like terror and disgust. Emotions are, as in all cases, motions. Emotions are in motion, they are elastic in the case of reception of literature just as in daily life, and thus every new interpretation of certain situations will modify the quality and intensity of vested emotions. We all know from experience that the re-interpretation of literary works, characters and situations will modify the quality and intensity of our emotional involvement.

Something else plays an important role in the rearrangement of emotions in the case of literature. This has something to do with our identification with the characters, most frequently with the main character. Whether we read a book or follow an action on the stage, we are tempted to look at the development of the plot from the position of one or the other chief characters. When one of these characters is thrown into a pleasant or unpleasant situation, be he a Don Quixote, a Hamlet, a Wilhelm Meister, a Marcel or a Hans Castorp, we will perceive their situation as if it were our own, whether we are similar or dissimilar to them, whether we are men or women. Let me repeat: evaluation through emotions is not a moral evaluation, at least if the moral effect is not intended by the author, and mostly this is not the case. We sympathize mostly with the chief characters in spite of their follies, as in case of *Tom Jones*, or in their missteps and weaknesses, as in the cases of Emma or Marianne, in Jane Austen's works. Yet one is often positively anxious about the fate of main characters even if they are not particularly attractive, such as Raskolnikov or Dimitrij Karamazov in Dostoyevsky's works. Anxiety can also be blended with hope. We hope for a satisfying—although not happy—outcome not just for the main characters, but also for the world, which momentarily becomes ours.

After having mentioned anxiety and hope for a satisfying outcome, I need to mention in brackets, that when Aristotle in *Poetics* and *Rhetorics* speaks of

fear in the soul of the spectator as one of the emotional effects of tragedy, he also must have had anxiety in mind. This is because he could not have insisted that the kind of fear elicited by tragedy would purify or relieve our soul from fear, as it is felt in pragmatic daily life. The other emotion mentioned by Aristotle in this context is empathy. This is one of the mostly felt emotions during the reception of narratives. Others are, to enumerate a few: terror, disgust, sorrow, gayness, grief, love, astonishment, pity, amusement, despair. The emotional disposition of love is duplicated in the case of literature. There is the primary love relationship with the artwork itself, and there is love vested in a character or in several characters. We all love Rosalind and may love Emma, Pierre Bezuhov, Swann, Tony Buddenbrook, to mention only a few.

Thus there are numerous emotions in pragmatic and practical life which get defused in the receptive situation in order to re-group themselves and resume a similar yet different quality. Yet there are emotions which will be entirely dissolved and never reappear in the state of reception. These are the exclusively ego-related emotions. One can experience anxiety, love, pain, grief, sadness, satisfaction or gayness in the reception of a drama or a novel, yet one cannot develop the emotions of jealousy or envy. No reader is envious in place of the character she sympathizes with. There are wishes yet no desires; normally, one does not experience carnal desire for a literary character. Resentment and vanity are in principle excluded from the possible emotions of a spectator. Spectators cannot compare themselves with fictitious characters. Without factual or possible comparison, there can neither be envy, vanity, resentment nor jealousy. I am not ashamed before the characters of a drama, nor do I hate anyone, not even the murderer since I cannot take revenge, not even mentally. The recipient is in this sense helpless, lame.

Normally artists do not aim at one or another emotional reception. As a possible exception one can mention literature with political or moral intent. Rather, during the times of high modernism the opposite was the case: artists aimed at the absence of any type of emotional reception and only for a cerebral one. Brecht's so-called alienating principle is a case in point. One could aim at impassibility through the ironic treatment of the literary material, devising a program of coldness and distancing. Needless to say, this program met with little success. One could avoid certain emotions as typical effects, for example, sentimentalism; yet not emotions in general. There are cerebral emotions, which appear often in the reception of the comic, the ironical, the sudden, the perplexing. In addition, the titillating satisfaction, the delight in the play of language is itself an emotion. When a work does not elicit any emotions at all we cannot speak of reception of a work of art. Then one reads a text as a scientific tractate.

EMOTIONS, AURA, HOME

Our relation to a painting has always been similar to our relation to a so-called modern "text" in literature, and dissimilar to our relation to traditional narrative genres. One can become infatuated, for example, with Vermeer's canvas entitled *Young Woman Reading a Letter* without developing the emotion of love or even sympathy for the maiden on the canvas. True there are also fetish-objects such as the *Venus of Milo* or the *Mona Lisa*. This obvious difference would already suffice to treat the general description of "art" as such with a kind of suspicion. The re-grouping of feelings into emotions also happens if one faces a painting and it can be entirely unique in each and every case, moreover, at each and every encounter, yet it does not depend on our emotional involvement in one or the other figurative representations of a Rembrandt or a Van Gogh painting, for example. In this respect, our relation to a work by Mondrian or Kiefer does not differ from our relation to a portrait by Ingres.

However, it happens in the reception of fine arts that certain emotions, which had been constituted before the encounter with a work of art, do not dissolve entirely into simple feelings and thus co-determine our pleasure or displeasure at the sight of the artwork. This is the case, for example, when a religious man or woman enters a cathedral and experiences delight at the sight of the grandeur or elegance of the interior of the building. One can hardly distinguish the religious sentiments from the aesthetic emotions. The frequently misused concept "aura" refers exactly to this entanglement and can be thus meaningfully used precisely in case of the reception of fine arts. The example of the religious man or woman entering a cathedral can be expanded and enlarged. There are holy images in all genres of fine arts, first and foremost in the representation of the stories of the Gospels in painting and sculpture. One encounters a similar aura in literature. One does not read the *Bible* as a recipient of an artwork, even if it also is, among other things, literature. What is an exception in literature can be typical in fine arts: works of art themselves elicit religious emotions.

Yet this religious sentiment is neither practical nor pragmatic, it melts into the aesthetic feelings, which on their part presuppose the attitude of pure contemplation, that is, the situation-free situation. As a result, non-believers can also be shaken by religious sentiments whenever they abandon themselves to the "auratic." This is almost always the case when the life of Jesus and especially his sufferings are presented on the canvas. In his lectures on aesthetics Hegel is to be praised for attributing, first and foremost, fine art and especially sculpture, to the period identified as *Kunstreligion* or religious art. Although I do not share Hegel's *historismus*, nor his ideologically underpinned preference for Greek plastic art and the statues of the Olympians, I

still believe that it is most meaningful to speak about "religious art" in a strict sense when our love is invested in visual images of certain kinds. In his "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" Walter Benjamin attributed "aura" to pre-modern art and called modern art proper post-auratic. I cannot go along with him in his interpretation but believe rather that it is the visual presentation of the sacred which is surrounded by an aura. And this is so not just in the pre-modern, but also in the modernist and post-modern fine arts. In fact, this interpretation follows from the presupposition that situation and cognition get reintegrated into feelings in the reception of works of art. When we look at the presentation of Christ on the Cross, the regard will already be auratic and so will be the recipient's emotions which blend aesthetic and the religious sentiments. A recipient who has never heard about the *Man of Sorrow* will, in all probability, experience emotions such as sadness mixed with aesthetic pleasure, yet without religious co-determinations. For him the scene of the *Visitation* will be no more or less auratic than a Bonnet interior. Where nothing sacred is presented one can hardly speak of religion of art. The so-called subject matter remains in fine arts mostly undetermined. Lukács spoke of an undetermined objectivity or representation.

Thus, contrary to literature, the presentation does not offer a clear road sign indicating the situation or allowing the formation of ideas, although both are the necessary condition for the re-constitution of relatively steady emotions. Sensuality impresses the recipient in an almost unmediated manner. It is in fine arts that Plato's thoughts sound most true: it is beauty that we love, and what we do love is beautiful. Moreover, beauty presented for the sight is the most beautiful among all kinds of sensual beauties. I think that the concept of the beautiful has been mishandled when attributed to all kinds of art. It is misused in the sense that it is made redundant, since it could be substituted by concepts such as perfection or "unity of form and content" and the like. Yet, in fine arts, the concepts of beautiful and ugly cannot be sidestepped or meaningfully replaced whether they refer to human faces, bodies, animals, plants, landscapes, in other words, where life and sensuality is directly presented and addressed in colors, lines and their relations. This is why it may not sound too pretentious or an exaggeration to say that if pure feelings are re-constituted into an emotion in the contemplation of a work of fine art, then this emotion will be a purely aesthetic one.

This re-constitution of pure feelings into emotions does not occur in literature in general, although perhaps it occurs in listening to certain kinds of poetry. To be sure, this pure aesthetic emotion is not pure in the metaphysical or Kantian meanings of the term. In the strict sense of these meanings only the simple and unmediated qualitative feelings are, and the co-constituted emotions are not, even if they are entirely undetermined. It needs to be added, too, that what is presented on a canvas is by no means a representation. A brushstroke, a color, a trace is a situation. A canvas by Rothko

presents situations no less than a still life by Tenier. Several emotions triggered by works of literature in the recipients are either entirely or almost entirely absent in the reception of fine arts. As I mentioned, we do not follow anyone with love or sympathy here. One rarely laughs at the sight of a building, unless it is ugly or misconstrued. Even comic paintings or images elicit a smile, the emotion of curiosity, quiet mirth, the pleasure at riddle-solving, or perhaps a bitter taste. Yet we do not burst out in laughter.

An aesthetic feeling, or rather the aesthetic emotion, is, as we know, a judgment. This judgment values the work as a whole and not the situations presented in the work with the exception of auratic artworks. I suggested that the presentation in fine arts is undetermined. I would now add that it is relatively undetermined. For example, it is not just beauty that is presented, but a specific kind of beauty, the beauty of a form of life or way of life. Something is suggested by a way of life which hits the recipient in her emotional epi-centre. Incipient in the emotional judgment is the relation of the recipient to the way of life on canvas, in marble or in stone. The way of life presented can be one long gone, yet it can also be ours. The elementary emotion triggered by a way of life which we recognize as ours is comeliness or the emotion of the uncanny, that is, *Heimlich, unheimlich*, while the elementary emotion triggered by a way of life of a bygone age is nostalgia. Thus the emotional effect of a work can be entirely different dependent on the hermeneutical position of the recipient. I assume that interiors of Dutch genre painters or the plain air canvases of French impressionists elicited in their own time emotions such as contentment, familiarity, bliss, musing, and fun. These are all comely, *Heimlich*, feelings. What is comely to the contemporary is, however, not necessarily also comely for the later generations. Their emotions can be mostly described with the word: nostalgia. Moderns, for example, feel the attraction of the peaceful life of the peasant villagers of Hobbema or the modest forests of Corot. They would like to be there, to walk among those trees, to share those lives. This has nothing to do with unconditioned nostalgia. They are imbued by nostalgia only as long as they stand before the painting, and not before or after. The nostalgia is the non-mediated answer to the provocation of the painting, without concept and without interest.

Very similar things, although not the same thing, can be said about the uncanny or *unheimlich*. The uncanny presented on the canvas is uncanny for the contemporaries. We may assume that the deformed creatures of the hell in a Bosch painting looked uncanny for those who believed in their existence and spell, whereas in our eye they look rather funny or even hilarious. Temporal distance to the comely produces the effect of nostalgia; temporal distance to the uncanny produces a comic effect. Yet this happens only in fine arts.

EMOTIONS AND MUSIC

Music is, without reservations, the genre of undetermined message. Naturally, this occurs only in the case of the so-called "pure music." Songs, as the songs of Schubert, Schumann or Strauss carry a certain message and not just through the texts of poetry. Opera is even less pure music in the above sense as it has been a kind of "*Gesamtkunst*" or total artwork from the time of its conception. Today, it has become an even greater *Gesamtkunst*. Music playing, text, plot, singing, acting, staging, directing, conducting, all those together is the opera we enjoy in the opera theater. To listen to an opera on a CD or in the opera theater where it occurs "live" is not the same kind of listening and, even less, the same kind of emotional involvement. Music can also be auratic, as in case of sacred music, oratorios or requiems, and these can elicit feelings of sublime grief and piety. There are liturgies, themes, sacred stories and their textual interpretations. One may or may not empathize with Handel's *Samson*, yet one cannot entirely abstract oneself from Milton's text.

Hence, let me briefly concentrate on "pure" music, although in a very simplified way. This music played an exquisite role in the creation of modern emotional culture from the eighteenth century until the present moment through the creation of a group of strong and emphatic lovers. It was Rousseau among others, who hailed music as the vehicle and medium of emotional expression. His theory is no longer persuasive, and several modern composers have revolted against it. Still the question remains open: why was music for centuries praised as the artistic organ of emotional expression; why was it believed that music triggers affections and emotions, that music differentiates our emotional life? Why was music associated with emotions for such a long time, and why is this no more the case? Is the statement that music enables the recipient more than other genres to wake up their feelings and make the mute speak, accurate or not? The trust in the healing effect of music, in music as therapy, in the moral power of music that transforms the cold heart into a feeling heart, the wicked into a sentimentalist and so on, is as old as perhaps music itself. The stars of this myth of music are Orpheus and King David. Is the reversal of this ancient creed true or false? Is it true or false that, as Thomas Mann once said, music is politically and also ethically suspect? Is it true or false that insofar music elicits emotions we are confronted with inauthentic, regressive listening as Adorno expressed? That the healing power, the moral power of music is a lie, and not even a pious lie?

It is easy to use the lash of harsh judgments of those such as Mann and Adorno on the recipient, yet the emotional effect of music can neither be erased nor repudiated by its use. Plato was the first to try this type of repudiation and without great success. True, the emotional effect of music can be used for good and bad alike. It can lend force to lies, strengthen bad instincts,

even murderous ones, yet it can also heal and make friends of enemies. What Freud has called emotional ambivalence cannot be circumvented. Not in music, not anywhere.

I dare to insist that contemporary music elicits undetermined emotions as well as the traditional melodies or harmonies, whether the composers would agree or disagree. Perhaps traditional—classical or romantic—music is more comely for the majority of listeners and they will react to modern or contemporary music as the uncanny, yet both are typical emotional answers to the challenge of a work. Yet, I would like to go further in this direction, relying on nothing else but my own emotions and on the emotional utterances, statements of people I know. I think that the emotional answer to the provocation of the artworks, if not also the emotional quality, remains structurally the same, whether one listens to a work by Mozart or by Gubaidulina, Telemann or Boulez, Monteverdi or Shostakovitsch, not to mention Martynov or Glass. One may object that I left out of consideration the "hard" composers like Stockhausen or Cage. Perhaps this true, perhaps not. Yet, whatever one thinks about these two radical composers, it still remains true that Ligetti, Schönberg on the one hand, and Handel and Strauss on the other, can equally trigger emotional answers. Whether they do, and what kind of emotional answers they are, also, or rather mostly, depend on the cultural background, musical experience, taste, and personality of the recipient.

When speaking about recipients I do not have in mind musicologists, music writers or critics, composers themselves or their fellow composers. I have in mind only lovers, the music lovers. Since music offers the lover an entirely undetermined presentation, the naïve recipient does not receive solid centers or even indications such as situations, concepts, ideas that guide or re-orientate the re-crystallization of emotions. The simple feeling, these chaotic splitters of the decomposed practical or pragmatic emotions which, under the impact of music seek the point for crystallization yet without finding any, circulate in the psyche, which on its part offers them fantasy images as substitutes for a presented point of crystalization. These images can also burst freely from the unconscious of the lover. The impact of unconscious desires can intensify our delight in the music, which on its part, again, furthers the emotional structuring around the images of fantasy. It is emotion, the emotional evaluation which will lead eventually to conceptualization. The emotionally lived experience will determine the undetermined objectivity through conceptualization. No one can answer the question as to whether the second movement in Beethoven's *Symphony Number Seven* is a funeral march or slow dance music. Moreover, this is not even a question. One listener feels grief, the other playful merriment, and both listen to the music as lovers in self-abandoned intensity. When someone turns to a piece of music with certain expectations, the music will satisfy exactly this expectation. Thus, if one has once experienced the second movement of Beethoven's

Seventh Symphony as a *Trauermarsch*, she will expect to feel sadness or grief for even the second or third time. Although one never "feels" exactly the same—and not only in the case of listening to music—one can conceptualize the indeterminate emotions several times in the same manner, as one also does in the case of more, although never entirely, determined emotions, for example, when one addresses the other with the sentence "I love you."

The music lover turns towards music as a lover. In this respect music reception does not differ from the reception of arts in general. In all love relationships, and thus also in the love relationship within an artwork, there is a difference between the first, second, third, and many times repeated encounter. The first encounter can be extremely intensive, yet it remains abstract. The first repetition, especially if it results from a strong desire for a second encounter, is the confirmation of love. Yet, not all encounters confirm the first love. Disappointment is also possible in the love relation to one or other works of art. Yet, the true lover, although she may become disappointed in one work of art, will go on longing for a new encounter, and will turn with high expectations to the kinds of works which have been the objects of her first love. This is the case with the lovers of any kinds of art, although chiefly with music lovers. Music lovers are always longing for repetition, they will never be satiated. To cut a long story short: the longing for repetition, for a renewed encounter with the beloved work, is the typical emotional state in the "before" and "after" of the reception of artworks. Longing in practical and pragmatic life is, however, not a simple feeling, not even a complex emotion, but a kind of desire. To express myself in Kant's vocabulary: unlike emotions, longing does not belong to the faculty of pleasure/displeasure, but to the faculty of desire. However, longing as the "before" and "after" of the pleasure taken in the artwork, is not longing as a desire for possession. As an objectless longing it does not fulfill the *telos* of a desire, but the *telos* of the faculty of pleasure/displeasure. For it is the longing for the repetition of a receptive experience, a longing for contemplation, a contemplative longing. It is an emotion.

I have presupposed that the pragmatic-practical emotions of daily life once deconstructed into simple feeling qualities in their openness to the reception of a work of art are not reconstructed into more ego-centered emotions in the process of the reception. I also made mention of the eventual refinement and differentiation of feeling qualities through reception. One could conclude from all this that after experiencing the delight in the reception of an artwork, we will return to our pragmatic-practical life with less egoistic and more refined emotions. Aristotle shared this opinion, as did Schiller in some of his aesthetic writings. Yet, this hope turned out to be one of the philosopher's illusions. This is illusory not only because we are told this, but also because there is empirical evidence for it. For example, we know that Hitler was infatuated with Beethoven and Wagner, and that Stalin

loved modernist poetry, which he practiced in his youth. To be sure, such examples could be seen as exceptions to the rule. However, the problem lies deeper, as in so many things, Kant detected it. The ego-related and ego-centered emotions of practical-pragmatic life are either imbued by, or in constant interplay with morals and with the culture of human commerce. The emotions triggered by works of art, however, are not, because, in the situation of the absence of situations, all ego-centered emotions become deconstructed. Yet, they do not disappear for good, they are just suspended. Since they are suspended, morality and the culture of human commerce are also suspended. They have nothing to do with the emotions to be newly constructed in and through the reception of a work of art. The same emotions suspended during the reception of an artwork return in the very moment the recipient returns to her daily life. It is, of course, not impossible that a person will change her attitude and lifestyle radically for the better under the influence of an artwork, yet this can happen to us under the influence of all kinds of life experiences. Art has no privileged position if compared to love, friendship, the advice of a teacher, the loss of illusions, a historical event, a trauma, and so on. Precisely because delight taken in great works of art has no moral implication, and does not even influence the culture of human commerce, there is some justification in Thomas Mann's dictum.

To censure sheer sensual delight taken in colors, musical tones, stories, and first and foremost the warmth of emotions as they are re-arranged around images of fantasy, daydreams and the free imagination, is a misbegotten idea. Yet, to keep a skeptical distance to our own love relationship with works of art is another thing. We abandon ourselves to work, our soul is entirely absorbed, and this is not a minor miracle. However, take care: no one is that subtle, that sublime, that loving, that open for non-egoistic pleasure, to behold beauty without interest. No one is that free from envy and vanity, jealousy, anger, resentment or pride, and all kinds of drives and desires which dissolve into totally innocent feeling-mosaics in the emotional world of a spectator or a listener. One should never identify oneself with oneself as spectator or a listener. From this perspective, even Brecht's method of alienation makes sense.

Chapter Five

Joke Culture and Transformations of the Public Sphere

Jürgen Habermas' now well-known *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, was written over forty years ago, and has not ceased to offer an effective guideline to understand the transformation of several social, especially cultural phenomena during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[1] That a few of the concrete theses and data presented by the book have been questioned and corrected since has not diminished its power of orientation, because the importance of a thesis or even an idea depends mainly on this power. Thus, when I started to study the social-cultural habit of telling jokes and asked the question of when this habit developed, I immediately bumped into this work because I found an answer to a question that had not been raised directly, yet the road sign was posted and I could securely follow it.

What is joke culture? The joke is an old comic genre. Like all comic genres it solicits laughter. To be sure, punning, kidding, making witty remarks on someone in our company or in his absence also solicits laughter, yet none of these are jokes. Jests or practical jokes can be rude and subtle, yet even if they are subtle they are not a "genre." In his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* Kant raised some objections against reflecting on the character of another person directly, even in a witty manner or in jest because in his mind this could be offensive.[2] Yet he had no objection against jokes. He even discussed jokes among plays in his *Critique of Judgment*, as the play of thoughts.[3]

The question of jokes, humor and wit became an interesting topic in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This had to do with the development of the public sphere and with the participation of the bourgeoisie in the activities of this sphere. As Shaftesbury wrote in Section II of Part I of his *Essay*

on the Freedom of Wit and Humour the "rallying Humour" "has pass'd from the Men of Pleasure to the men of Business." He also adds, "I am writing to you only in defence of the Liberty of the Club."[4] The difference between Shaftesbury and Kant is the difference between liberal nobility and liberal plebeians. For Kant, all kinds of wit are suspect if they were practiced solely in the company of noblemen. Additionally, for Kant, only the kind of play of thought free from interest can be approved. However, he would surely have agreed with Shaftesbury's recommendation that wit is to be practiced among men and women equal in liberty, and that it is the best weapon against fanaticism and superstition.

The joke, I repeat, is an old comic genre. As with every genre it has its own internal rules, which can be modified, yet not entirely changed. Joke-rules are fairly rigid, although the jokes are not. Kant's incongruence theory says something important about the most general structure of jokes. According to this theory, a joke contains two different stories, but by telling a joke, the performer directs the listener's attention towards one of the stories and not the other. Yet at the punch line the expectation of the listeners will come to nothing, because another, unexpected story will be substituted for the expected one. I add only that this theory works not just in case of narrative jokes, but also in the case of the puzzle jokes, such as "what is the difference between X and Y?"

The specificity of the joke as a genre can also be described by its effect in the same way that Aristotle presented tragedy, among other art forms, also through its effect. There are several more or less important accounts about the effect of comedy, yet one among them cannot be neglected if one is to discuss joke culture. This theory was mainly elaborated by Freud, but he also had several predecessors and successors. Freud suggested that the effect of a comic presentation in general, yet of jokes in particular, is relief. According to Freud, certain suppressed unconscious and mainly sexual desires get a green light through jokes. The non-permitted becomes permitted, because it is not seriously meant; it is only a joke.[5] Moreover, Freud's theory is closely related to Kant's presupposition that the play of thought, that is the joke, is a disinterested play and in this sense it is not practical as the joke teller as well as the listener. Both occupy the spectator's position. The effect of a joke can also be another kind of relief, that is, one concerning relief from an external rather than internal desire that has been repressed or, rather, oppressed by political or social censorship. The desire for freedom, which can be the desire for free speech, as well as the desire of liberation from despotism, can be indirectly satisfied in telling a political joke or listening to one. The victim can feel victorious, the powerless powerful when he or she tells a joke in company of the like-minded about tyrants, masters, enemies, presenting them as ridiculous puppets in a non-existent puppet theater. We laugh together at

the point, and at this very moment we are free, powerful, and in the position of superiority in the face of our almighty oppressors.

The joke as a genre is not really an empirical universal or common practice as punning, kidding, making fun of someone, or practical joking. However, we cannot say that it made its presence only or first in the seventeenth century. In ancient comedies, such as in those by Aristophanes or Plautus, as well as comic novels such as Cervantes'*Don Quixote* someone occasionally tells a joke that satisfies all the criteria of joke as a genre. In other words, there are very old jokes, yet there is no old joke culture. Narrative jokes, practical jokes, jesting, and punning are all presented in witty scenes or entertainments from Shakespeare's comedies to carnival, but jokes have had no privileged position in the cavalcade of all kinds of laughing matters. We also know from such works as *The Canterbury Tales, The Decameron* and several comic novels, that when men and women are brought together by accident, for example, in a journey, in a pub or an unusual event or catastrophe, that they begin to tell one another fairy tales, novellas and anecdotes in order to pass time, to forget the disaster, and to entertain. The stories can be piquant, they can contain political and moral lessons, yet they are not jokes. They belong to genres, which, beside their comic version, also have a non-comic version, such as the novella. However, the joke is the comic genre *par excellence*. There are no non-comic jokes, just bad ones.

I speak of joke culture in cases when telling jokes becomes informally rather than formally institutionalized among certain groups of people and in certain spaces. Men, in the absence or presence of women, get together in a social milieu with or without a purpose or reason, although not necessarily to tell jokes. Nonetheless, at one point during the encounter one person among them tells a joke. He gets laughter yet this is not the end. After his point has been rewarded by laughter, another person immediately begins to tell another joke, and then the third gets into the joke-telling business, and so on and so forth.

Two things are important here. The company does not get together in order to tell jokes or to listen to them, because if they did the aspect of informality of joke culture would have been lost. This is why telling jokes is never a must, but a permission that is mostly utilized. Moreover, there are people who are renowned good joke tellers, and it perhaps happens that at one point during the evening one of them is asked to tell a joke. Yet he is free to consent or to turn the request down. This circumstance underlines the Kantian suggestion of "free play." Freedom does not inhere in the structure of joke alone, that is, in its being a free play, but also in the context where the joke is told. In his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* Kant describes the intellectual choreography of conversation during a dinner party: first, story telling; second, reflection and debate; third, jest and laughter. According to him, such a get-together ends in laughter. Jest is, of course a

broader category than just telling jokes, but in Kant's rendering it also includes joke telling.[6]

Secondly, the venue for joke telling is as elastic as its "occasion," yet it is a space which can be described metaphorically to occupy the seam-line between the private and the public sphere. It encompasses the type of spaces Habermas describes in his book on the public sphere. This, however, is mentioned with one proviso—they are all spaces of oral, and not of written culture. The world of the printed press, the emergence of which is interestingly analyzed by Habermas, also launched the humor pages, which included satire, parody, caricature, and witty writings. Caricature soon became a favorite tid bit of the daily papers, as did the satirical caricatures showing the moral degradation of both the rich and the poor. Satirical writings were sometimes biting and strictly polemical, sometimes milder and ironic. William Hogarth, the friend of Henry Fielding, was the best known satirical comic artist of his time, renowned for the high artistic quality of his satirical drawings, paintings and prints. These are examples of marketed humor and wit. Habermas pointed out that the market of cultural goods begins to develop exactly during these times. Although comic pictures, perhaps with the exception of the Netherlands, are not regarded at that time as noble art—this happens later—they were nonetheless marketed as they satisfied the needs of social, political and moral criticism. Nonetheless, jokes, themselves, were not marketed, or their marketing remained insignificant.

Joke culture developed in clubs, cafés, bars, in friendly circles around the table, while people enjoyed a drink, a cigarette, or a coffee. It developed in spaces which were public insofar as the participants in joke culture did not participate exclusively in it, but rather in a culture constituted by values and interests concerning public affairs. That is, they participated in cultural discourse, in general. The jokes they told or listened to were either directly or mostly indirectly connected to those values and interests. These were groups of people who considered themselves each others' equals, who also had some personal affection or affiliation with one another, and were, thus, friends in a broader sense. They may not have been of the same profession or trade, or, if they were this was not discussed in a community of people of this sort, or at least it did not enjoy privilege among the topics of discussion. In such a group it was generally preferred that socially equal participants should come from different walks of life and professions. To refer to Kant again: disinterestedness was thus the best guarantee. Although frequently friends, they were groups of people who were used to reflecting on public affairs, be it of politics, business, literature, the press, or anything they considered important for the welfare of the public. Shaftesbury summed this up briefly in his phrase "Private Friendship, Zeal for the Publick and our Country."[7] However, joke culture was a male culture with the exception of some salons of the

eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Jokes were normally told by men, although this has now changed.

Perhaps we are beyond the age of joke culture now, except for a provisional note. Jokes never left the territory of the seam between the private and public spheres because they are mini-narratives which have nothing to do with grand narratives, and their structure has remained relatively stable. Given this, the fate of joke culture did not run in parallel with the demise of the bourgeois public sphere, at least in Habermas' interpretation of it. Although the emergence of mass society played a part in the metamorphoses of the function of jokes, this is only a single aspect of the story of joke culture.

Joke culture develops and flourishes every time when there is a cultural need shared by many among equals, although not equally, for the momentary, sudden relief of repressed instincts and desires, and for the momentary, sudden, symbolic liberation from an oppressing power, the need for the experience of superiority in face of an overwhelming power. The emergence of joke culture presupposes at least the possibility of indirect relief or liberation without punishment, the possibility to tell jokes without immediately meeting severe social and political sanctions. Joke culture cannot exist in periods when instincts seem to be totally repressed and the desire for a "discourse" on sex, for example, is not on the agenda, and when one cannot spell out dissatisfaction with a political power, let alone tell a joke about that power without punishment. There must exist a kind of liberty as well as repression and/or oppression.

Joke culture thrives in obscurity, in the times of dawn and dusk. It does not exist in the darkness of night or during the full light of day. I refer to these metaphors because Hegel contrasted the gods of night, that is, the gods of instincts, of the family herd with the gods of daylight, that is, the gods of the political sphere when discussing Antigone in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.[8] The joke world would not recognize itself in this juxtaposition, for, I repeat, joke culture thrives during dawn and dusk, and in the realms of Eros and Thanatos, and the political. In a permissive world like ours the absence of freedom makes itself unknown exactly through general permission where there are no tyrants of dangerous dimension, where everyone can watch the presentation of vaginas in public cinemas, on DVDs, or on the Internet. In a mass democracy *cum* capitalist market society joke culture disappears. Teenagers will still guffaw at the obscenities they do not understand, and we will still crack politically correct or incorrect ethnic jokes. However, this is no longer a joke culture. Where everything can be called its proper name, no culture of euphemism is needed.

I do not say all of this as a cultural critic, I only narrate. It would be a sign of bad conscience to say all this critically, for in times of the eclipse of these freedoms, even in mass society, joke culture re-emerges in full swing. This certainly happened in totalitarian states at times when the direct threat of

terror was a matter of the past, yet the desire for liberty remained unsatisfied and total control remained in place. The same jokes I heard about Hitler as a child were re-told about Stalin in my youth.

Although joke culture seems—at least for the time being—a thing of the past, good jokes are still published as the skeletons of a culture in collections of jokes, and sometimes the best jokes are told by a character in another comic genre in the same manner as they used to be told prior the emergence of joke culture. One still tells jokes in comic plays, in comic novels and also in film comedies. Excellent jokes are told in Beckett's *Murphy* as well as Woody Allen's film *Annie Hall*, which ends with a well known Jewish joke.

The choreography of joke culture needs types, and joke characters that perform a certain function or occupy a certain position not just in one joke, but in a series of them. They are normally human characters, although they can also be animals standing for them. These types are just types and so their single embodiments are replaceable. This is why Stalin can replace Hitler in a joke, Molotov can replace Goering and so on—the function, the "role" of the characters is the same. The little Toto of the French joke can become the little Moritz of Hungarian/Jewish joke. The same is true about "space" characters. The bus can be replaced by the train and the train by the airplane, yet the "venue" plays the same role. The joke characters are not clowns, they are not clowning. Moreover, the demise of joke culture also sees the demise of joke characters.

Let me return, though, to the nineteenth century when joke culture flourished. I mentioned earlier that joke culture remained an oral culture. It became the oral narrative culture of the city. Here, I again return to Habermas. Habermas connected the emergence of bourgeois public life to the increasing importance of city life. Joke culture is an urban culture. It is the oral culture of the city. This is so, even if it did not develop only in cities; nonetheless, it was and remained an urban culture. For example, the famous Jewish jokes of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were invented or repeated, or reinvented in the East European *stetl*, their typical characters were businessmen, artisans, beggars or *shnorrers*, marriage brokers, and rabbis.

There is a kind of resemblance between fairy tales, the typical oral culture of the village, on the one hand, and joke telling, the typical oral culture of the town, on the other. Fairy tales, like jokes, are also stories of sexual and social wish fulfillment. Yet, one does not react to a fairy tale with laughter. By contrast, that joke culture became the oral culture of modern cities at the time of the emergence of an enlightened public sphere tells something about the character of this newly constituted sphere. The new oral culture had to prefer narratives that were critical, skeptical, and self-ironic, remedies against too much seriousness, self-righteousness and fanaticism. Jokes are exactly such narratives. The new public sphere is rational, thus it prefers narratives that address reason, and this is exactly what jokes do. Joke culture sides with the

rational since we burst out in laughter about something that is non-rational. To be sure, "rational" may mean different things here, from good common sense to Reason with a capital "R," but this was also true about all kinds of discussions practiced in the public sphere of those times. It can be argued, especially in the light of Habermas' version in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* that the genre of jokes, which preceded the emergence of joke culture by perhaps two thousand years, became cultivated, found its own niche, space, time and choreography as a practice within this public sphere for the reasons mentioned above.

The joke as a public genre was not lost under the Gutenberg galaxy, and it is the last genre still orally transmitted. True, books of jokes have appeared; however, they became more widespread the more joke culture declined. Jokes read are not jokes proper. Jokes proper thrive in the company of joke tellers. The public and oral character of jokes creates a silent conspiracy among the listeners on the one hand, the teller of the jokes, on the other. Readiness to laugh, as laughter itself, creates a bond of quasi-comradeship. This is a companionship without emotions, a kind of rational companionship, in which "we all understand, and we understand in the same manner." This is why the joke narrator has to presuppose the relative homogeneity of the company tuned to laughter. One tells certain jokes to certain people from whom one can expect to grasp the hints, the hidden message of the joke. One cannot tell jokes with footnotes.

All orally transmitted genres share some features. Fairy tales, like jokes, are not just orally transmitted, they are also modified, and there exists several variations of the same joke. One could even dare to say that the same joke is not even told twice, because jokes live in their delivery. Not every teller of jokes is equally the master of delivery. The personality of the joke teller, his ability to keep a poker face before getting to the punch line, his gestures, and the modulation of his voice all contribute to the pleasure of listening to a joke. A joke which sounds flat when read can be superbly enjoyable when delivered by an able joke teller.

Similarly to those who tell fairy tales joke tellers are not professionals. There have always been professional jesters, as there are now professional humorists. A professional teller of jokes in the cabaret, the circus, or in the comic theater, appears in a public space, but it is public in the same sense that public transport is public. Everyone has access to the performance who pays the entrance fee. Professional joke tellers are paid for telling jokes; they are specialized actors like Benny Hill or Jerry Seinfeld. Yet the non-professional "dilettante" joke tellers tell jokes in the club or hotel in a company of friends and their sole payment is laughter. The teller of the joke is one of us, and in this sense he or she is more "public" than the professional.

Whenever a group gathers and gets attuned to listening to jokes, several of the members of the group—even if not all of them—will tell a joke in turn,

some will do it better, some others worse. Yet, joke telling ceases to be a living culture if there is just a single entertainer in a group and all others are just listeners and recipients. One should not forget that jokes do not circulate in one single group; they need to be re-told in other groups within a generation or in different generations. Otherwise joke culture ceases to be a public culture and becomes an entirely esoteric one. One learns to tell a joke properly only by telling jokes. Moreover, there is a silent competition among the listeners, since several participants can hardly wait their turn. The desire to speak instead of listening indicates that telling a joke goes with major psychological gratification. It also goes with major psychological risks. Both gratification and risk is greater here than in other oral cultures.

In a similar way to fairy tales, jokes also employ schematic repetitions. For example, in fairy tales there are mostly three brothers or sisters, and the youngest will always hit the mark and become happy. Or there is a good witch and a bad witch. As I have already mentioned, in jokes, and especially semantic ones all repeated schemes are schemes of irrationality, like incorrect reasoning, faulty logic, following a way of demonstration *ad absurdum*, upsetting the language game, automatic thinking, sophistic reasoning, breaking down all established frames of reference, and so on. There are also constantly recurring butts like impotency of every kind, butt characters like the mother-in-law, "pairs" like doctor/patient, poor/wealthy, and the priest/believer.

The most important similarity between fairy tales and jokes, though, is their indifference to reality, possibility and probability. Jokes, just like fairy tales, are indifferent to belief. To enjoy the sense of a joke has nothing to do with believing that the thing has really happened, probably happened, or could have happened. The grotesque, the fantastic, or the absurd perhaps surprises us in a novella or a drama, but not in a joke or in a fairy tale. Jokes, too, may lack any fantastic or absurd features, as there are other jokes which abound with them. This is why I would not say that there are no "realistic" jokes, only that jokes are indifferent to reality. There is nothing absurd about the joke-like anecdote of Thales and the Thracian maid, yet there is in the constantly repeated and variegated joke about the egg. According to Freud, jokes are indifferent to reality precisely because they resemble dreams. To be sure, there are no nightmare jokes, although after some reflection one could judge a joke as a nightmare, although without anxiety. Since jokes are not related to interests and since they are told from the position of reason, they are also anti-emotional. Laughter can also be described as the instinct of reason.[9]

Let me now return to the sphere or locus and the time of joke culture.

The sphere or locus of joke culture occupies the seam between private and public. There is no public access to the representative places of joke-telling such as clubs or cafes; one cannot get entrance simply by paying a fee,

one needs to be accepted. Surely, everyone can sit in a café if paying the check, yet one cannot join the company of joke tellers without having been invited. At the same time, public issues are discussed in these groups; there is a passionate interest in all public affairs, and the jokes mostly ridicule these as well as social restrictions. But they do it "without interest," that is, with their interests and emotions suspended.

As already mentioned, the time of joke culture is dawn and dusk, neither the light of the day nor the darkness of the night. Liberty and relief is sorely needed during dusk and dawn, and jokes are "free" for in the joke world there are no inhibitions, one can transgress. But transgression also has limits. There are permitted and non-permitted transgressions. Only the non-permitted ones are regarded as transgressions within a group of people telling jokes. Yet those limits are not set by an external authority, they are set by the joke-telling group itself, and they can be limits of morals as well as taste. As it generally happens in acts of speech "without interest," moral limits are also limits of taste and vice versa. In fact, moral limits and limits of taste mostly coincide. In the age of the Enlightenment political thinkers tended to accept the principle that people should obey only self-created laws. In the realm of joke culture there are self-created norms. If someone transgresses those unwritten norms he or she will punished, not with prison, but first and foremost with silence, with the absence of laughter, and secondly, with an informal rather than formal ostracism.

The readiness for being attuned to listening to jokes also requires the gathering to loosen their personal and social inhibitions. A few glasses of wine can contribute to putting the members of the company in this state of mind. However, this is possible only under the condition of mutual trust. One must be confident that one is not being threatened with personal exposure. A direct allusion made about one member of the company betrays the basic trust and makes the society of jokers uncomfortable. Such a breech of the joke partners' confidence is also a breech of the rule of joke-culture, of disinterestedness. The joke ceases to be rational and allows the expression of personal *ressentiment*. A joke teller who ventures into informally prohibited territory will immediately meet sanction: the punch line will not be acknowledged by laughter, but instead be followed by embarrassed silence. Repeated transgression of the rules breaks up a company of jokers. Prohibition of direct personal offense characterizes all groups within joke culture.

Nonetheless, jokes are different, and they have differences in style and character. Certain jokes, which transgress the rule in one society of jokers, are accepted in another. The same kind of joke can transgress the informal rules of taste at one time, yet not at another time. This is especially true about sexual jokes. For centuries some jokes were not allowed to be told in the company of women, yet this restriction has been annulled. One does not tell certain jokes in the company of small children. One does not tell jokes about

impotency in the company of an impotent man. One does not crack jokes about God in the company of deeply religious persons. The latter restrictions are elastic. It depends on the storyteller's judgment of the situation and his knowledge of the character of religious members of the group to assess, whether the religious person will be hurt by a joke about God or laugh together with the joker.

There are refined jokes and rude ones, sophisticated philosophical jokes and quite direct obscene ones. There are circles of people in which only sophisticated, complicated, philosophical jokes circulate; other circles of people in which rude and obscene ones circulate; and finally there are groups of people in which both kinds circulate, although at different occasions. One needs not only to tune in to tell and listen to jokes, but also to adjust to the specific informal rules of good taste in a company of joke tellers. If one does not do so, one will be sanctioned in the above-described manner: embarrassed silence will follow the joke instead of laughter. For example, in the United States of America ethnic jokes were accepted for several decades, whereas today some of them are off-limits. The same jokes which would have solicited laughter earlier have become embarrassing in another time or place. I would repeat that embarrassed silence instead of laughter is the most serious sanction in the company of joke tellers. One can, of course, protest against the informal boundaries and sanctions, and reject them as prejudicial. One can also tell non-accepted jokes on purpose. This gesture is similar to other gestures of transgression. In transgressing the informal boundaries set by a company of jokers, the transgressor does not want to be acknowledged by laughter, but calls for embarrassed silence, even for loud protest, because these are the adequate answers to provocation.

There are also places where it is in bad taste to tell jokes, for example in the cemetery, especially during a funeral, not only because joking is perceived there and then as sacrilegious, but also because others would not listen and surely they would not laugh. To be sure, telling jokes in places and times one should not is a gesture of subversion. However, subversion of the informal limits set to liberty by the free informal agreement of members of a group of people contradicts the condition of disinterestedness. It reintroduces to the suspended practical and pragmatic attitude aims such as making other persons ashamed or angry. Such aims contradict the general rules of joke as a genre for the free play of thoughts, and turn the joke into something used as a means. This is the case irrespective of the circumstance, that is, whether the joke itself is offensive or just the place and time, where and when it is told.

Let me return briefly to the choreography of the normal joke situation. The company of jokers is an informal company which does not gather only in order to tell jokes. After having discussed several things of public interest, the company gets tuned in to continue with telling jokes. There can be excellent tellers of jokes and less good ones, yet several persons will tell jokes in

turn. Still, one can distinguish between the position of joke teller and the position of listeners or "recipients," even if many members of the group will occupy both positions in turn. In this respect a community of jokers resembles communities of informal, direct democracy. It is not obligatory for all to tell jokes, but they can, if they wish. According to Freud the joke teller is an exhibitionist. One can also say that the joke teller is involved in an ego trip. The joke teller occupies the position of power, of superiority. He already knows the joke he is about to tell, he knows the point ahead, he is in control. He also chooses the jokes he tells, this privilege belongs to his power position. Moreover, exhibitionism is not just permitted, it is also required. It is in his exhibitionist performance that the joke teller suspends several inhibitions and sidesteps the censor. Finally, the joke teller privileges what he otherwise would not enjoy, namely the monopolization of the speaker's position. Joke telling is always the exercise of power, even if the teller of the joke does not boost his ego. However, in cases of good joke performance the joke teller also boosts his ego, and he can double the pleasure he takes in himself by being self-ironical. If the others gratify him with good cheers and laughter he will feel his superiority will be confirmed. Yet, joke telling, as we saw, is also risky. If there is no laughter, there is humiliation and sanction. The teller of the joke will appear ridiculous, the butt of laughter. In such a case one does not laugh at the point of the joke, but at the joke teller himself. (I mention parenthetically that there is a type of joke which makes fun of telling jokes in the wrong way.)

Yet even if the joke teller is the exhibitionist and he is in the situation of power, relief or liberation is the joke's effect on the recipients, the listeners. Relief, the feel of liberation is the effect of the point, it must be sudden, unexpected, a surprise. Since the joke teller knows the point in advance, only the recipients share this pleasure. They laugh, they feel relieved and merry. The joke teller himself does not experience this relief. Thus both positions, the position of the joke teller and the position of joke listeners, offer their own gratifications. Hence, there is a shared choreography of joke culture, namely that several persons tell jokes in turn, even if not all of them are equally good joke tellers. The choreography of joke cultures entails that one can enjoy two different types of psychological gratification.

Let's return to Habermas' book, though. Joke culture was born and thrives in a world of cultural discourse. It thrives in a world of cultural discourse without class barriers, although not without inherent rules of decency and taste. It is a culture where private interests and pragmatic aims are suspended, and motivations are not suspect. Yet one cannot conduct cultural discourse without emotional involvement, without making clear the differences of opinions and values. In cultural discourse, in general, there are no narrators and recipients, just participants. Cultural discourse is neither an art nor a genre, but a practice in judgment and reflection of publicly minded

people who are ready to think with their own minds. The kind of position Kant called "pluralism," that is, to speak as "we" instead of "I" is, here, a claim and remains only a claim. Every speaker claims universality for his judgment, this is the principle of *Furwahrhalten* or truthfulness, although for quite different judgments, not for the same ones. Otherwise there could be no meaningful conversation, no interesting debate.

However, joke culture speaks the language of "we." "We the jokers" we laugh at the same jokes. We all laugh together about the irrationality of life, men, death, sex, politics, social rules and inhibitions, tyrants, slaves, jealousy, stupidity, anger, false pretences, self-righteousness, logic, thinking, conventions—about virtually everything. As I have already said, here veracity or verisimilitude and belief are suspended, and so are the differences of opinions. There are no opinions at all. The humanistic and old-fashioned idea of Schiller, which is also expressed in Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*, of universal fraternity in joy is far from being utopian in the company of jokers. Fraternity is not universal, for it is the fraternity of a group, the group of jokers, yet it is a fraternity in joy. There are many kinds of fraternity in joy, and not all of them are attractive. When a soccer team wins the cup, the fans and supporters embrace one another in the ecstasy of joy, as people also often do at the defeat or even death of their enemies. In these and similar cases joy is either not disinterested, or it is the satisfaction of several very heterogeneous desires, such as the desire for victory or revenge.

Nonetheless, when it comes to jokes the desire to be satisfied in the fraternity of laughter, merriment and joy, although only indirectly, is the desire for liberty, for freedom. This is why the joy is reactive and not motivational. It is reactive in spite of satisfying a desire. To speak Kant's language, it is freedom as the faculty of desire which is satisfied by jokes. However, this freedom is not transcendental freedom, and neither is it a lower faculty of desire. Rather, the joke is a play and a judgment, and as such is "seated" in the faculty of pleasure-displeasure, and yet it is still the practice of our faculty of critical reason. As I have formulated it paradoxically: laughter is the instinct of reason. I may now add: good jokes unleash the instinct of reason for the right reason. Joke culture is a culture of Enlightenment, and it is one without pompousness, without illusions vested into the power of Reason, without certainties, even without opinions.

In the light of the day of mass society things look shabbier than in the half-light of dawn. Yet, these things can also be treated with humor, even after the withering of joke culture. There is now humor everywhere, in painting and in photography, in music and in prose. The comic phenomenon wanders from place to place, for it is the immortal signal of human finitude.

Habermas wrote his book on the structural change of public life more than forty years ago. This was a fresh and young book and it remains both fresh and young. This accounts for its attraction for me, and for so many

others. It is my guess that today Habermas would end this book on a different, albeit perhaps not less critical, tone, but without nostalgia. We have lost many things since the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, yet we have also gained many other things instead. And none of us can pit those gains against those losses or vice versa, for they are incomparable.

NOTES

1. Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Offentlichkeit* (1964), trans. as *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, trans. by Thomas Burger with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1989).
2. I. Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. Victor Lyle Dowdell, rev. and ed. Hans H. Rudnick, with an introduction by Frederick P. Van de Pitte (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978), 171–172.
3. Kant, *Critique of Judgment Including the First Introduction*, trans. with an introduction by Wener S. Pluhar, with a forward by Mary J. Gregor (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), 203, paragraph 332.
4. Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), especially "Sensus Communis or an Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour," sect. 2, part I, 48–53; see also, sect. 1, part II, 38–39.
5. Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (London: Verso Press).
6. Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, 189.
7. Shaftesbury, "Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour," 3, 1, 58–61.
8. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of the Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller with an analysis of the text and forward by J. N. Findlay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979) C/bb "The Ethical Order," paras. 469–470, 283–284.
9. Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*.

Chapter Six

The Contemporary Historical Novel

Historical drama was born with Shakespeare. He was the first, and for a long time the only dramatist, who substituted history for mythology in tragic drama. The genre we call the novel was born almost simultaneously with drama, but not as the historical but as the comic novel. Another type of novel, the so-called social or realistic novel made its appearance in the eighteenth century. The historical novel, however, appeared only after the French Revolution, simultaneously with the emergence of the grand narratives. Not that it tried to fictionalize the grand narrative itself—that was attempted rather in drama, for example in Goethe's *Faust*, but without establishing a genre in its own right. It was not the content, but the vision of the grand narrative which the historical novel and drama shared, at least in one respect. Historical novels portrayed through the vicissitudes of representative characters and situations central conflicts between the old and the new tied to the birth of modernity. The outcome was the victory of the new, depicted as progressive change, even if the author sympathized with the forms of life and the mores of the victims. Despite all his sympathies with the old Scottish clans or the revolutionary Puritans, Walter Scott portrayed their demise as a historical necessity, the condition of the birth of a modern Britain; Tolstoy's *War and Peace* ends with the Decembrist conspiracy against the Tsarist autocracy. It is perhaps because of this shared vision with the grand narrative that traditional historical novels told very similar stories about the past of the present and the historical past. Let me just mention that only in America does the past of the present remain the concern of historical novelists, since America has no remote past. A traditional historical novel like *Gone with the Wind* takes place around the Civil War, whereas a contemporary historical novel, *The Dante Club,* is set immediately after the Civil War.

What is the difference between the novel in general and the historical novel in particular, and between the historical novel and historiography? All three are fictions, although different kinds of fiction.

If one includes the novel among the arts, this does not presuppose any necessary link between truth and reality. Truth in art is revelatory truth, *aletheia,* as interpreted by Heidegger. But do we need to include fiction in the category of art? Paul Ernst for example referred to the novel as a half-art. However, if we are happy to include novels, as a genre in literature, among the arts, then we have to concede that truth in the novel, as with all kinds of works of art, be it a painting, a sonata or a building, is revelatory truth. Truth as *aletheia* has little to do with the real; a novel is as different from probability, possibility or actuality as a joke. When we read Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* we do not ask whether a realm of dwarfs, giants or horses exists. We do not even ask whether a girl like Elisabeth Bennett in *Pride and Prejudice* was modeled on a "real" girl or invented entirely by the author. For it does not make any difference as far as the truth of the novel is concerned.

Although novels are fiction, this is not entirely true in the case of historical novels. Some connection between reality and truth is re-established. A historical novel cannot be entirely self-referential, for it always refers to something external to itself. One can invent in a novel an American civil war in the sixteenth century, but this would be science fiction, not a historical novel. But this does not make a historical novel into a narrative kind of historiography, since even if some of the characters and their stories are not fictitious, most are. And what is more important, the truth of a historical novel remains revelatory, whereas the truth of historiography can be described with some simplification as aiming for verisimilitude. This is why biographies of representative historical figures cannot be regarded as historical novels, with the exception of those historical figures about whom we know very little, as for instance in the case of the Apostle Paul in Cannon's novel of the same name. Novels written about Moses or Jesus normally focus on the period between childhood and their calling, that is, the years of their lives about which nothing has been written in the Bible. Needless to say, they are not historical novels. Neither are the stories of biblical heroines like Sarah, Zipporah by Halter or Dinah by Diament. Nor are so called family sagas, like Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks* or Galsworthy's *Forsyth Saga*, even though they portray the essential changes in family life and mores as due to changing historical circumstances. All the characters in family sagas are fictitious. Satirical novels are sometimes parodies of political conspiracies, as for instance Fielding's *Jonathan Wilde*. Nevertheless, we do not need to know the model of the parody to enjoy the novel.

Georg Lukács wrote an interesting study on the historical novel in which he discusses some representative structural features of the genre. In spite of all their differences, to which I will presently turn, contemporary historical

novels share these structural features with the traditional historical novel. First, the central character of a historical novel stands in the "middle" between the representatives of the two or more main historical forces in conflict. Standing in the middle can mean that the principal character is decent, yet ready for compromise, but it can also be the case that he stands apart from the historical forces in conflict because he has decided to avoid fundamentalism, fanaticism and self-delusion. Having such a main character as the center of the narrative makes it possible for the novelist to portray all the main historical protagonists from the inside. The young Morton in Walter Scott's *Old Mortality* stands between Puritan fanatics and loyalists to the old world order. In Feuchtwanger's *Jewish War* trilogy Josephus Flavius is placed between the Roman imperial court and the vanquished Jewish community. Or to turn to contemporary historical novels, the heroine of Peter Pranger's novel *Die Philosophin* is Sophie Volland. Through her story the author introduces us into the company of the Encyclopedists, especially Diderot, but also into the court sphere of Madame Pompadour. The middling hero of Saylor's entertaining detective fictions set in ancient Rome is an utterly fictitious investigator, called Gordianus. Through him we encounter leading historical actors such as Cicero, Pompey, Catilina, historical protagonists and mortal enemies during the last decades of the Roman Republic. Even the Apostle Paul in Cannon's novel stands between the Romans and the Jews.

The second structural feature of the historical novel, according to Lukács, is what he calls necessary anachronism. Even if a writer tries hard to remain true to the consciousness and self-understanding of the historical epoch he portrays, she cannot achieve her aim. Unwittingly, the self-understanding of her own age will impede the understanding of the past. There is a difference, however, between the traditional and the contemporary historical novel in this respect. In the contemporary historical novel anachronism is mostly conscious. Sometimes irony indicates the purpose, as in Pamuk's *My Name is Red*. Sometimes the author spells it out, like Saylor, who wonders whether his country, America, will meet a fate similar to that of the Roman Republic. Finally, indirect reference to the present can be made obvious by presenting parallel stories from different historical epochs, as Pears does in his *Dream of Scipio*, where the third and final story takes place in France during the Second World War.

The self-conscious anachronism of contemporary historical novelists, in contrast to the unintended anachronism of the traditional historical novelists, also indicates a fundamental change in the perception of history itself. If history has no telos, if there is no universal progress or regress, things of the past can illuminate the present and vice versa, for things that happened in the past can happen again in the present, not in the same way, yet as far as the fate of individuals is concerned, in similar ways.

The third structural characteristic of historical novels, according to Lukács, is the portrayal of the so-called people, that is, the lowly, excluded, marginal strata or classes. In traditional historical novels members of those strata or classes are beyond doubt idealized: Platon Karatajev in Tolstoy, the peasant girls, Jews and servants in Walter Scott, or Mammy in *Gone With the Wind*. The same classes or strata are also portrayed in contemporary historical novels, but without a grain of sentimentalism or romanticism. In the contemporary historical novel there is no moral difference due to one's place in the social hierarchy.

All representative contemporary historical novels share a common vision of history and of the possibility and worth of historically relevant actions. Although in all probability none of the writers has ever read Hegel, they constantly polemicize with Hegel's understanding of the role of reason in history, not because they know that there is no reason in history, but because they believe that, if there is one, we can know nothing about it, and that it is therefore of no significance for us. From this it follows that they view very skeptically all so-called world-historical individuals. In Hegel's philosophy of history the main world-historical individuals are Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar and Napoleon. No doubt, he had good reasons to select exactly those three. It was they, who through their conquests spread the then highest cultural achievements to the widest territory of the known world. The authors of contemporary historical novels do not share Hegel's judgment. In their mind it is not the warlords but an entirely different kind of people who played the most significant role in humanity's histories. They were artists, traders, cartographers, philosophers, scholars. The most important events were not wars but civil wars, scientific discoveries such as blood transfusion, even the South Sea Bubble. And even less can contemporary historical novelists share Hegel's understanding of the world-historical role of evil, because nothing plays a world-historical role in their works. Modern novelists write about histories in the plural, never any kind of world history. Moreover, they do not believe that evil can play a great role, even if evil is understood in a perspectivist manner. One can accept if one is a perspectivist, that every kind of new, unusual action or idea is regarded from the perspective of the old world as intrinsically evil. Yet even if we reduce the concept of evil to this perspectivist minimum, we no longer accept the tenet that the new as evil advances history to the better. In the eyes of Cicero Caesar was evil, the man who destroyed the Republic. Although Gordianus, Saylor's main character, does not share Cicero's perspective he nevertheless has a low view of Caesar and his machinations.

The authors of contemporary historical novels have very different images of men. The Hungarian writer György Spiro has a philosophical anthropology that is extremely gloomy. There is not a single person in his universe who is not either wicked or a naïve imbecile. In Pearl's historical universe there

are a few exceptions: the decent men and women. And there are also others who have not lost the capacity for regret or repentance. The world of Liss' novels is very forgiving. Humans are frail, they are treated with understanding within limits, among them also the central character of two of his novels; Liss, or better, his main character, is unforgiving, however, if someone crosses the limit twice. Harris for his part makes allowances for shrewd manipulation if he finds there at least a grain of unselfishness or of simple empathy, as in Cicero and his secretary Tiro, the narrator in *Imperium*. And he admires without reservation the men who are possessed by the unselfish passion for science, for truth, like Pliny the Elder.

Although their image of men can be very different, their image of history is rather similar. There are stories which always repeat themselves. Men and women vest their hopes in some cause or thing. They cherish the conviction that if they try hard, if they achieve this or that, the world will turn into a better place. Sometimes their passions are invested in vain, their world collapses and so do their hopes. Sometimes their dreams come true, but only to become unlike their dreams. All passions are tied to illusions which finally fade away. The world does not change even though it constantly changes. We are presented with a kind of *corso e ricorso.* Of course the story of lost illusions is not new. It is as old as the realistic novel itself and the novel of education, the *Bildungsroman.* The classic novels of the nineteenth century, from Stendhal, Balzac, and Dickens onwards, are full of stories about lost illusions. But the lost illusions relate to personal ambition in love, politics, and public success. In the contemporary historical novel, or least in those I know, no one has illusions about her—or him—self. The main characters are basically decent persons, not particularly interested in their personal advancement to the top; indeed most of them already occupy the place best suited to them, which can also be at the top. The Dante scholar wants to remain a Dante scholar, the engineer a water engineer, the investigator an investigator.

The emotional coloring of this shared vision of history depends mainly on the writer's image of men and of his heroes. For Harris and Pearl, for example, and even for Saylor, what has been in vain was nevertheless not in vain. For it is a great thing to embrace a cause, such as the successful defense of someone wrongly accused, to observe a unique natural phenomenon or to find the murderer of one's father, and to embrace this cause sincerely, to put your life at risk for it, yet spare the lives of others. It is a great thing to believe, to cherish hopes, even in phantoms, if one does not hurt innocent people on purpose, because to live in peace with oneself is not nothing. The morality, the decency of men and women, one's involvement in discovering the truth about something is of value. It counts. Among all the contemporary writers of historical fictions that I know, only Spiro's novel, *Captivity*, ends in total resignation. But it is not just the vision of the world and of men that

distinguishes the contemporary from the traditional historical novel. Irrespective of their quality as novels, contemporary historical novels also depart in several other respects from the grand narrative.

The omniscient narrator disappears in contemporary historical novels (as in most contemporary novels in general). The stories are frequently told in the first-person singular, as in the novel of Liss, in *Pompei* by Harris, in Eco's *The Name of the Rose*. In Harris's *Imperium* the narrative is presented as a biography of Cicero written by Tiro, his slave, scribe and friend. In Pears'*An Instance of the Fingerpost* the same story is told from four different positions; in his *Dream of Scipio* the stories are deciphered from old manuscripts, in Pamuk's *My Name is Red* even a painted horse or a color tells a part of the story. Where the author occupies the position of a narrator, he or she writes from the standpoint of the main character and tells only as much as the main character witnessed with her eyes or ears.

A novel is a novel. It needs to be teleologically constructed. Through all its contingencies, the story finds its way to its end. Whether the end is happy or unhappy, it is the end of a particular narrative. The reader can phantasize about the possible continuation of the narrative, but she must believe the author. One can interpret a great novel in a thousand different ways but one can only interpret what has been written. A great traditional novel is a world, a closed world. However, this is not the case in the contemporary novel, and especially not in the contemporary historical novel. Since there is no omniscient narrator, the reader can always experiment with alternatives. For example, Tiro, the scribe, writes about Cicero. He is a loyal friend and slave. How do we know that the story he describes is true, that he has not kept a few secrets? What might these secrets—if they are secrets—be? Must we believe that in Spiro's novel Yuri in fact met Christ in the prison cell? The question is not whether Christ could have been in a prison cell in Jerusalem (for that is an irresolvable historical question) but whether Yuri's story can be believed in its own right. One should not forget that memory is always distorted; observed and experienced events are fixed in memory in a quasi-distorted manner. In contemporary novels the reader therefore does not get the narrative ready-made, she reads the narrative critically. She experiments with alternative stories; she tries to unmask the lies and misunderstandings of the writers. In other words, she is constantly involved in puzzle-solving.

The first well known contemporary, postmodern historical novel was written by a philosopher, Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose*, which established a new tradition. Contemporary historical novels written since *The Name of the Rose* followed in its footsteps. Some are far better novels than their model, but aesthetic judgment is not the question here. *The Name of the Rose* begins as a kind of thriller. Murders are committed in a monastery, and two men, the story teller and his mentor, like self-appointed detectives, decide to catch the murderer. As it turns out later, even though other murders

follow, they will lose their significance. At the end of the novel we even lose interest in the detective work, or rather, another kind of detective work, relating to conflict between the Church and the Throne, heretics and punishment, replaces the initial investigation. There is a murder case or there are several murder cases also in Pears, in Liss, in Pearl, in Saylor, Pamuk, Harris and Spiro. And in each case the murder riddles are nothing but manifestations of other riddles, of other "cases." Who are the real perpetrators? Perpetrators of what crimes? Such and similar questions will cast their shadow over the initial case. I do not think that the thriller aspects of modern historical novels are just tricks or attention-catching devices. The message is philosophical. As I mentioned, in the contemporary historical novel all the stories or segments of stories are riddles, for we do not know whether the memory of the storyteller is precise, and if he errs, which we presuppose anyhow, what has been distorted and to what extent. Sometimes, when the same story is told by several persons, one distortion might correct the other, but we still lack certainty. For example, the last storyteller of *An Instance of the Fingerpost* unmasks all the others as liars by revealing himself as the real murderer. However, his real story sounds far more fantastic than the stories unmasked by him. Finally, we throw in the towel. We do not know. The contemporary historical novel cannot be closed with the satisfying words "The End."

In a traditional historical novel there is no essential difference between the past of the present and the remote past. Narrating a story from the past of the present and the remote past were perceived as being equally "historical." This is no longer the case. We do not perceive novels about the past of our present as "historical." A novel about the Second World War, for example *The Naked and the Dead*, is not a historical novel. Even less do we perceive novels about the Holocaust, for example *Fateless* by Imre Kertesz, as historical novels. Lukács' necessary anachronism is impossible in novels about the past of our present. It is not just that we perceive a past story as relevant for the present, but the past of the present is deeply, unmistakably present in our present. It is not a closed chapter. I could add not yet, but I think that as far as Holocaust novels are concerned it never will be.

The contemporary historical novel does not cover the whole range of the past. All significant historical novels, perhaps also the less significant ones, concentrate on two historical periods. First, they concentrate on stories of Rome from the last century of the Republic up to the final collapse of the Roman Empire. Among the novels I mentioned this period is covered by all the books of the "Sub Rosa" series by Saylor, the first story in Pears' *The Dream of Scipio*, by Harris's *Pompei* and *Imperium* and by Spiro's novel *Captivity*. The renewal of interest in this period of Rome began earlier in Robert Graves' *Claudius* novels, which belong to the genre of biographical fiction. It is worth noting in passing that even during the period of Graecomania in philosophy, no historical novels were written on the Greeks. Second,

they concentrate on stories about the emergence of the modern world from the late medieval period onwards until the age of Enlightenment. The historical novels that treat the post-Enlightenment period are confined to American history. Both of Pearl's novels, *The Dante Club* and *The Poe Shadow*, take place in the nineteenth century. Among the novels I mentioned, the following deal with the period of the emergence of modernity: the second part of Pears' *The Dream of Scipio*, the three novels by Liss, *The Name of the Rose*, and the novels by Rey, Sarah Dunant, Pranger, and Lohner. Several stories take place in the same period and in the same country or city, for example seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England, London and Oxford, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France, Versailles, Paris, and fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Florence. I know, for example, of three novels which center on the murder of Giuliano Medici, the revenge of Lorenzo il Magnifico, the rebellion against the Medici, the rule and the fall of Savonarola. Of these Dunant's *The Birth of Venus* is to my mind the best. I can think of four reasons for writers to choose this period and city. The first reason is that the "murder" motive is here intimately related to the political. The question is not why Giuliano was murdered, because this is obvious, but who murdered him, who was behind the conspiracy. Second, this event opened the possibility of moving philosophers (like Pico della Mirandola) and artists to the centre of the novel. The cult figure of Leonardo da Vinci plays an entirely fictitious part in three of these novels. Third, one of the major conflicts of modernity, a conflict we still feel today, made its first appearance in Florence after the murder of Giuliano Medici. Savonarola was not just a fanatic, he was perhaps the first conscious fundamentalist ever. He hated modernity in the making, the liberal treatment of religiosity combined with an unscrupulous quest for luxury, and he was ready to throw not just the paintings of nudes but also their collectors on the bonfire of vanities. In addition, the main targets for punishment beside the rich were so-called loose women and homosexuals. Since difference had already made its appearance, the outlawing of difference could be put on the agenda.

So in sum, the collapse of the ancient world and the birth of the modern world are the "periods" of special interest for contemporary historical novelists. A world goes down in violence and a world is born in violence. There is no historical novel without violence. The contemporary historical novel is no exception. But there is an essential difference between the kind of violence portrayed in traditional and contemporary historical novels. In traditional historical novels violence asserts itself in war, war between us and them, as Carl Schmitt described it. Wars against so-called natural enemies, wars that were mostly regarded as just from the perspective of the main character, but also civil wars. It is in the situation of war that a person can show his worth, display his courage or cowardice, defend his honor or go down in shame. The main characters of traditional novels are men, who are, of course, in love

with women. War is public but women remain in the private sphere. The main characters belong generally to the upper classes, to the aristocracy or the gentry, for they are the ones who must defend their honor. But, as I already mentioned, the so called lower classes, especially peasants, can also play an important role, replacing the chorus of the ancient Greek drama.

In novels which concentrate on the age of the birth of modernity, war plays no role at all. Certainly, there are references to previous wars, especially civil wars, if the secret of one or the other main characters lies buried in the past, as in *An Instance of the Fingerpost* or *The Dante Club*. In novels about the end of the Roman Republic wars are portrayed by Saylor. They are, however, depicted as entirely senseless. Moreover, the wars are external to the development of the main narrative and particularly to showing the moral worth of the protagonists' character. None of the other Roman novels (of Spiro, Pears or Harris) tells a war story. Nevertheless violence is omnipresent. What kind of violence? Proscription, lynching, pogroms, witch hunts, the hunting down of heretics, the murder of political enemies. Violence is played out in the open, as with mob action, incited by the vested interests of the rich and mighty, or in the dark, perpetrated by conspirators. The main act of violence in the Roman stories is proscription and the unpunishable murders it licenses. As this kind of violence shows, the thriller-like character of many contemporary historical novels is not a trick, but belongs to the heart of the stories themselves. The targets of violence are mainly the innocents, the usual scapegoats, against whom mass hatred can be easily mobilized. Thus the main characters in many contemporary historical novels are women, Jews and heretics. But the protagonists of these novels are in general Roman citizens. I know of one exception. The central character of the novel *Captivity* by Spiro is a Roman citizen, who is also a Jew. In this novel violence is omnipresent, yet it is also, so to speak, "civil." In contrast to Feuchtwanger, Spiro does not portray the Jewish War. The main scenes of violence in his book are pogroms: pogroms against Jews, against Christians, especially the infamous and well documented pogrom of Alexandria.

Let me now turn briefly to the second, and perhaps major, period covered by the contemporary historical novel. Women branded as witches are burned at the stake in two novels (*The Name of the Rose* and *Die Philosophin*). Witch hunts against heretics also play a major role in the second part of *Dream of Scipio*. Women suffer from persecution for their "loose morals," especially in the novels on Florence. In five of the novels I have mentioned, Jews are the main characters or one of the main characters, who are mostly targets of hatred and persecution. For example, a Jew is the central character in the three novels by Liss. Liss presents the stories of Sephardic Jews in London and Amsterdam, who, even if politically marginal, play an essential part in trade as well as in the early world of banking. The hero of his *A Conspiracy of Paper* is a marginal Jewish man, a former boxer, who returns

home to expose his father's murderer, but finds himself confronted by the famous gangster Jonathan Wild and becomes entangled in the South Sea Bubble, which he helps to unmask after several adventures. In the other novels with Jewish protagonists Jews and women are the victims of violence. Almost all the stories told in these novels are also known from history books. The success of at least two of those novels is due to the way they draw the interpretation of historical events *into the presentation of interesting characters and moving personal fates.* I have in mind Rey's *The Master of the Compasses* and Lohner's *The Jewess of Trent*. The first is also a story about the Sephardic Jews who drew the first reliable map of the sea, absolutely necessary for successful navigation. Their work and person were supported and lavishly rewarded by the King of Aragon, whom their leaders met personally. Aragon was as yet spared the pogroms in Castile. The disaster came unexpectedly as a terrible surprise. These people had felt themselves esteemed and safe. What is called necessary anachronism is obviously felt in reading the novel. Even if we know that this indeed happened at Palma de Majorca, we still think of the prosperous German Jews at the time of the rise of Hitler. Nevertheless, a novel is a novel. The pogrom is, so to speak, the "condition" or the "occasion" to present two young men, two friends, who only get to know their inner selves in a time of great trial. The serious and religious youth will convert to Christianity to save his life, whereas his rough, ambitious and sometime cynical friend chooses rather to jump to his death from a tower in Barcelona rather than abandon his faith under duress. If the pogrom does not come as a surprise for the reader, the actions or reactions of the characters do. Lohner's *The Jewess of Trent* is about a blood libel in Trent roughly at the time of Savonarola. A child is found dead and declared to have been murdered by a Jewess. (As we know from the preface, this child will become a saint of the Catholic Church two decades later.) Jews are coerced to confess and convert. The novel develops around two centers. First, the Jewess and the Jewish community. Second, the Catholic Church, more exactly, three representatives of the Church. One of them, who initiated the trial of the Jews, is a fundamentalist fanatic, the second stands for something we would now call a "liberal" position, the third, the pragmatist, for the renewal of the Church but without abuse. The three priests conduct a long philosophical discussion. Although this discussion could have been conducted before Luther, it could have also been conducted the day before yesterday.

My comments must remain unfinished, because new historical novels are constantly appearing. There are several that I failed to mention, because too many examples obscure the argument. I return briefly to the issue I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. My judgments are not aesthetic. Among the books I referred to there are very good novels and also just good novels. Let me enumerate the very good ones: *An Instance of the Fingerpost,*

The Conspiracy of Papers, Captivity, The Dante Club, My Name is Red. Take this, please, with a grain of salt, for the judgment reflects my taste. The other novels I have mentioned are good in their genre. A good novel is easy to recognize. If a book is good in its genre one would like to read it again. True enough, taste and sense of quality are not identical, but through frequent and varied reading, reflective reading, one can slowly acquire a sense of quality in addition to taste. Outstanding historical novels have perhaps never been written. I have doubts even in the case of *War and Peace*. Whether excellent historical novels will be written in the future we do not know. But we enjoy what we have, the very good and, occasionally, the good ones. And we are pleased that the novel, this half-art, has not died out but has been given fresh life, and that whenever we visit a bookshop, there is the expectation of a new, great, positive surprise.

Edited by David Roberts

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cannon, James. *Apostle Paul*. Hannover: N. H. Zoland Books, 2006.
Diament, Anita. *The Red Tent*. New York: St. Martin's, 1997.
Dunant, Sarah. *Birth of Venus*. New York: Random House, 2004.
Eco, Umberto. *The Name of the Rose*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1983.
Feuchtwanger, Lion. *Josephus*. New York: Viking, 1932.
Feuchtwanger, Lion. *The Jew of Rome*. New York: Viking, 1936.
Feuchtwanger, Lion. *The Day Will Come.* New York: Viking, 1942.
Halter, Marek. *Sarah*. New York: Random House, 2005.
Halter, Marek. *Zipporah. Wife of Moses*. New York: Random House, 2006.
Harris, Robert. *Pompeii*. London: Arrow Books, 2004.
Harris, Robert. *Imperium*. London: Hutchinson, 2006.
Kertesz, Imre. *Fateless*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1992.
Lohner, Alexander. *Die Jüdin von Trient*. Berlin: Aufbau, 2004.
Liss, David. *A Conspiracy of Paper*. London: Ballantine, 2001.
Liss, David. *The Coffee Trader*. London: Ballantine, 2004.
Liss, David. *A Spectacle of Corruption*. London: Ballantine, 2004a.
Lukács, Gyorgy. *The Historical Novel*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981.
Mailer, Norman. The *Naked and the Dead*. New York: Holt, 1998 [1948].
Pamuk, Orhan. *My Name is Red*. New York: Vintage, 2002.
Pearl, Matthew. *The Dante Club*. New York: Random House, 2003.
Pearl, Matthew. *The Poe Shadow*. New York: Random House, 2006.
Pears, Iain. *An Instance of the Fingerpost.* Berkeley: Berkeley Books, 1997.
Pears, Iain. *The Dream of Scipio.* Riverhead Books, 2002.
Prange, Peter. *Die Philosophin*. Munich: Droemer Knaur, 2004.
Rey, Pascale. *Le Maitre des Boussoles*. Paris: Lartes, 2004.
Saylor, Steven. Sub Rosa series, 12 volumes. London: Constable, 1991–2008.
Spiro, Gyorgy. *Fogsag* (Captivity). Budapest, 2005.

Chapter Seven

The Metaphysics of Embodiment in the Western Tradition

THE CRISIS OF METAPHYSICS, EMBODIMENT AND DISEMBODIMENT

Almost all the sources of the Western tradition, sometimes combined, sometimes torn asunder, yet always recurring, present the human being as a composite of at least two different, entirely unrelated elements. In the *Book of Genesis*, for example, God forms Adam out of the dust of the Earth, a kind of matter, and breaths life—a kind of soul—into his nostril. In Plato's work the immortal soul is kept prisoner in the material body; in Aristotle's the form, a spiritual, teleological essence warrants solidity and ipseity to individual substances, and thus to human beings. Surely, the heterogeneity of the human person is not a philosophical invention, but deeply rooted in archaic human imagination and omnipresent in all cultures. It expresses a primary experience, or rather several primary experiences. First the experiences of anxiety, of insecurity, of stress, second the experience of doing things against our intentions, and third the sense of guilt or shame. All these and similar experiences tell us that we are two in one, two persons in one body. In fact it is our body, shape, face, our body alone, which presents us to ourselves and to others as "one," whereas our experiences present us to ourselves and also to others as two or more in one. Those two or more in one body can form a synthesis with one another yet can also be entangled in constant warfare.

However, the body, although always one, is not indifferent to the split persons or rather powers it carries, for it normally sides with one power against the other. Some of the persons—or powers—united in one body associate themselves with powers outside it like spirits, specters, and deities.

Those who are "outside" can be embodied yet also disembodied, invisible. Our body can be in contact with something disembodied. From this primordial experience a great hope is born, or alternatively, the hope itself may initiate and reinforce the experience. This hope is vested in a kind of personal life outside the body, one's own body included, life after death. The feeling or rather the experience that one part of the person is not at all embodied, that it can leave the body and return to it, and that this something is invisible to ourselves and to others gives rise to the conviction, faith or knowledge that this "something," this disembodied self can communicate with other disembodied selves, stay in their company and remain alive after the decomposition of the dead body. It maybe, or is, immortal, although the body is mortal. Theses common "experiences" of disembodiment were traditionally packaged in shared narratives such as myths and legends. Nowadays, they are rather packaged in narratives about very personal experiences of men and women who have been brought back from the so-called clinical death. They report of having seen some spiritual thing—although extended—leaving their rigid body. Physiological explanations of the experience do not change the experience. Once Freud said that the unconscious is timeless and this is why we do not really believe in our death, although we know all about it. One could modify his insight and admit that at the soul, the psyche, whatever it is, or an aspect or "part" of it is timeless, and this is why Freud is right. We do not believe in our own death. No more and no less, than our remote ancestors.

I do not want to speculate about collective myths or personal experiences but about their reflection, mirroring or re-telling in the Western philosophical imagination. Surely, the philosophical imagination is not the prerogative of Western culture. However, here I want to deal solely with the philosophical answers to the experience of embodiment in Western cultures, firstly because my knowledge does not reach beyond this, and secondly, for other, more theoretical reasons. These reasons are simple. I am interested in the present crisis of traditional—metaphysical—philosophy. The reconstruction of some variation of the soul/body theme will be guided by this interest.

I will cover the philosophical understanding of the primordial experiences described above while discussing the vicissitudes of the traditional binary category body/soul, and the Trinitarian formulation of body, psyche, and spirit.

Until the Renaissance, or rather until the seventeenth century, the traditional binary and Trinitarian categories had been frequently modified although not replaced. In the wake of the victorious march of scientific-world explanations, however, two new binary categories of mind-body and thinking-extension replaced their predecessors. This meant not just a change in the vocabulary, as a few post-metaphysicians would make us believe, but a radical change of the *episteme*, or the historical *a priori* itself, to employ Fou-

cault's terminology. This radical change meant that from this time onwards other and new statements participated in the discourse which raised a claim to truth. The mind-body question, or the attempt to eliminate this binary category and with it the problem itself once and for all, marks the discourse of the nineteenth and twentieth century. It should, however, not to be forgotten, that philosophy is not a strict science, and that it remains possible to operate with the traditional soul-body dualism or the Trinitarian, that is, body-psyche-spirit, synthesis on an abstract level even after the mutation of the historical *a priori*. Kierkegaard is a case in point.

To express myself primitively: dualism or monism, this is the question. However, the question of dualism and, or, monism concerns not only the traditional issue of matter and spirit, both ontologically or epistemologically speaking, but also the character of the self, and how the divided self might be thematized or understood. In addition, the question also concerns the issue of whether humans live only in one world or in several. The question of dualism or monism is a paradigmatic one insofar as the different ways to raise it cannot be neatly categorized and put into the boxes of metaphysics or post-metaphysics. This means that the usual contemporary habit to find an easy "yes" or "no" will not prove fruitful in this case.

I will proceed quasi-genealogically, since I want to detect the great-grandfathers and grandmothers of the contemporary debates. Those great-grandmothers and grandfathers were unrelated and did not know about each other, yet we inherited more than just the "spiritual" genes from all of them. To employ Castoriadis' terminology, we have inherited their imagination and some of their imaginary institutions, discourses, theories, truths. The different theories, discourses or truths all had their own agendas. In all of them the issues concerning the soul-body or body-soul-spirit were addressed, but the *telos* of the discourses have been different in each and every case. Sometimes the same philosopher will enter different discourses and thus devise more than one model, depending on his actual agenda.

I will briefly introduce four versions and characterize each of them with a phrase: (1) The soul in the prison of the body; (2) the body in the prison of the soul; (3) the body as the expression of the soul; (4) pains, pleasures and the matters of the "heart." My brief demonstration will not even resemble any kind of history of philosophy. I am interested in the dominating imaginary, and not in the sequences of philosophical problem solving.

THE SOUL IN THE PRISON OF THE BODY

The metaphor of the soul imprisoned in the body stems, as is well known, from Plato. The fantasies and myths linked to the formula are widespread in

several Asian cultures; however, I will neglect these in my quasi-genealogy of the images in Western modernity. The incarcerated soul is the metaphor of mortality. Unless imprisoned by the mortal body, the soul is free, free-floating, and immortal. According to Socrates in *Phaedo* the imprisoned soul is sick, because the body makes it sick. Yet when the body dies, the soul is healed. Or in another orchestration: according to Socrates in *Phaedrus*, the divine charioteers do not fall down into mortal bodies. This fate awaits only human souls whose wings get lost during the fall, although they still preserve the capacity to faintly recollect their divine life before they fell.

There is a seeming contradiction in the story. The Greek gods were not spiritual creatures, they had a body. They made love, drank, ate; they were angry, desiring and so on. Yet they were immortal. It is not the body as such which imprisoned the soul but the transient, mortal, material body. An immortal body is not a prison precisely because the soul both cannot escape from it, nor needs to. The body of a god is at the same time unlike a human body. A god can metamorphose, that is, can appear in entirely different bodies, for example as golden rain or a swan. This means that the divine body is an astral body. A real body, a material body cannot metamorphose. Its sole metamorphosis is the transition from life to corpse. As is well known, Plato tried to eliminate the only obstacle to dealing with the immortal corporeality of gods by attributing their bad inclinations, desires and deeds to fraudulent human imagination.

The contrast between body and soul is at first temporal—mortality versus immortality, transient versus perpetuity, destructibility versus indestructibility. Yet the contrast is not just temporal, but also spatial, and finally temporal-spatial. The soul flies upwards to the sky and the body is bound to the earth; or the human soul falls to join the earth-bound body. The soul is free unless it is a prisoner of the body. In other words, the body is a prison. All these have a major epistemological significance. The body prevents us from knowing the truth, the soul can fly up to the region of the ideas, and thus it can at least approximate the knowledge or the vision of truth. The soul is immaterial. Only the immaterial thing can know the truth.

Here we encounter for the first time the typical metaphysical construction which remains essentially constant and consistent during the next two thousand years.

Independent of the Greek philosophical tradition, the Western imagination also inherited imaginary institutions from another pair of great-grandparents, namely the *Bible* and biblical interpretations. Biblical thinking is not of a metaphysical kind, for instead of being presented in logical structures or rational edifices, the thoughts are developed in narratives. However, these narratives are not a mythological kind of thinking either, since they tell representative stories of representative humans. Monotheism excludes the essence of all mythologies: *teomachia.* Yet the two pairs of great-grandpar-

ents, who knew nothing of each other and developed their message in entirely different ways still shared a combination, or rather an interconnection, of three certainties—the One, the Truth, and the Good. Given the different ways of thinking, it was impossible to synthesize them philosophically, yet given their shared certainties, they could be thought together, in concert, unaware of their differences.

This holds true for the body-soul *duality*, although not necessarily for its *dualism*. Duality is about difference; dualism concerns hierarchy and more often than not, an irreconcilable one. Duality is detectable almost everywhere in the biblical narrative, yet dualism only sporadically, in the later books of the canon. Plato, Aristotle or the Stoics sometimes mean duality and sometimes dualism. To be sure, Plato's metaphor about the body as the prison of the soul presents a very strong case for dualism.

In the first biblical narrative about day six, God has created the sexless human in his image. Without repeating any of the numberless interpretations of this passage, one interpretation remains certain: it does not allow for the body-soul dualism. In the second biblical narrative God forms the human's shape, that is, the body out of dust, that is, matter. Thus, the body itself is the unity of matter and form and a perfect divine work. Only after the matter is formed will God breathe life into Adam's nostril. Life as soul is an afterthought after the creation of the body. Since it is divine breath and of divine origin, it is the chain that connects man to God, for it is not created by hand but by mouth, the original and originating kiss of life, the gesture of love. The breath is invisible, yet not without extension and certainly not without heat. It is also a kind of matter, an invisible, warm, spiritual matter. This is duality and not dualism. For the shape and the breath are together in the human creature, they are bound together, they do not exist without each other, for the soul of every single individual, his or her breath ceases to exist with the demise of the body. Body and soul live together. They can fight—this is a duality—but they cannot exist without one another. Thus the body is not the prison of the soul, but its home. The soul cannot escape the body, since it is life, and there is no other human life than the life of the body. The idea of the immortality of the soul is here irrelevant. Either both soul and body are mortal, or both of them are, or become, immortal. Or death is not the final fate of the human creature, just an interregnum or interval before the resurrection of the dead. In the later-Messianic ages and eschatological fantasies God will resurrect the dead, and not just the ones who died yesterday. He will gather the dry bones—as Ezekiel and later Daniel prophesized—assemble them, put flesh on them, and thus resurrect them in their own earthly bodies. This was the "good news" Jesus Christ and his apostles brought into the old worlds of Greek and Roman philosophers. Who cares anymore for the immortality of the soul, this aristocratic dream? Being resurrected in our own

bodies, in our identity from top to toe, this is the real promise worthy of belief.

Christianity, as in most other cases, made several attempts to reconcile these two, entirely different conceptions: the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the ensouled body. They could not abandon either of them. The immortality of the soul could not be abandoned because the early Christians were breastfed on this image and hope. Nor could the image of the resurrection of the dead be abandoned because Christ had been resurrected after his death. Moreover, the mere spiritual existence could no more have been hailed in contrast to bodily existence, for Christ, the Redeemer, became flesh, he was incarnated spirit, and only as human in flesh could he redeem those who had faith in him. Early Christians felt uneasy about this very Jewish idea. Some of them suggested that the body of Christ was not a real body, whilst others suggested, in contrast, that his body really died and his soul flew to his Father. Yet Christian orthodoxy branded both conceptions heretical. This was because the suffering of Christ must have been real, not imaginary, because it was through suffering in flesh that he redeemed the human race, and his soul could not abandon his body, since the disciples saw him in his earthly shape as a resurrected body. Finally the resurrection of the body, the good news, could not be side-stepped, although it could be interpreted in a sense closer to the Greeks. When the apostle Paul discussed the resurrection of the body in his "First Letter to the Corinthians," he emphasized that there were entirely different kinds of bodies. The resurrected body is not the same body as the corruptible one. It is not a natural body, but a spiritual one. By contrast, John in his "Apocalypse" argued that those who are resurrected to live under the Kingdom of Christ for a thousand years will eat, drink, be holy and happy, and their bodies will be real rather than astral. Moreover, the denizens of this pre-Judgment Kingdom will be the just and faithful ones, those whose soul-body are, or become, clean and guiltless.

The grandchildren of this double ancestral inheritance had to face another challenge. In the Greek-Roman tradition, the immortal was identified with Reason, or rather with "upper Reason" termed in Greek *nous*, and in Latin *intellect*. This part of the soul was epistemologically privileged. For example, the more the soul-Reason liberated itself from the prison of the body, the more perfect knowledge it could attain. The prison or the cave of the body prevented the soul or Reason—in this case the same—from acquiring perfect knowledge, clear insight into truth. The prison or cave distorts images, it produces make-beliefs, falsity, shows an unclean picture, confusion, or chaos. Moreover, the Jewish tradition is also present here. For example, there is no reason without a body, or as Spinoza says, extension and cognition are the two attributes of the same substance.

I do not want to complicate matters further. In the very Platonic tradition, thought about the immortality of the soul—for example in Ficino's work—

and even transmigration of the soul into very different bodies, is not necessarily related to the idea of the epistemological privilege of a disembodied self. In Spinoza's case it was the eternal immobility of the universal nature-god substance which made the whole immortality of the soul paradigm irrelevant, although the "prison" metaphor remained in case of single individuals. For Leibniz, though, for whom all individual substances are alive and there is transformation rather than death, the whole prison metaphor sounded nonsensical.

We still carry both traditions on our backs. I do not have in mind here marginal discourses like theosophy or anthroposophy, nor everyday thinking in the Christian tradition where the souls of the dead meet their Creator, but the central philosophical discourses evolving around the mind-body problem. The issue of "immortality" or "mortality" is replaced by the issue of the absence of causality or determination. The question had already bothered Kant—transcendental freedom has no cause, because if it had, we would just be marionettes pulled by strings. The marionette metaphor is in the last instance just a reformulation of the prison metaphor, even in contemporary arguments about the final cause of the function of the brain. One can ask is thought but the function of the brain? If one answers this question in the affirmative, the final question is still left open: can we understand from a concrete constellation of brain function what kind of thought has entered our mind just now? Will we be ever able to answer this question with greater certitude than our ancestors answered their old, yet functionally very equivalent questions two thousand years ago? If every concrete thought as is "caused" by the brain, then the "soul" does not exist, yet the body remains a prison from which there is no escape. Thus, metaphysics may be dead, but the issues, the "existential" concerns which were constantly tackled among others traditions including metaphysics, are not.

THE BODY IN THE PRISON OF THE SOUL

The metaphor that our body is imprisoned in our soul is borrowed from Foucault's book *Discipline and Punish*, and was meant as a polemical reversal of Plato's well-known dictum. Since Foucault was interested in the social *a priori* at the time of the birth of modernity, at least in this work, he elaborated or unpacked the meaning of the metaphor with the then emerging "human sciences," their institutionalization and their disciplinary practices. The "soul," which imprisons the body of modern human beings, is produced in the discourse of the human sciences. Foucault identifies the "soul" not with our immortal spiritual essence, but with Reason, Knowledge, Truth, and all the paraphernalia of the metaphysical tradition. This is a relevant reversal

of the message of *Phaedo* or of one conception in *Phaedrus*, although not of Plato in general who was not entirely an alien to this very twentieth-century idea of Foucault's.

There is, however, still a reversal. Plato, and after him the whole metaphysical tradition after him evaluates. For them, it is right that the body is imprisoned by the soul since it and especially its immortal aspect—reason, spirituality—warrants both epistemological and moral truth. The body is the main obstacle in our way to Truth and Goodness—and happiness. Spirit, or Reason, needs to command, the body should obey. Foucault, who does not detect universal progress or regress in human histories, but mutations, the emergence of ever new mosaics, *epistemes*, does not evaluate. In *The History of Sexuality* he admits that the body has been imprisoned by the soul in several traditions of European culture, yet the question remains, how, to what extent, and by what means. He sympathizes with one practice more than with another and vice versa. To cut a long story short, there is a tremendous difference as to whether one's own soul, reason, or will regulates and controls one's own body, like in the case of Stoic asceticism, or if a general, impersonal "consciousness," science, that is, a so-called objective power—knowledge—produces the truth about one's body and prescribes the ways to regulate it. In the first case one can create a work of art out of himself. I will soon return to this question.

Whenever the soul is imprisoned in the body the soul revolts and tries to escape. Whenever the body is imprisoned in the soul the body revolts and tries to escape.

The biblical story of the so-called fall offers a simple cue to the dynamic of the latter. It is not Eve's body which makes her disobey the divine command. The serpent talks to her, it talks to her mind. It awakes her doubt, but also her curiosity. Doubt and curiosity are mental powers; they "dwell" in the "soul." What does Eve's body do? It hands an apple to Adam whilst she eats her own. The body obeys the mind, it cannot resist. Then Adam and Eve discover that they are naked. The body is naked. But shame, the knowledge of being naked, is matter of the soul. The body is, again, in the prison of the soul. No so-called original motivations of the body, such as thirst, hunger or sexual arousal play a part in the story of the fall.

Thus biblical narrative-thinking testifies from the beginning that the wickedness done by the body is done under the command of thoughts, ideas, reason, and the soul. The gist of the matter is, however, that only the body can inflict violence, and, in the last instance, murder. Soul, thought, reason can exercise power on its own, and so can humiliate and spiritually annihilate. Yet it cannot do violence. One can violate only another person's body, and only the body has direct access to another body. Beating, wounding, raping, killing, and also imprisoning or sometimes disciplining are acts of bodies exercised on bodies. The body can obey, yet if it does not, it will be

violated. Walter Benjamin's concept of divine violence in "Critique of Violence" can be conditionally condoned. God violated people's bodies during the Flood, for example. He did not do it with his own body, but through material disasters and human bodies. The "first" murder, perpetrated by Cain, is, however, not a reaction to violence, but violence under mental command. This is called the "first" murder even if it has been repeated a million times. "Second" murder is perpetrated through a "bodily" reaction, given that rage, as an affect, is innate. Biblical narrative-thinking, however, does not address philosophical issues such as the "parts" or the "functions" of the soul.

Whenever Plato or Aristotle, or most philosophers after them directly addressed the forms of violence, they could not avoid reaching more or less similar conclusions in terms of divisions or compartments between the body and the soul, and especially within the soul, itself, which occupied the supreme position in the human constitution. Although soul, spirituality and reason were considered immortal, there were, nonetheless, according to Plato and Aristotle, different kinds or reason, and different parts of the soul. Only the "highest" soul was epistemologically and morally privileged, as against its lower parts or capacities. If the soul initiated wicked acts while imprisoning the body, it was the lower part or function of the soul alone that was its evil counsel. The bipartite or tripartite model of the soul took care of the problem of the goodness or otherwise of acts and deeds. In another of Plato's metaphors, the charioteer is Reason, the immortal soul, the privileged knower and moral warranty of truth. However, only one of the "horses" of the soul that the charioteer commands is obedient; the other is disobedient. Plato does not simply identify the disobedient horse as the agent of carnal desire. It also stands for the lust for acquisitiveness. Moreover, in cases of the desire for violence, murder, or rape Plato pins the guilt on imagination or fantasy, which is very much a spiritual and mental faculty. In fact, mere bodily lusts are easily satisfied, and only the lusts of the imagination are insatiable and, thus, are motives for violence.

The body, then, is not imprisoned by the soul, but by one of its functions or parts. This compartmentalization achieves its most sophisticated form in Kant. The supreme spiritual power, Reason, as practical reason identical with transcendental freedom, its moral imperative, is categorical. Yet, it is not just the body that should obey; so should the faculties of cognition and the imagination. Kant speaks in length about rational argumentation as morally suspect. Rational argumentation should not replace subjection to the moral law. No knowledge, not even the knowledge of the good, is allowed to co-determine our pure Will. In addition, it is the understanding rather than theoretical Reason, that is the guarantee of true knowledge. Moreover, the immortality of the soul—as soul itself—so Kant argues, is just an idea of reason; we can think it without knowing it. Kant even declared in *The Metaphysics of Mo-*

rals, that it is an issue of indifference whether thinking is a function of matter or the soul.

Yet, as Foucault's formula—that our body is imprisoned in our soul—indicates, the issue tackled in the Bible and the metaphysical tradition has become more burning than ever. Nowadays more than ever before, theories, ideas, and ideologies keep bodies on strings and make them commit acts of violence, sometimes even without being entirely aware of it, or seeing the consequences. It is still the case, for it cannot be otherwise, that only a body violates another body, but the mediations between the bodies are expanding. Even if one has to push just one single button to cause the death of many thousands, it is still an act performed by the body, although dictated by the mind.

Let me exemplify the new versions of the old story with novels and the experiences of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In Balzac's novel, *Father Goriot*, the ex-convict and soul snatcher Vautrin puts the following question to Rastignac, his intended instrument of crime without punishment: if you knew that in pushing a button you would kill a Chinese mandarin whom you have never met and got rich through his death, would you do it? Balzac had foreseen a very modern situation. Roman emperors had allowed gladiators to be killed by a gesture that replaced a word. Tyrants generally killed with words such as commands and insinuations, and hired assassins with the use of well understood or ambiguous verbal allusions. The world of Shakespeare is populated by them. However, at the end of the chain there is always the body of the murderer, there are hands which strangle a neck, pierce a rapier into a heart, or mix the poison. The murderer normally sees his victim face to face or knows him, whether he is sadistically enjoying the bloody "work," doing it just for money, or in the pursuit of his cold interest. But what happened in Hiroshima? One gave the go-ahead sign, the other pushed a button. Each has not seen the targets. There was murder, but were they murderers? The bodies of the victims suffered violence through the application of science as technology. Yet, let me repeat, the body has been involved as it always was. Without pushing the button there is no death. The "go-ahead" does not matter unless there is also execution. The body of the man whose finger pushes the button, is the prisoner of calculation, war machinery, strategies and tactics, he does not simply obey a command, but follows a long, and, by him, unknown and perhaps hardly understandable chain of reasoning.

In Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* Raskolnikov kills the old usurer allegedly for her money. As we know he also kills her halfwit sister. At the time of the murder his emaciated body is already imprisoned in the cave of ideology, the combination of rational justification with an alleged holy or praiseworthy goal and calculation. We all know that in this fictitious case, this dominating combination ends with disaster. Still, it is a "dominating

combination," as the mass murders of the twentieth century were normally perpetrated according to this model. Rational calculation, as well as rational justification, has been dismissed since early modernity as morally problematic guides without an associate such as moral sense. Rational calculation, when combined with the justification of a holy or praiseworthy end—most often than not—recommends, condones and even glorifies violence. Violence shines as a universally recommended remedy against real or presumed universal ills. Everyone can be targeted as a "usurer," that is, a Jew, a kulak, an enemy of the people. To my mind, Carl Schmitt makes a very problematic proposal when he argues that the target is not a so-called "natural enemy." Ideology itself constitutes the enemy, it becomes an artificial, an ideology-dependent, enemy. In the case of a "natural enemy" the enmity is mutual. In ideologically constituted cases, this is not so. Think of *Crime and Punishment*. The old woman usurer was not Raskolnikov's "natural enemy," nor was Raskolnikov hers. She became Raskolnikov's personal enemy, that is, the body he targeted for violence, only through and in the wake of his, and his own period's ideological construction. To refer to historical examples: for the Jews Germany was not a "natural enemy" and neither was German nationalism; for the Trotskyites Soviet Communism was not a "natural enemy." Jews and Trotskyites were ideologically singled out and constructed as essential enemies.

We can think or rather hope that there is a soul that escapes the body altogether. We can also think a body that is not imprisoned, but rather shaped by the soul and simultaneously expresses the soul and makes it manifest. And this suggestion, just like the other two, is also a tradition of metaphysics.

THE BODY AS THE EXPRESSION OR MANIFESTATION OF THE SOUL

The Aristotelian hylomorphic tradition makes other suggestions. Its model is life as such and all the things alive. The living things have a soul, soul or souls inhabit the cosmos, and so thereby, the cosmos is not just matter. Decay is temporal and relative, and so is decomposition. There is constant generation in corruption. There is no unformed life. The universe bursts with life and so everything is formed. Here the spatial image of soul-body is reversed. The soul is not carried inside an otherwise soulless body. The form—the soul—is manifest, it is "outside." It is through its own form that the thing becomes what it is. The form carries identity, carries *ipseity*. The form is the embodiment, that is, it is the "body," although it is not a material one, but spiritual. In what follows I will outline three ways in which this tradition developed: the first in terms of the materialization, and later, socialization, of

the soul; the second in terms of the unity and perfection between soul and matter, where artworks, especially sculpture, takes up a privileged position; and a third in terms of the individuality of the artwork and the artist.

The Materialization and Socialization of the Soul

In the Aristotelian version of hylomorphism, which is best known, form as such does not guarantee immortality. Only pure form can be immortal or eternal. *Nous*, as pure form or Reason, maybe immortal, and the universal pure form, the deity that thinks itself and is not burdened with matter, is eternal. This is also the case for mere matter or chaos, for the cosmos is the formed out of chaos. Although form is the embodiment, singular physical bodies do not achieve nobility solely by this ontological shift, for everything has a perfect form or *telos*, and those forms form a hierarchical chain. Thus, the free virtuous human being, in this instance a man, is the form of the human being. To achieve this perfect form the free man has to mould his matter or *alogon*, that is, his emotions and non-rational soul into the form of virtues, up to the point where it becomes natural or quasi-instinctual to practice them. Thus, a certain kind of man can form himself as a perfect artwork, yet the virtues, which he should achieve, are general, they are given. Contrary to the first two models of embodiment, this is an aristocratic one, for it is only from the ranks of the few that the perfect man can emerge.

Yet, insofar as one drops the whole Aristotelian ontology and epistemology, one can easily recognize in this model a simple description of a process which has been conceptualized today by mainstream modern sociology and anthropology as "socialization."

The infant has to "mould" his innate pre-formed "matter" into the forms of social customs and forms of life in order to be able survive in her environment. This is easy for one, difficult for the other, depending on the character, quality and the force of resistance by the pre-formed innate matter. And it is not just the process of acculturation, as every process of learning, at least on an elementary level, is cognized within this contemporary version of the hylomorphic tradition. There are social forms which can mould all the innate matters, for example, to learn how to speak a language, how to use objects, how to recognize and follow customs. It is not just by analogy that one speaks of forms of life, meaning in this case forms of human, social life. However, not all "matters" can be molded into all kinds of forms. It is normally less problematic if no practice, no *askesis*, no mental power can make a body perform well in sprinting, ballet dancing or playing the violin. The innate material sometimes does not fit into the elementary forms of life, and so there is a tension and sometimes a revolt. Without such a tension or revolt, the tension between innate pre-formed material and the form of life, there would never be change, there would never be grandeur. Needless to

say, not every tension produces change or, even less, grandeur. However, there must be a tension as not everything can be formed in an optimal way. However, despite its contemporary packaging this is hylomorphism of the old Aristotelian, metaphysical brand, but the kind of metaphysics which does not operate with the inside-outside binary opposition, as it aims at the elimination of this opposition.

The Unity and Perfection Between Soul and Matter

Form, that is telos, spirituality, identity and *ipseity*, that is, *tode ti*, is the soul of all the living, yet the human being is the single living being who can give form to chaos, matter, stuff. This second tradition is found in our understanding of aesthetics. Here, the hylomorphic understanding of works of art is not restricted to the Aristotelian peripatetic school, but became widespread also in the Platonic circles and beyond to the present day. Despite Plato's disapproval of writing, the written word, the text has been hailed as the embodiment of thought. However, the paradigmatic case of the adequate embodiment of thought, spirit, soul, was sculpture. Sculpture is incarnation proper. The body itself beholds the spirit. However, the body is not of flesh and blood, that is, this body is not of corruptible matter, it is formed of marble or bronze, of material which survive humans, generations, centuries, and is perhaps as perennial as time itself.

In this variant of the soul-body question the internal and external change places, at least seemingly. It is the external, the body which is long-lasting, perhaps everlasting, and in this sense immortal. Yet the reversal or inside-outside relation is deceptive, since the human being is "the master of god" as Hegel later puts it in the section of absolute spirit in his *Encyclopedia*. Hegel's dictum is ambiguous, yet this ambiguity is on purpose because this is how he covers both sides of the tradition. It is suggested, for example, by Plotinus that the idea of the work, the form itself, is present in the soul of the creator before the creation, and thus the internal soul has the priority. It is the single human's soul, the idea of the soul that manifests itself in the corporeal soul, the form proper. It is also suggested—as Michelangelo's famous poem formulated it—that the idea, the spirit is "objective," it dwells in the marble. The work of the sculptor is to bring out the form from the marble, and briefly, to liberate the soul, or idea from the prison of mere matter. It is left in darkness, whether the Idea—God—employs the sculptor as his master-builder, or whether the idea in the mind of the sculptor is the demiurge that makes him able to create gods. In the perfect unity of matter and form or of content and form, spirit and body merge, became one. Here there is no longer any tension or even motion. The perfect work of art shines in the light of a-temporality or eternity.

The image of artwork as of the finally realized perfect unity of soul and form became problematic in modernity and seemingly disowned together with metaphysics. However, to my mind, only seemingly. Rather, it seems to me that this tradition became more valued today than we might fathom. To dismiss the soul-form expression does not mean to dismiss the thing itself. What is then Nietzsche's "grand art" than the molding of an entirely new, never ever fathomed idea into a perfect form? I would even dare, taking the brunt of ridicule from all the Heidegger experts, to read the relation between earth and world in his "Origin of the Work of Art" as a new and perhaps more sophisticated formula for the matter-soul liaison.

The Individuality of the Artwork and the Artist

The ancient, metaphysical, question of the soul-body relation or liaison disappeared at least after Hegel, and opened the way for a third development. The hylomorphic formula only became a metaphor. The expression "form," which referred to a work of art, no longer stood for its spirit, soul or the materialization of a divine-human idea, but replaced these with terms such as "perfect" "well done," or "artistically successful."

Nonetheless, even here there are some contemporary offspring who still resemble their great-grandfathers. First, there is ipseity or *tode ti*. Even today, even in times of so-called postmodernism, a work of art remains itself: it must have an identity, and so must its creator. When one visits a contemporary exhibition she will immediately recognize the paintings of the same artist and also that all of them are different. All paintings have an ipseity—one needs to stand for more than a few minutes in front of them to realize this—and they all carry the signature of the artists who created them even when they are not signed. Individuality, the unrepeated and unrepeatable individuality remains the "soul" that appears in the works—we can call them bodies if you like—and nothing will change this "constellation" of the individuality of the artwork and of the artist until the end of art which, despite the popular slogan, is not in sight.

Second: the soul, that is the unrepeatable ipseity of the creator and the creature is not equivalent with the idea. Sometimes an artist carries out an idea, and can give a report about it, or at least believes that she can. Sometimes the artist even rejects the idea of an idea, and so there may not be a recognizable referent. In traditional works of art, especially in fine arts, the referent used to set a limit to the manifestation of unrepeatable ipseity. Think of a painting on the nativity, a still life, or a landscape. The absence of referents in contemporary fine arts may make the distinction between matter and form obsolete. The unidentifiable image is taken for granted, which gives the appearance that no idea has been followed. Yet "thing" is "ensouled".

To sum up, thus far, my discussion of the third case of the embodiment argument—the body as the expression or manifestation of the soul. I referred to three different discourses in quasi-historical sequence in order to make its genealogy work. The first discourse can be briefly formulated in the following way: the single soul may be mortal, yet it created the body, the work of art is hopefully immortal. The second discourse can be briefly formulated thus: the subjective or objective ideas which constitute the form can merge and thus embody divine perfection. The third discourse is the following: every creature of art was the signature of the creator, known or unknown, yet every thing has its own soul. It was around the second discourse that the so-called religion of art, that is, the worship of the artwork, and sometimes also the artist, gained prominence from the Renaissance onwards.

The hylomorphic conception was also translated into a personal form of life, and could be summed up in the Latin proverb "a healthy spirit dwells in a healthy body." This conception occurred in both the Stoic and Epicurean traditions which sometimes merged and sometimes confronted one another. Moreover, by the word "personal" I do not mean that each person followed her own precept to create a unity of her soul and body, but that the general precept that had been set down in dominant philosophies was applicable to single persons as guidelines for their personal conduct of life. In other words, the precepts were generally accepted, but the conduct of life was individually formed. The original Aristotelian model of ethical hylomorphism, where the appropriation of commonly recognized held virtues stood at the center of self-creation and self-formation was replaced in the context of late Antiquity by a program to prepare the individual to face all the contingencies of life. No one knew what would happen tomorrow. One could gain or lose one's wealth; the tyrant could turn against one as much as heap favors; one could gain distinction or lose honor. The wise man, though, could prepare himself for all these eventualities, yet nothing could change his equanimity or his enjoyment of all that the pleasure of life can offer. The main thing is that one has to take care of himself. Foucault discusses the major "technologies" of the self in several of his later writings, for example in the *Care of the Self*.

Stoic and Epicurean technologies of the self remained models for a long time even up until Spinoza and Goethe. To be sure, Goethe develops the story in a new direction, and he is not alone. He is preceded and joined by the Romantics. I would start with a very simple statement. Kant and a little later, Goethe makes the interesting remark that every person over thirty is responsible for his face. Of course, we know the ancient proverb that the face is the mirror of the soul. It tells us that the face of the virtuous expresses goodness and the face of the wicked express wickedness. To be sure, since the Renaissance the meaning of the above proverb became broader and also different, exemplified through portrait painting. Portrait painters from the high Renaissance onwards presented and represented the soul of their models, and just in

terms of whether their souls were virtuous or wicked, but rather in terms of their ipseity. Here no portrait simply stood for the face of the one being painted. This was not just because a painting became the work of the painter and not of the model, whereby it entailed the idea of the painter about the model instead of directly manifesting the soul of the model. Rather, as this was still an age where representation meant more than presentation, painting was meant to catch the genus of the doge, cardinal or burgher together with the singularity of the person. Thus, no Renaissance painter would have said that his model and she alone is responsible for her face. But Kant and Goethe say exactly this. A world was dawning where everyone was meant to sign the statement that all men and women are born free and equally endowed with conscience and reason. In such a world everyone could be held equally responsible for his or her face by the age of thirty.

This simple statement—everyone is responsible for his face at the age of thirty—is the sign of a new mutation of the hylomorphic discourse. The "soul" becomes identical with personality, and personality becomes identical with character. Moreover, character is no longer typical; it does not represent a socio-cultural group, but is solely singular, individual. This character shines on the face. If everyone is responsible for his face then everyone is responsible for his character. Furthermore, everyone is the author of his or her character, and so everyone is the creator of her character. She is a self-made woman, but not in the vulgar sense of someone who elevated herself from a humble state to a higher rank or greater riches, but rather self-made in the sense of the sole maker of her soul and form, as the sole maker of her ipseity. In the act of self-formation the creator and the creature are one and so are the soul and body. The central statement of this version is described by Foucault in *Care of the Self* in the following terms: the human being makes an artwork out of him or herself. Of course, one is born into a concrete environment, everyone has a different childhood, one has a lucky, the other an unlucky upbringing, one is endowed with certain talents whereas the other is not, one is clever whereas the other is rather dull, one is handsome whereas the other is rather plain. All those "conditions" are regarded as matter, stuff, raw material just like bronze, marble or stone. Yet out of his or her raw material each person was supposed to shape a perfect statue. As Goethe expressed it, even the most humble can become perfect; or as Nietzsche formulated it while referring to himself—one should become what one is. The dominating ethics of modernity, the ethics of personality still composes variations of this theme.

Psychoanalysis can be interpreted, for example, as an answer to the ethics of personality and the self-made-perfect-statue paradigm because it concentrates on the obstacles to this project. It does not concentrate on the social obstacles, as these are the seen as contingent raw materials from which the human being can make him or herself, but on the obstacles that dwell in the

body/soul. Here, too, though, the body and the soul are united as much as in the "statue" concept. The libido is corporeal and psychical. In Freud's later model of the psyche, the instincts of Eros and Thanatos are both corporeal and psychical. He also combines this third model with models one and two, that is, soul in the prison of the body, and the body in the prison of the soul. He accepts the traditional differentiation of the soul, associating one part with temporal, the other with the a-temporal, one of which is placed "high up," the other "deep down," so to speak. As a deeply secular thinker he attributes "eternity" "timelessness" to the "lowest," that is, the non-personal Id, whereas he attributes temporality and corruptibility to the highest—moral super ego, the consciousness of our transience. His is a reciprocal model of imprisonment. Through repression the superego and the ego keep the unconscious psyche-soma captive, yet through traumas, neuroses and madness it is the unconscious-somatic part which will keep the ego and the superego in its prison cell. And even if the condition of healing comes from outside, from the science of psychoanalysis and the analyst, healing itself is the fruit of autonomy. Freud's ideal is, and remains that of Goethe—the self-made man or woman whose body and soul merge, the final product becoming the perfect individual character, like the statue of Moses by Michelangelo.

PAINS, PLEASURES, AND THE MATTERS OF THE HEART— BEYOND DUALISM

Adam and Eve sinned—if their disobedience can be called sin—yet not through their body. They sinned by their "soul," or one capacity of it—their imaginations. Eve was curious, she dared to grasp and eat the fruit—a "material" act in itself—in order to meet the challenge. She took a risk. For their transgression, however, both Adam and Eve were punished on their body. In other words, their punishment was bodily and not spiritual pain, that is, the pain of childbirth and the pain of hard work. Eve was also punished by desire: desire for her husband which would make her enslaved to her husband. It might be interesting to discuss why the Bible mentions the woman's lust and not the man's. The spiritual punishment which accompanies these bodily pains aggravates them, and this pain is the awareness, the consciousness of death.

Are all these pains in vain?

We know about the pains, yet not about pleasures. In contrast to this painful adventure in "Paradise" or "The Garden of Eden" the Bible does not speak of any pleasures there. We know that the first man felt solitary before God's second thought in creating a woman as his "helper." But helping in what? We know that they were allowed to eat from every tree of the garden,

yet there is not one word of pleasure. Adam also gave names to the animals, but was it pleasure? There is an old debate as to whether the first pair made love in the Garden. The usual answer is yes, since God did not create two genders for nothing. Yet, there is not one word mentioned about sexual pleasure. Pleasure, just as pain happens outside "Paradise." Or, in one of the Zohar interpretations, the expulsion from "Paradise" stands for the expulsion from the mother's womb.

All the narratives of the Bible—especially of Genesis—carry a philosophical message about the human condition. It could hardly be maintained that pain precedes pleasure, but it can be said without further explanation that the body is first "thrown" into the prison of the soul. At first the body and only the body is used as the means of acculturation. Inflicting pleasure or pain on the body is the first reward or punishment. The awards and punishments inflicted on the body through the bodies of the adults are mediating the soul, that is rationality, customs, and thereby obedience. Since disobedience is the other side of obedience, Adam and Eve expelled themselves from "Paradise."

Let me repeat that at the "beginning" the body is thrown into the prison of the general "soul," or if you wish an "objective" soul. Only afterwards will some of the innate affects such as fear, shame and the need for a familiar friendly face—elementary love—join the bandwagon. Love as sentiment follows suit.

This fourth story differs in one essential sense from the previous ones in that it offers little or no basis for a conclusive kind of dualism. Different feelings and emotions were usually located at, or identified with, one "part" of our body, for example anger with the liver, misanthropy or contemptuousness with bile, love with the heart. Character types were also described by bodily characteristics. In the nineteenth century, for example, phrenology became accepted as a kind of science *cum* art. It was presupposed that the mere form and structure of the skull gave reliable information of capacities, contents and insights. Hegel even made fun of this in "Observation of self-consciousness in its relation to its immediate actuality. Physiognomy and Phrenology." in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

The "raw material" paradigm is still there, yet this stuff is hardly formed, least in a hylomorphic sense. The insight developed in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* was never entirely left behind. It was presupposed that the "raw materials" of all feelings and emotions were innate. All of the philosophers mentioned pleasure and pain, and some even mentioned desire, or simple affects such as rage, shame, disgust, joy and sadness. Philosophers also agreed on another major point: cognition and the assessment of the situation are built into emotions and more complex feelings. They judge the situation. Pleasure felt while meeting an old friend, listening to music, getting an erotic response, having done the right thing are not the same pleasure. The feelings, emotions themselves are different, as is love is also different in the case of love for

one's child, love of a beautiful spring day, or a satisfying meal. Cognition is built into the feeling, the assessment of situation and its judgment can hardly be called a "form." It is not a shape, it does not even resemble a body, yet it is not purely spiritual either. Emotions or feelings unite stuff and cognition, and they evaluate, but they cannot be evaluated, at least not morally. The whole philosophical literature, both ancient and modern, circles around two questions. The first question is whether the emotions are "passions of the soul" or passions of the body, and, the second one is which emotions are more liable to be understood in the first sense, and which ones in the second sense. For example, a headache is a straightforward bodily pain. But what about the pains felt by a hypochondriac? The desire to pass an exam with flying colors is spiritual, yet what about the heavily beating heart, the perspiration? Second, which feelings or emotions are virtuous, and which of them are wicked? Alternatively which of them are indifferent to this generality and need to be evaluated only in the situation where they emerge, accounting for their intensity, development and motivating force? Which of them is active, which reactive? When and where?

It is easy to realize that feelings and emotions are relational, that is, social. Briefly, emotions and feelings are intra-human happenings. Pleasure, pain and desire are contact feelings. They confirm and affirm, thus vindicating our life, person and deeds; equally they can repel, deny and reject, thus, hitting us in the face.

While the metaphor of "the body as the prisoner of the soul" has been discussed, I tried to show that only bodies can violate other bodies. I added, that although violence is perpetrated by the body it is mostly initiated by the "soul" and that force or constraint or the exercise if power is by no means dependent on bodily transmission. Feelings and emotions, or their absence, can do more and more lasting harm to the other persons than beatings can; they can kill even if no body gets touched. Yet, emotions themselves need to be expressed by bodies or quasi-bodies to do harm and also to bring blessing. The facial expression can show anger or disgust, as well as erotic desire. Yet, emotions are mostly expressed in words, speeches, and texts, and are thus embodied. These words, speeches and texts can make one devastated or blessedly happy.

The human condition is at first not about autonomy but about dependency. It is not lack of means of survival that makes us mostly dependent, but the desire for recognition, for affirmation, and for love. We are emotionally dependent beings just as others are emotionally dependent on us. Void of emotional dependency we are lacking in "human substance"—if this expression still makes sense. It certainly made sense in fairy tales told about stonehearted men and women since time immemorial.

Yet emotional dependency, in general, and exclusive emotional dependency between two people is not the same thing. Exclusive emotional depen-

dency normally excludes third parties entirely, or almost entirely, from the emotional chain of reciprocity. It is excessive; in Greek it is also hubris. As it happens in several cases of hubris, exclusive emotional dependency between two people is potentially the greatest blessing and/or the greatest curse in human life. It is ambivalent, a hubris, even if the dependency is mutual and symmetrical. The first presentation of this kind of mutual dependency is also to be found in the Book of Genesis. The story of Jacob and Rachel, the story of Jacob and Joseph are the tales of symmetrical emotional dependency. And yet, the "third parties" of jealousy and envy created havoc and guilt, on the one hand, and terrible pain about the presumed loss on the other. Hubris calls for punishment, this time not from God, who put the things finally right, but from other human beings. Moreover, if emotional dependency is not symmetrical, when reciprocity vanishes, suffering reaches its high pitch and the results may be devastating. The tragedies of Euripides tell us several of these stories.

It can be observed how the problem of the body/soul relation can be translated into the language of the emotion/reason problematic. One needs to perform some shifts in the precise use of terms if one merges the two questions. In what follows, I will try such a translation, although I am not concerned with the consistency of the traditional arguments, and thus will avoid unmasking the sometimes illicit mergers.

In the model of body-soul hierarchy, especially if combined with a hierarchy within the soul, for example in models One and Two, the soul, or its "upper part" Reason, is epistemologically privileged. Since something corporeal, namely the organs of sense, are the sources of sensation, or at least participate in it, knowledge gained by sensation is unreliable, confused, subjective, and "empirical." It does not warrant truth or certainty. Only those mental entities and procedures that do not rely on the senses or are not mixed with sensual experiences are spiritual and, thus, can grasp truth, which is also spiritual. The disembodied self is the privileged "subject" of true knowledge. This is how the concept of "pure" enters the question concerning the sources of knowing. "Pure" means unmixed with anything that is connected with the body. "A priori" knowledge in all its understanding is supposed to be "pure" in the above understanding.

Originally "purity" referred to bodies and mostly to the relations of two or more matters or "stuffs" that should be kept apart, which should not be mixed with one another, for example of keeping certain materials away from temples and holy places, or of being purified through water or a baptism. Analogously, purity also meant to be innocent from guilt in something. The guilty man or woman was impure, he or she was sometimes regarded as the source of contamination, who poisoned his or her environment, challenged the gods, caused disaster and had to be eliminated, exiled, even killed in order to save the city, the people, the family. Both Greek mythology and the *Bible* are full

of this interpretation of purity and impurity. Although moral "purity" is an analogy, the original stories did not separate or keep apart the spiritual and the corporeal. Contamination was not just a spiritual, but also as corporeal matter.

However, none of the original versions of the purity/impurity distinction had anything to do with the relation between reason and senses. One does not commit crimes or any transgression just with senses or obeying his or her senses. The truth at stake here is the identification of the source of contamination, and not the "how" of the identification. And this remained so in detection until the present day.

Nonetheless it is remarkable that the carrier of the concept of "purity," which starts humbly from being unmixed, continues innocently to achieve the highest status of epistemological privilege. Moreover, it is a long-lasting distinction that remains steady from Plato, or perhaps from Parmenides, up to and including Hegel at least, that is, during the whole history of metaphysics, and perhaps, beyond. What is of major interest for the question of incarnation here is the transference of this epistemological privilege to a moral one. This transference answers the need of metaphysical philosophy. A fully developed metaphysical philosophy is a kind of picture puzzle, where everything must click. First and foremost the speculative and the practical aspect of the philosophy need to click together. Since, in speculative philosophy, pure soul or pure reason became the privileged source and warranty of reaching certainty or truth, the same pure soul or pure reason had to play the role of the sole source of certainty, the warrant of truth in morality as well. This was an easy trick. One just had to identify senses such as seeing or hearing with feelings or emotions, such as love, grief, joy, or anxiety. Thus, there were "external sensations" and "internal sensations," both subjective and thus erratic, both of which we had to leave behind in order to achieve "pure" knowledge and thus also to be or become morally "pure." Instead of following our passions we needed to conduct our life with the guidance of Reason, as Spinoza put it.

Here an auxiliary construction was needed, covered by the version in my second reconstruction, "The Body in the Prison of the Soul." Most of the wicked acts without doubt had a mental origin. Kant would say that they are the reversal of the hierarchy of maxims. A man in rage can kill dozens, but an idea, a command can murder millions. Since this is common knowledge it could not be simply swept aside even by the most fervent enemies of mere opinions. But a solution presented itself: not reason, rationality without qualification, yet only upper reason, "pure" reason warrants the knowledge of the good and thus true morality. This is a vicious circle: only the kind of reason warrants goodness, which is already constructed as the only source of truth alias goodness. Yet it "clicked" and after all, this was the exigency of the system building of pure reason.

No one ever experienced the conflict between "pure reason" and "impure" affections or emotions. "Pure" and "impure" understood in the traditional metaphysical way, including Kant, are not just characters of the philosophical theater—as all the categories are—but simply bad metaphors. What is, indeed, constantly experienced, as well as expressed in artworks and practical philosophy, is the uncontrollability of certain passions, the addiction to certain emotions. This is by far not always a moral question, and when it is, the morally right is not always on reason's side, unless we identify reason with purity and goodness, although we have no reason to cling to this tradition. As there is no emotion without a cognitive aspect, there is also no cognitive impulse or motivation which would be void of feelings.

Spinoza knew that very well in *Ethics*. Otherwise he would not have been able to sum up the greatest wisdom philosophy uttered in this matter so far, that no emotion can be conquered or mastered by anything else but by an opposing and stronger emotion. What is termed "reason" in conflict with other emotions, is sometimes the most useful emotion, sometimes the one which is accepted and also expected by our cultural milieu, sometimes the emotion which makes us follow habitual ways of thinking and action, or rather the emotion which signals the danger of addiction to another emotion, or that this or that emotion will make us do or suffer something we will certainly regret later. There is no "pure" reason and nothing that we do or desire is entirely without reason. Moral judgment or choice is theoretically not as easy as metaphysical thinking surmised. But, perhaps practically, it is not that difficult.

I tried to understand the metaphysical addiction by the metaphor of "purity." It is the desire to make the system click, a desire for completion, perfection and beauty. At this point another desire, need, can also be detected that co-motivates men and women, and especially philosophers in the same direction. From Aristotle, who praised the "autocephalous," that is the human being who did not need anyone else, until Kant, who advised us to dismiss all our feelings and obey the command of pure practical reason or transcendental freedom within us alone, the autonomy of every single individual human being was hailed as the pinnacle of perfection. But is it?

I do not want to raise the question whether perfect autonomy can be achieved or not. Most philosophers agree that it cannot. What I want to say is different: perfect individual autonomy would transform humans into monsters. If it is true, as an almost common shared experience, that mutual emotional dependency—Sartre would say "*être-pour-autrui*"—is intrinsic to the human condition, then we cannot get rid of this dependency and neither can others rid themselves from the emotional dependency from us. Perhaps, this is easier to understand for women than men. Men, especially philosophers/men were supposed to be—if we believe Socrates—pregnant with ideas which they conceived on their own. If someone is pregnant with ideas,

emotional dependency can be dismissed as irrelevant for pure thinking. Yet women who are pregnant with children cannot dismiss emotional dependency, the co-habitation with another life, as impure or as a-philosophical. It must be admitted into "truth."

Emotional dependency is thus intrinsic to the human condition. The desire for autonomy, however, is not to be dismissed. No desire can be dismissed. Autonomy/heteronomy is a bad opposition. This is not because the good thing is somewhere in the middle, but because philosophy cannot answer the question "where" this middle is, where the line could be drawn, at which point emotional dependency and autonomy can co-habit, even if not united on a nuptial bed. Neither the "where" nor the "how" are answerable in their generality. Only the single individual can give an answer or at least raise the question for herself. And there are no final answers, not even for the single individual, for the question needs to be raised again and again.

I tried to illustrate my conviction that philosophy after the collapse of metaphysical tradition needs to re-think duality. Metaphysics interpreted duality as dualism, yet in contemporary philosophical discourse, the conceptions of two substances or two unrelated attributes, or the contrast between immortal soul and perishable body, of pure reason and impure capacities of knowledge, can hardly raise a claim, even to acceptability. Yet, whatever they claimed, metaphysical systems worked on human life experiences, both changing and constant. Philosophers of our age still work on human life experiences. One of those, and not a minor one, is, and remains, duality. Human persons do not experience themselves as a homogeneous self. There are several selves within one person. Moreover, we also live in more than one world, at least two or more, and it is by far not the same self that is best suited to live in all of them. As we shut our eyes when listening to music we sometimes shut down one function of our cognitive capacities or close off one of our emotional involvements in order to be ready to become fully absorbed by a world where those involvements would disturb our sojourn. Yes, we constantly leave a world behind in order to step into another and a third, and back again, and we know that this is what we are doing and we normally do not mix up one world with another. A five year old in the zoo will not mistake the wolf she observes there for the wolf that has devoured a grandmother in *Little Red Riding Hood*. While listening to the story, she will keep living in it, and will not think of the wolf in the zoo. How can this be?

Philosophy has always asked childish questions. Let us stay with them.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

de Balzac, Honoré. *Father Goriot*, trans. Marion Ayton Crawford. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968.

Benjamin, Walter. "Critique of Violence," trans. Edmund Jephcott, eds. Marcus Bullock and Michael Jennings, in *Selected Writings*, Vol. 1. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Dotoyevsky, Fyodor. *Crime and Punishment*, trans. with an introduction and notes by David McDuff. London: Penguin, 2003.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish.* Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1977.

Foucault, Michel. *The Use of Pleasure: The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 2, trans. Robert Hurley. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985.

Hegel, G. W. F. "Observation of the Relation of Self-Consciousness to Its Immediate Actuality," 185–210, paras. 309–346, in G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of the Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller with an analysis of the text and foreword by J. N. Findlay. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979.

Hegel, G. W. F. *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Outline and Critical Writings*, ed. Ernst Behler. New York: Continuum, 1990.

Chapter Eight

European Master Narratives about Freedom

In this chapter I want to employ the concept of master narrative in the spirit of the history and memory school initiated by Pierre Nora.[1] I will speak of stories, histories, fantasies, patterns of imagination which play the role of a kind of *arche* in a given culture. I mean culture in the broadest interpretation of this many faceted and complex concept in a manner similarly deployed by Clifford Geertz. He defined culture as "a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which humans communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge and attitude towards life."[2] One can point to a concrete, singular culture in the case of, at least, one shared master narrative.

A master narrative can be termed an *arche* of a culture in both interpretations of the Greek word. The *arche* stories are stories to which we always return; they are the final or ultimate foundations of a type of cultural imagination. Yet as the guides of cultural imagination they also rule, control, and are vested with power. Direct or indirect references to master narratives provide strengths and power to new stories or new images, they lend them double legitimacy—legitimacy by tradition and by charisma (for in case of master narratives tradition, itself, is charismatic). References to a shared tradition are not just cognitively understood but also emotionally felt, without footnotes, without explanation or interpretation. It is not even necessary for men and women to be familiar with the master narrative itself, for they are living in a world where a host of memories and interpretations are imbued by their spirit. Several allusions refer to master narratives, irrespective of their evaluation. That Homer's two epic poems were the master narratives of ancient Greek culture is beyond question. Yet, Plato makes almost always negative references to them, since he is deeply dissatisfied with the culture

which had been built around the Homeric master narratives. However, he could not avoid referring to them in order to be properly understood by his contemporaries.

Which narratives become or do not become master narratives of a culture is not decided at the very start, and does not necessarily depend on the quality of the narrative or the imagination. For example, one can speculate as a few scholars have done, what would have happened if the heretical movement of Gnosticism had become the master narrative of the late Roman Empire instead of orthodox Catholic Christianity. With Gnosticism as a master narrative a different culture, not ours, would have developed. But it did not, and Gnosticism, although an interesting topic of inquiry and a worthy object of scientific curiosity remains an esoteric issue. Because it did not become the master narrative references to ions, thirty two emanations, or the sin of Sophia did not legitimate a single idea, image or story in European history. However, references to the snake and to Eve, or to the death of Socrates, however, did and continue to do so.

Every culture—in the broadest sense of the word culture—has its own master narratives, mostly myths, foundational stories, or religious visions. Thus by "European Culture" I mean the master narratives shared by different people and nation on the European subcontinent. Certainly, all people of Europe also have their own master narratives that are not shared by other Europeans. Moreover, non-European people can also share one or the other story of the European master narratives. In what follows, however, I restrict my interpretation solely to the shared European master narratives.

The European master narratives are the *Bible* on the one hand, and Greek/Roman philosophy and historiography on the other hand. They are texts. We have no access to happenings or acts or to the spoken words but through texts. Newly gained knowledge due to archaeological excavations and finds does not affect our relation to the master narratives. The texts, not the archaeological finds, are still constantly reinterpreted, presented and worked upon in literature, painting, philosophy, politics and daily life.

In what follows I will speak of the European master narratives exclusively from the vantage point of freedom and liberty. I want to give some thought to the importance of the issue that our European thinking of freedom, our imaginary institutions of liberty and freedom drew constantly on the sources presented and represented by the *Bible* on the one hand, and Greek/Roman philosophy and history writing, on the other.

Let me start with the *Bible*. The concept of freedom makes its first appearance in the *Bible* in its interpretation as free choice or free will. In this text no distinction was made between choice and will. Eve and Adam picked an apple from the tree of knowledge and tasted it. As we learn, it is from this moment that humans have the chance to choose between good and evil.

Nothing determines them at the outset to choose one rather than the other. For one person it is easy to choose the good, for the other it is difficult, yet for no one is it impossible. The possibility to choose is the human condition in general. It means to take responsibility for others and for oneself. Cain was the first human born from the mother's womb. He already "inherited" the possibility of free choice. God warned him as much: "Why art thou wroth? And why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shall it not be lifted up? And if thou doest not well, sin coucheth at the door, and unto thee is its desire, but thou mayest rule over it."[3] Cain, as we know, failed to rule over his desire, but in a later chapter of "Genesis," in a similar situation Esau succeeded. Instead of killing his brother he embraced him.

From the Christian fathers until Kant, Hegel and Kierkegaard the great philosophers constantly returned to this paradigm, Kant even twice. European literature, in both dramas and novels, is breast-fed on this master narrative. For example, the serpent, the tempter, who is entirely absent from Greek tragedy, plays a central role. Macbeth is seduced into sin by the witches and by Lady Macbeth; Rastignac and Rumepre by the demonic Vautrin; and Raskolnikov by the mythological image of Napoleon. For two thousand years, at least, philosophers and theologians have discussed the existence or not of free will, and whichever conclusion is drawn, the discussion never ends—the text has remained a master narrative.

The second fundamental biblical story of freedom is the narrative of liberation, the liberation from Egyptian slavery. The biblical quotation "Let my people go," for example, became the refrain for the song of African slaves in America. It gave voice to their desire and resolve for liberation. Nietzsche was right when he wrote—albeit critically in his *Genealogy of Morals*—that without this liberation story there would be neither modern democracy nor socialism. Instead of claiming descent from gods, a people claimed descent from slaves, thereby reversing the hierarchy of values.

The central, the most emphatic reference to liberation can be found in the passages about divine revelation on Mount Sinai. God, the giver of the law, makes himself known to the people of Israel not as the creator of the world, but as the liberator, as the God who brought them out from the land of bondage. God makes the people immediately aware of their liberty, since Law can be given only to free people, because only free people can obey the law as well as infringe it. After having revealed himself first as the liberator, God commands that people should not have other gods before him. They should not serve things as if they were gods, and above all no humans or their statues. All Pharaohs or Emperors, and later a Hitler or a Stalin, are idols, and their worship is idolatry. The King of Kings stands above all other Kings, as the victims of despotism would so frequently declare.

The biblical narration also continues in this vein with the paradigmatic story of the golden calf, which also became a European master narrative.

People do not want to be free; they prefer the fleshpots of Egypt. The encounter between Christ and the Grand Inquisitor in Dostoevsky's novel *The Brothers Karamazov*, for example, is a replay of the controversy between Moses and Aaron after the episode of the golden calf.

The third European master narrative of freedom is contained in the story of Jesus of Nazareth, and the fourth in the creed of Christ, the Redeemer. The two stories are connected, yet not identical. The claim for the freedom of religion, the freedom of conscience and faith appears first in the person and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. Freedom of religion, of faith, is the first among all liberties claimed, and remained the first liberty claimed even in modern times. Jesus of Nazareth did not invent a new religion, so the Gospels tell us, but interpreted the religion of his fathers in his own and new way while surrounding himself with disciples who learned to share his interpretation. Jesus of Nazareth, a free spirit, refused to abandon his own radical and free thinking about religious observance for the sake of institutionalized interpretations. Thus, he provoked the wrath of the Caducean officials of the Temple and won the loving enthusiasm of many people. One can also interpret his martyr's death as the first sacrifice for the freedom of faith, religion and speech. Christian heretics have also interpreted the Gospels in this spirit. Yet they were not the only ones who did. A master narrative is a master narrative because it transcends the boundaries of a single community of faith. For example, Sartre in his early drama *Barioná* told the story of the birth of Jesus in this sense, as it was first staged in a Nazi prisoner of war camp.

In the fourth European master narrative of freedom Christ is believed the Redeemer of humankind. This creed entails a freedom narrative which is the radicalization of the Genesis story about free choice and free will. The original story suggests that one can always choose the good, that one is never predetermined to sin. Yet the promise of salvation goes further here—it is, indeed, a promise. It not only warns the faithful man or woman about his or her responsibility, but also promises him or her an entirely new beginning. It suggests that even if one has chosen an evil path, this does not seal his or her character or fate forever. One can liberate oneself from sin, from one's own past, from all bad decisions, and become an entirely new man or woman. One can be born for the second time. The Saul-Paul story is perhaps the first paradigmatic exemplification of this promise. European imagination returns to it again and again.

I will now turn to Greek and Roman stories which will become—just like the stories of the *Bible*—European master narratives. I repeat that one does not need to know all those stories, perhaps not even one of them, to keep them alive as master narratives, for they have already been absorbed by the series of imaginary institutions on the European continent.

Interestingly and as a preliminary remark, Greek and Roman mythology does not belong to European master narratives. Surely, one can return to

them and revive them from time to time. This occurred in painting from the late Renaissance to the Baroque or in the curriculum of the gymnasium in the nineteenth century. However, this culture was based on subtle knowledge and remained esoteric in the first instance, like the Gnostic tradition. There were exceptions, such as the images of Aphrodite or Venus, and Eros or Amour; even here it was their function rather than their stories that became paradigmatic. As far as the freedom narratives are concerned, the sole remaining hero is Prometheus, the rebel, symbolizing not the relevance of mythology but rather the uprising against the tyranny of a god. There is an absence of Greek and Roman mythology as stories from the European master narratives, despite the repeated attempts to revive them and make them work because these master narratives formed in the context of the biblical monotheistic tradition, which excluded all kinds of mythology. The *Bible* is not mythological, and early Christian mythologies, such as Gnosticism, were esoteric and disappeared. In Europe, at least roughly during the last fifteen hundred years, there is no story of *teomachia*; gods do not beget god, they do not make love, and they do not metamorphose. The old gods are with us, although not as gods—they do not dwell on Mount Olympus but in museums.

To be sure, in the nineteenth century a radical change was attempted. The conviction that the Jewish-Christian God was dead, voiced by Heine and made popular by Nietzsche, became widely accepted. It took time to realize that the conception was based on a false analogy. Greek and Roman gods died with their culture, thus, the conclusion presented itself that modernity, as an entirely new culture or civilization, would follow the same course with the death of the Jewish-Christian God. What was not understood then, although is emphasized today by excellent cultural historians such as Jan Assman, was that the Jewish and Christian religions were not culturally specific; they accommodated themselves to entirely different cultures, and will in all probability continue to do so in the future.[4] Yet, as long as the creed in the coming demise of the Jewish Christian God remained widespread, at least in Europe, a few artificial attempts were made to replace the old God with other gods, mostly borrowed from the world of ancient mythologies. Nietzsche, for example, tried allegorically to revive the figure of the prophet Zarathustra and the god of wine, Dionysus. Needless to say, the attempts to make old mythologies relevant to the modern European mind were doomed to failure. There were some pagan racist fantasies that Nazism, for example, tried to resuscitate in order to celebrate a cult around Germanic deities, especially Wotan. However, this idea became restricted to the cult of Wagner and his Ring cycle, where the mythical figures themselves served as allegories for something universal, at least according to the composer.

Nonetheless, even if Greek and Roman mythology did not bestow Europe with master narratives, Greek and Roman philosophy and historiography

bequeathed several, and there are three master narratives of freedom among them.

The foundational text of the first master narrative is the oration of Pericles according to Thucydides, and it is this oration, if not its exact speech but at least its spirit, that is the reference point for the definition of Aristotle's *Politics:* "the city is the sum total of its citizens."[5] Just as the master narrative of liberation was bequeathed by the *Bible*, the narrative about the constitution of liberties was bequeathed by the Greeks and the Romans. Israel received the Law from God. Free Athenian citizens, themselves, constituted the laws that they were ready to obey. They also created the fundamental law, the law of all the laws, the constitution. The Latin word constitution already suggests that we are talking about an artifice created by people, men in this instance. Aristotle even called constitution-making a kind of *techné.* In most variations of this master narrative, which, one after the other, transformed the original description into a master narrative, the men who created the constitution are under the protection of the constitution; they preserve and enjoy their liberties because of it. They are the free citizens. They are the city, all others are aliens. Let me refer again to the Biblical concept. There the Law is not of human making; it is not constituted, but bestowed as the gift of God, although its addressee is the free human person. Here everyone is equally subject to the law, not just men, but also women, servants, slaves. The Law even includes obligations towards strangers. And everyone is equally duty-bound to obey the commandments.

Already at this point one encounters one of the characteristic features of European culture—there are tensions between various master narratives so that one master narrative or one interpretation of a master narrative can be played off against the other. This is not a kind of shortcoming but inheres in the dynamic character of this culture. Without a tension between certain master narratives one single interpretation of one master narrative would become in all probability fossilized. The tension prompts constant reinterpretations. Sometimes a kind of *okumene* is established between them, although the narratives are not fused. They enter into conversation with one another and implant certain features in each other. Typical examples of such mutual accommodations are the so called social contract theories, and even the slogan of the French revolution—liberty, fraternity, equality. That the mutual accommodation of the master narratives in political theories and slogans does not also eliminate tensions and contradictions in pragmatic political life has been brilliantly documented in de Tocqueville's famous book, *Democracy in America*. De Tocqueville discovers the dilemma and concentrates—among other things—on two master narratives, their messages and the difficulty of their co-existence.

Hobbes, though, is the first author of representative social contract theory who goes far in his attempt to think the two master narratives together, and

not just in the second part of *Leviathan*, one of the first writings on political theology. The idea of the contract or the covenant attempts to fuse the biblical tradition with the Greek-Roman idea of a good constitution. Although the contract is devised among humans who enter into contract with one another, they alienate their freedom to the Sovereign. Moreover, although humans are the makers of their own laws, they still are under the guidance of the laws of nature, which are on their part divine, and serve as uncontestable sources of, and limits to, the human act of constituting.

Before social contract theory reached its most republican version in Rousseau, different types of mediation between the two master narratives were attempted; even other narratives were called in for complementary service such as the story of Adam and Eve in Locke's work. Rousseau came up with another kind of mediation. Although his republic was entirely based on the ancient model, or rather on a strong interpretation of ancient anti-liberal Greek—rather Spartan—citizenship, he still needed God, the Supreme Being, as the authority above and behind a constitution, which on its part, was been created solely by citizens. God is by no means the source of Law, but obedience to it is warranted by a commonly shared faith, the faith in God. Needless to say, the tension between the two master narratives on freedom always assumed different forms and meanings. For example, today this tension makes its appearance in the feverish controversies between American communitarians and liberals.

The second European master narrative inherited from the Greek polis is the story of Socrates in the form known to us from Plato's dialogues. It is the story of freedom of conscience. This story has been constantly retold, referred to by philosophers, writers, political actors, and it is deeply cherished by people who held the freedom of speech and conscience dear. The story is understood without footnotes. For example, during World War Two, Steinbeck wrote a play about a man who was unwilling to betray his conscience and, as a result, was condemned to death by the Nazis. Standing before his judges, he simply recited the word of Socrates from Plato's *Apology*. The audience wept.[6]

European philosophers and other storytellers have frequently compared the fate of Jesus and the fate of Socrates. In the Renaissance they almost merged the two characters, for example in exclamations like: "Holy Socrates, pray for us!" If we consider the master narratives of freedom alone, the comparison is justified. Both Jesus and Socrates died because they refused to act and to speak in discordance with their faith and conviction.

However, the two stories also convey different messages. Interpretations of the master narrative "Socrates," for example, emit their own specific messages. The Socrates story is not the master narrative about freedom of religion, religious practices and faith. Rather, it is the master narrative about freedom of thought, expression, opinion, and personal conscience. It is also

the story about freedom of disbelief and about the dignity of personal and oppositional judgment and opinion in matters of state, constitution and tradition. Socrates, in Plato's narrative, died in defense of a new language game, that is, in defense of being free to say things such as "what you consider true is in fact not true, what you consider just is in fact not just, something else is good or just" when discussing any topic such as politics, poetry, ethics, and especially wisdom. The question concerning the philosophy of Socrates, as well as the never-ending dispute about the possibility or impossibility to discern Plato's philosophy from that of Socrates, interests philosophy deeply, but it does not make a difference to the master narrative of freedom. Socrates, this funny old sage who treated his accusers with irony, defied the prejudiced judges and the crowd and defended himself and his truth with a sense of superiority and dignity, is and remains the hero of the European master narrative about the freedom of personality, of personal thinking, and moral autonomy. This is especially the case concerning freedoms against tyranny—the tyranny of the tyrant, of the masses, of public opinion. Kant also spoke in the spirit of this tradition in inventing the formula of the categorical imperative. The moral law, so he suggested, represents humankind within us, and not outside of us.

The third European master narrative on freedom that works with the Greek-Roman heritage is a complex one. It revives, applies and retells several stories about political and other institutions, their creation, survival and vicissitudes. The texts of philosophers, writers, but first and foremost ones of historians, are the essential sources of this complex master narrative. Let me mention only one of the sources, *Parallel Lives* by Plutarch.[7] The social and political imagination of European historical actors has been deeply influenced and shaped by these stories until the full development of modernity. Here, for example, one finds the foundation stories and the histories of the mythological "founding fathers" from Lycurgus to Romulus and Remus. An entirely new political entity was thus created and established, not only by laying foundations, but also by establishing basic institutions which would secure the longevity and the stability of that political entity. These basic standing institutions allowed change without changing themselves, and protected the political body against tyranny. The protection of the great standing institutions against external and internal enemies also required heroic deeds. Greek and Roman master narratives provided Europeans with role-models—"defenders of freedom" such as Brutus—both of them, the Gracchus brothers and Cato.

In *The Discourses* Machiavelli, the first modern political author, dwells at length on the narratives of the founding fathers, although he includes Moses among them. His continuation of the story is also an essential aspect of this master narrative. The continuation of the story sounds roughly like this: "Times go on and people get accustomed to their liberties, they cease to care

for them. They get richer, they become used to luxuries, and morals sink from bad to worse, the tyrant stands before the door." Perhaps the story will end with the establishment of tyranny, and perhaps not. There is an alternative, namely revolution. Revolution is but the return to the beginning, to the gesture of foundation where the story can begin again. This master narrative is kept alive in political theory until the present day, from Rousseau to Hannah Arendt. Arendt's concept of the new beginning, natality, modernizes the traditional freedom narrative, where in her book *On Revolution*, she expresses her hope that perhaps even America might return to the glorious past of its foundation, the constitution of liberties. In this context, the United States has its own founding story, and this time it is not one that draws on mythologies. The gesture of foundation is said to be always a free gesture and as such a creation out of nothing.[8]

However, it is not just the story about establishing, losing and regaining freedom that constantly gets worked upon and re-told. Several concrete institutions presented in ancient philosophy and history books serve as models for new and even modern institutions. The drive to repeat is a well-known drive presented in the stories, yet it also characterizes actors in relation to these stories. Although nowadays the new is not rationally legitimated as something that has already been tried with success, as in pre-modern times, yet reference to the old still makes the new emotionally more acceptable. The stories about the Roman Republic, the idea of the republic and republicanism are examples of this type of emotional, historical connection. The Latin term *res publica*, "the common thing," still rings a bell today in the form of the people's "tribunes," that is, the emergence of the institution of representation, an institution which remains until the present day one of the major pillars of modern democracy. Napoleon first became a consul, then an emperor, according the script of the master narrative, although he also claimed the second step as the continuation of the master narrative of freedom. Americans have their Senate, like the Romans with their "*senatus populusque romanus*." However, the function and the content of those institutions change and they are not mere copies.

Yet, there is a lesson in this old European master narrative about the creation of political institutions that constantly returns and is voiced again and again in times of hereditary monarchies and the institutions of the nobility, in the free cities, in the institutions of some protestant denominations, and, which, hence, occupies a central place in modernity. This lesson is the following. The highest power is not enjoyed during one's whole life, for one is selected or elected for a limited time. Power is thus temporary. It turns out that the idea of the freedom of choice we are familiar with in the first master narrative on freedom from *the Bible* is not only relevant in moral matters. One can freely choose in politics too, and what is true in case of a moral

decision, is true also in politics. One can regret one's choice and might choose next time differently and better.

The master narrative of republicanism is the master story of pluralism as well. It is also the story about the fragility of political freedom. The demise of the Roman Republic confronts us with the most horrifying spectacle of mass murder, mass executions, proscription, theft, civil wars, debauchery, and fundamentalism—all in one. And, at the end comes the Empire, despotism. Other stories can also be told about Imperial Rome concerning pluralism, diversity, early Christianity. However, as far as the freedom narrative is concerned, the outcome is the loss of republican freedom. Emperor Nero became the hero of the master narrative of the absolute loss of freedom, the European master narrative about despotism. For almost two thousand years the name Nero became identical with freedom lost, the metaphor for the unlimited power of one single person who uses it for murder out of lust and whim. Nero's story is indirectly about freedom. It works as a warning—freedom can be a burden, but the loss of freedom is, itself, an unmitigated disaster. Nero lost his pride of place as a metaphor of European despotism only in the twentieth century when he became displaced by the figures of Hitler and Stalin.

All master narratives of freedom speak also about the fragility of freedom. Freedom is burdensome, it goes with too much responsibility; liberty is difficult, as Levinas put it. Freedom does not promise immediate wish fulfillment, happiness, or even personal security. If we start to rethink all the European master narratives about freedom we can draw a fairly pessimistic picture. Let me recapitulate. Cain was free to choose between good and evil, and he chose evil; the people of Israel abandoned the God who liberated them from bondage and instead worshipped the golden calf; Jesus of Nazareth was crucified; and Socrates drank the hemlock. After having flourished for a while, free republics wither and despotism prospers.

However, the presentation of defeat has nothing to do with pessimism. If we ask the question whether it is or was worthwhile, all the master stories on freedom give an unambiguous answer: yes it was, it is absolutely worthwhile. Only those things worth having can be lost. Life is dear because my life and those who are dear to me will be certainly lost. Freedom is dear, because my freedom and the freedom of those dear to me can eventually be lost, although this is never certain. Working on the master narratives on freedom is to work on freedom.

I told a very short story about the European master narratives on freedom. These are the stories which are interpreted, used, applied, exploited, and remade by thinkers, actors and storytellers who are living in this tradition. These are the texts in which we recognize ourselves, whether we are dwelling on the subcontinent called Europe or have carried the sweet burden of master narratives with us to the new world, or whether we are religious or

non-religious, rich or poor. These are the fundamental principles of European culture.

Yet, let me repeat myself, each and every national culture or culture of an ethnicity, a people, a religion, a human group, a profession, a sect or a family has its own little master narratives which they understand without footnotes, and which others cannot. What is obvious without even saying it is that the great ancient civilizations of India, China, Japan and others have their own universal master narratives and so have all cultures and all peoples. However, "humankind as such" has none, although one narrative can be translated into the language of the other with more or less success, and different interpretations of various narratives can enter into a dialogue with each other. An *okumene* of the master narratives is not likely to be formed and it is, perhaps, not even desirable; yet an *okumene* of freedom narratives would be desirable, and, I hope, not entirely beyond reach.

I spoke only about those master narratives—the European master narratives on freedom—which, I hope, could perhaps form an *okumene* with other master narratives of freedom. However, European master narratives, generally, are far broader and far more variegated and multifaceted than the master narratives on freedom. I mention only a few. One of the fundamental master narratives, termed metaphysics, centered and still centers its inquiry on the question: "whether is there something rather than nothing." There is the master story of time or temporality, including eschatology, and the messianic message; there is the master story of incarnation or embodiment; the master narrative of friendship from Aristotle to Shakespeare and then to Derrida. There are also the master narratives of "*amour passion*," of art, religion and philosophy, of fate, good and bad luck, of necessity and of contingency. I do not think that in case of those and other European master narratives an *okumene* of cultures would be desirable, even if it were at all possible. Let us remain different and let us remain curious.

Finally, I want to quote the title of Hans Blumenberg's wonderful book *Work on Myth*. I think that as far European culture is concerned, the title is a misnomer. Since European culture exists—and it did not exist in the times of the ancient Greeks and Romans, but only since the time of the combination of the two sources of master narratives—we do not work on myths, but rather on master narratives. European culture is conspicuously void of myths. This is why Greek and Roman mythologies do not belong to our master narratives. Whether it is an asset or a shortcoming to live without myths, but with master narratives, I cannot decide. No one can decide. One makes just emotional judgments, confessions of love or hatred or both. This is why I have to end this chapter with a confession. I love master narratives more than myths.

NOTES

1. See for example, *Constructing the Past. Essays in Historical Methodology*, ed. Jacques Le Goff and Pierre Nora with an introduction by Colin Lucas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Paris: Editions de la maison sciences de l'homme, 1985).
2. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 89.
3. The Bible, "Genesis," 4. 7.
4. See Jan Assman, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998).
5. Aristotle, *The Politics*, trans. with an introduction by T. A. Sinclair (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979).
6. John Steinbeck, *The Moon Is Down* (London: Penguin, 1995 [1942]). See Plato, "Socrates' Defense (Apology)," in *Plato: The Collected Dialogues* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 3–26.
7. Plutarch, *Plutarch's Lives* (London: Dent; New York: Dutton, 3 vols., 1969–1971).
8. Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1979).

Chapter Nine

The Three Logics of Modernity and the Double Bind of the Modern Imagination

My starting point is simple. Modernity has no foundation, since it emerged in and through the destruction and deconstruction of all foundations. In other words, modernity is founded on freedom. There is nothing new in this thought, for in fact all representative modern thinkers and all modern foundational documents (for example, constitutions) confirm and reconfirm it. What I wish to do is to interpret it.

The modern world is based on freedom: that is, freedom is the arche of the modern world. Yet freedom is entirely unfit to serve as an arche, because it is a foundation that does not found. As a *Grund*—to speak with both Hegel and Heidegger—it opens the *Abgrund*: that is, the ground opens the abyss. And since the modern world is based on freedom, on an arche that cannot found, it remains a world without foundation, a world that continuously has to reinvent itself. This is one of the main reasons why all the constructed models of the modern world are abstract, in the Hegelian sense of the word, and by definition counterfactual, and why all coherent narratives ring true for no more than a few decades.

Let me briefly exemplify (rather than explain) the assertion that the arche of modernity is freedom, a foundation that does not found, in terms of both of the constituents of modernity that together constitute the essence of modernity. I call one of these constituents the dynamics of modernity, and the other, the modern social arrangement.

The dynamic of modernity is the midwife of the modern social arrangement, although it appeared on a number of occasions long before the emergence of the modern social arrangement—the case of the Greek Enlighten-

ment is perhaps the most frequently discussed of these appearances. This dynamic consists of the constant and ongoing querying and testing of the dominating concepts of the true, the good, and the just. They delegitimize the traditional norms, rules, beliefs, and suchlike of any given world as "mere opinion" and legitimize other concepts and contents of the true, the good, and the just in their place—"this is not good, something else is good."

The dynamic of modernity harbors dangers for all pre-modern social arrangements. Since it can go on and on, seemingly *ad infinitum*, it can delegitimize all the time-honored, dominating norms, rules, and beliefs. Since no pre-modern social arrangement is founded on freedom, but on *archai* that limit the scope and form of interrogation, these *archai* are destroyed by the dynamic of modernity. Hegel was the first to realize (or at least to formulate philosophically) that modernity is the sole world that is not destroyed but maintained and revitalized by the ongoing process of negation. This is one of the main reasons why modernity is the end of history. Still, in Hegel's model the dynamic of modernity is still going on, within limits, for the modern social arrangement itself—the trinity of the ethical powers of the family, civil society, and the state limits it. But, if I have read the text of the twentieth century well, the dynamic of modernity can break through the limits of the modern social arrangement itself and negate modernity. The dynamic of modernity can run its course as a radically nihilistic discourse, yet also end up as fundamentalism.

I shall now turn to the second constituent of the essence of modernity, the modern social arrangement. It has developed slowly over the last three centuries, first in Western Europe and in North America, then spreading ever more quickly throughout the globe. The early moderns deconstructed the old natural edifice—that is, the pre-modern hierarchical structure of estates and privileges—with the slogan "All men are born free." What had been natural hitherto (that some are free and others not) was declared to be contrary to nature. Thus the modern social arrangement was also conceived as the arrangement of society "according to nature." If people are born equal, then a person's position in the social hierarchy cannot be determined by birth, but should result from his or her free activities and choices. Society is no longer hierarchized in daily life, but in the institutions that take care of the division of labor, goods, and services. Men and women are then born free—that is, contingent, or, indeed, endowed with boundless possibilities—and in this sense also equal. But they come to occupy very different places in the hierarchy of social institutions. To put it briefly, free and equal opportunities constitute the model of the modern social arrangement.

Freedom as the foundation of the modern world assigns other notions of value (particularly those of equality and happiness) to the position of means-values. This is not just the operation of the "priority principle," but a condi-

tion of the longevity of modernity, this most fragile of social arrangements, the survival of which is always hanging in the balance.

The simple statement that modernity is founded on freedom is reconfirmed in terms of both the dynamic of modernity and the modern social arrangement. In addition, freedom as an arche that does not found is paradoxical. From the paradoxical character of a non-founding foundation several other paradoxes follow. If one wishes, one can speak of aporias or antinomies instead. Kant (like Nietzsche later on) was painfully aware of the paradoxicality of freedom. In order to solve its antinomies he needed to make a very strong metaphysical-ontological statement about the division of the world into phenomena and noumena. This avenue is hardly open to our contemporaries; the Hegelian sublation of contradictions is even less amenable to modern thinking, at least not now and not for us.

Freedom's paradoxicality cuts across almost all levels of the modern imagination, for it is here that the question of meaning (sense) is located. Freedom means, on the one hand, that every limit can and must be crossed; but is there such a thing as a human life in which the only remaining limit is the death of the single "existent"? The double bind that I would like to consider briefly in this article is the paradoxicality of freedom itself, seen in the perspective of the imagination.

I would like to advance the proposition that, although the paradox of freedom cannot be solved (this is why it is a paradox), it is not necessarily conceived as a paradox by those endowed with it, who bump into the paradox whenever reflection returns to itself. The two sides of the paradox normally appear not to be on the same level, in the same sphere, in the same story, at the same time, and frequently point in different directions. For example, in the case of the aporia "universality/difference," where universality stands for *apeiron* and difference for *peras*, paradoxicality is very rarely perceived. Rather there are "pushes" in a particular direction, sometimes this way, sometimes that. I call such pushes "the temporalization of the paradox." In my view, this "temporalization of the paradox" is a normal modern phenomenon. The paradox remains unnoticed if groups that push in one or the other direction do so with the conviction that if they can only manage to do the right thing the "other" will disappear. They can regard the paradox as a seeming paradox that can be eliminated, or as a problem that can and must be solved. They can also devise foolproof models that accommodate both universality and difference, giving each its due. In most cases, the paradox is denied in the perspective of the technological imagination (life is a technological problem that can be solved). But one can also take the view that "otherness" is just an illusion or a tradition, a prejudice that can be overcome through enlightenment (as Kant believed that there was only one religion, although—unfortunately—many faiths). In this case the temporalization of

the paradox is theoretical, and it takes place in the perspective of the historical imagination.

The two "main characters" of the present chapter—the technological imagination and the historical imagination—are not offered as a scheme of understanding. First, because not every kind of modern imagination is directly related to the paradox of freedom and truth, and to *peras/apeiron*. I take these two main frames of the imagination roughly in the sense of Heidegger and Castoriadis. I shall discuss the institutions of the modern imagination—in addition to "institution," I shall also use the term "frame," in Heidegger's sense of *Gestell.* We are, so to speak, "enframed." We are enframed by the modern concept of truth (yet also by those of "good" and "beautiful"). Heidegger, in his famous essay about the essence of technology, states that the essence of technology "is by no means anything technological."

It is the dominating imagination of the modern sciences and the carrier of the modern concept of truth, which identifies truth with true knowledge (the correspondence theory of truth) and with the unlimited progression of knowledge, technology, and science. Science as an ideology (to employ Habermas' term) has become (in place of religion) the dominating imaginary institution of the moderns.

My point is that there is an alternative—strong and forceful—frame of the modern imagination which enframes modernity with the idea of the limit, what we call sense, meaning, meaning-rendering, and so on. It also has a truth concept of its own: historical truth. And just as the essence of technology is not anything technological, the essence of history (*Geschichte*) is not historical. The historical imagination affords meaning to the present/modern world in presenting historical truth/untruth by way of interpretation.

I am now in a position to exemplify in a few words the difference between the two. The other day we heard here in the New School for Social Research a discussion on Freud's *Moses and Monotheism*, involving Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, Jacques Derrida, and Richard Bernstein. At a particular point in his narrative Freud tells us that he is deciphering historical truth with the help of natural (or material) truth. Historical truth is not a problem to be solved, but a puzzle to be deciphered by another—alternative—fiction. (Freud calls the alternative fiction that is to be used to decipher the religious fiction a historical novel.) The aim is meaning-rendering, interpretation, genealogy. The glance is past-oriented, but the past (the historical truth) is the exercise ground for the present (to my mind, for the killing of God by modern science, including psychoanalysis, but that is another story). Freud deciphers the hidden and indecipherable historical truth by means of the theory of the return of the repressed, taking the Oedipal trauma as a cue. Yet the Oedipal trauma—provided that it does indeed cause neuroses (the correspondence theory of truth)—is a problem to be solved. It is not a puzzle to be tentatively deciphered by means of another fiction. Freud knows exactly

what the Oedipal trauma is, he discovered it and researched it scientifically (it is true), and as a result he now knows how it can be cured, when it can be cured at all (problem solving). We are here confronted with the simultaneous employment of both kinds of imagination and of two different concepts of truth. I would add that neither of them is the "truth" of metaphysics, of religion, of bygone ages. Although the technological imagination turns around *apeiron* (infinite progression, infinite regression), in the case of the single "existent" the *apeiron* is lived as *peras*. Max Weber described this as a painful experience, yet he also exulted in it as a heroic stance. Scientists know only too well that their great discoveries will eventually be superseded, but they passionately abandon themselves to their vocation all the same. Let me add that, on the contrary, the historical imagination which is vested in *peras*, the limited thing (*Dasein* to use Hegel's term in the *Logik*)—for example, in the creation of an artwork, the interpretation of a bygone event, or an ideologically inspired political action—may turn out to be inexhaustible and, in this sense, unlimited for the meaning-rendering "existents," be they creators, actors, recipients, or interpreters. If anything grants immortality to moderns, it is the limited, not the unlimited.

Before I turn to the three logics of modernity and the double bind of the modern imagination I must still clarify one thing. In my discussion of the three logics of modernity I shall associate the historical imagination with the romantic enlightenment and the technological imagination with the rationalistic enlightenment. But modernity is characterized by the fact that things do not fit into one another. This is also the case here. If one considers, for example, the issue of culture and the three concepts of culture that crisscross all three logics of modernity, it turns out immediately that the historical imagination cannot be associated solely with romanticism; nor can the technological imagination be associated solely with the rationalistic enlightenment. The self-understanding of the moderns in general mobilizes both kinds of imagination. The age of technological revolutions is also the age of hermeneutics.

To return to the introductory sentences of this chapter, I would like to distinguish between three logics or tendencies in modernity: first, the logic of technology; second, the logic of the functional allocation of social positions; and finally, the logic of political power (institutions of freedom, institutions of government, including authority and coercion). The concept of the three logics or three developmental tendencies only corroborates the presupposition that the modern world is heterogeneous. Each tendency entails several developmental options in their dynamic stage. During their development particular options become excluded, either forever or only for a time. If all three logics developed in concert or even through contradictions that are still to be reconciled, the unfolding of the three dynamics would become more and more unilinear. On my reading of the text of modernity, however, the

three logics are relatively—although not absolutely—independent of each other, and none constantly dominates or determines the other two. They develop in interplay, in conflict with each other, as they may mutually support or mutually limit one another. Even if one of the developmental tendencies is thwarted only for a historically insignificant time, its character will be different to what it would have been if its development had been uninhibited. It would be foolish to think of the three developmental tendencies in teleological terms—needless to say, in retrospect one can always design a teleological sequence, but this proves only the one thing we already know from philosophy from Aristotle to Hegel, namely, that all categories can develop only those potentials which slumber in them as they come into being.

The three logics of modernity are not, of course, blind natural forces; some of their potentialities develop because they are developed by historical agents or actors. Their development requires different types of actions and different powers of imagination. In what follows, I shall discuss the first and second logics only briefly in order to deal with the third at greater length.

THE LOGIC OF TECHNOLOGY

It is obvious that in the first logic of modernity (the development of technology and science as the dominating world explanation of modernity) the technological imagination dominates. The technological imagination is future-oriented: it gives preference to the mental attitude of problem solving; it takes the correspondence theory of truth for granted; it operates in terms of a goals-means rationality; it treats things—both nature and men—as objects; it includes a faith in progress and in the accumulation of knowledge; it prefers the new to the old; it puts the highest premium on utility and efficiency. It is obvious that the technological imagination also permeates the two other spheres. Since Max Weber formulated his theory of rationalization and disenchantment this tendency has been described and theorized lavishly in both philosophy and the social sciences, sometimes critically, sometimes approvingly. I attribute the critical approach guided by the historical imagination to the romantic enlightenment.

It is fair to say that the technological imagination has had a far greater impact on the other two tendencies of modernity than the historical imagination has had on the first. The relationship between the two kinds of imagination seems grossly unequal in this respect. Technology progresses, accumulates knowledge—while also being the result of the accumulation of knowledge—requires problem-solving thinking, and is both rational and rationalized. Alternative technologies are constantly being suggested, but not implemented. Technological development does not mobilize meaning-rendering

activity. True, the historical imagination filters through into the logic of technology, too (for example, nowadays by way of ecological considerations), without, however, becoming a condition of its development. One has to consider that, among the three logics, only the first is indifferent to culture, to tradition, even if particular traditions and their attitudes (for example, Protestantism) provide better conditions for its development than others.

What is most important, however, is the circumstance that the development of technology and its rationality is by now empirically universal. It is in fact the same all over the world. The historical imagination, by contrast, is past- and tradition-sensitive, feeds on recollection, and mobilizes the human capacity towards expanded (*erweiterte* in Kantian terms), not just goal-oriented, but meaning-oriented thinking.

One could object to this description by pointing out that revolutionary science mobilizes both kinds of imagination, and that without revolutionary science the puzzle-solving stance of normal science would not be able to continue. However, one cannot know for sure that revolutionary science is now in fact necessary for the future development of the first logic of modernity, even if one subscribes without hesitation to the view that revolutionary science is motivated by the instinct of reason known as curiosity and by the desire to know—coupled with the quest for creativity—in fact, that it is inspired also by the historical imagination. One could also raise another objection. Indeed, the human stance that treats nature—human nature included—as a kind of "standing reserve" (*Bestand*), in Heidegger's characterization, is very much a feature of modernity. At the same time, the adoration of the beauty of a landscape or of a tree merely for its own sake is also a determinately modern attitude. Indeed, one might say that the more nature has come to be regarded as a mere object, a "standing reserve" for human use, the more it has become beautiful to "the eye of the beholder," who (disinterestedly!) lets nature stand where it stands. Still, I would not like to talk of a double bind in the logic of technology. Contemplating nature, like painting landscapes, is a cultural attitude, and culture (not to mention the three concepts of culture which I have no space to discuss) cuts across all three logics of modernity.

THE LOGIC OF THE FUNCTIONAL ALLOCATION OF SOCIAL POSITIONS

Let me now turn briefly to the second logic (tendency) of modernity. The description of the second developmental logic of modernity as "the logic of the division of social positions, functions, and wealth" sounds too complicated, but I have not found a satisfying shorter version.

The developmental tendency of the second logic of modernity is constantly triggered or kept in motion by the contestation of justice, one of the major manifestations of the dynamic of modernity. Different social strata contest justice. What is claimed as just for one is denounced by the other as unjust. This means that, under the conditions of political freedom, the contestation of justice (dynamic justice) does not push for changes in only one direction. This circumstance shows immediately that the second logic of modernity unfolds in a different way to the first. Social institutions shift in one direction, only to shift back, eventually, to the original one. Rationality cannot be entirely instrumental or functional here. If a group of people denounce an institution as unjust, they generally also query its rationality. There are as many contents to rationality as there are claimants who speak the modern language of justice. And the content is not indifferent to the kind of rationality at stake. Social groups and actors normally query and test the validity of norms and rules of justice from the standpoint of the values of freedom and life (equality of life chances included). The foundation of modernity is here employed normatively (as a value). The normative employment of the values of freedom and life is, however, guided by the historical imagination. In the process of the contestation of justice particular experiences are accumulated, whereas others are not. Moreover, these experiences are constantly being reinterpreted. One can learn too much as well as too little from previous experiences. I do not subscribe to Hannah Arendt's view that the social question is about problem-solving and so mobilizes the technological imagination alone. The contestation of social justice itself is guided mainly—and sometimes entirely—by the historical imagination. Only after a decision has been made or an agreement reached will the technological imagination as problem-solving begin to take the upper hand. I would like to employ another of Hannah Arendt's distinctions at this point, nevertheless, namely, her point that there is a gap between the life of modern man and his world. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the case of need allocation and specialization, two crucial institutions of the modern social arrangement and two representative battlefields of the dynamic of modernity, on which the battle has been and is still being fought from the perspectives of both the technological and the historical imagination—between enlightenment rationalists and romantics.

If we take a look at the major institutions of the second logic of modernity, ranging from the market to human rights, it is obvious that the individual does not need to become a personality (an autonomous individuality) in order to reproduce her life successfully. She does not need to carry inside—in her "internal chambers"—emotional wealth or "density"; she does not even need a moral character. She needs to learn adjustment, utility calculation, skills for problem-solving in at least one profession, and, on a lower level, also in daily life. Life can be successfully lived under the guidance of the technological imagination alone. In order to have a world, however, one

needs to become detached from the technological imagination—not to abandon it (for by abandoning it one would have to go native, and nowadays even this would not suffice), but to establish (to create) a distance from the technological imagination. It is the historical imagination that guides men and women in keeping this distance. It is important to note that I am talking here about the double bind within the second logic of modernity. The agent in this case (taking on board both Kant and Hegel, not to mention Kierkegaard) is the single individual or association of single individuals. Political action and (or) the state do not come into question at this point. I think that in the second logic of modernity historical consciousness is provided by the living objectivations which were discussed by Hegel in terms of "absolute spirit," where the guidance is and remains individual, selective, and hermeneutic, because it is the personality who favors one kind of historical imagination rather than another, and this is one of the great blessings of modernity. In the third logic of modernity, however, the historical imagination appears as tradition and ideology, which guide—and guide forcefully—political actions both for the better and the worse.

I must emphasize one point here: I do not mean that the technological imagination is the "bad guy" and the historical imagination the "good guy." I am talking about the double bind. But whereas the double bind is freely chosen within the second logic, it seems inescapable in the third. What is a matter of (relatively) free resolution in the third logic is the content of tradition and of ideology, and not their strong presence.

To exemplify my point about the second logic of modernity I shall return briefly to the issues of need allocation and specialization (professionalization). Need allocation and specialization are useful examples because they belong to the few essentially unilinear tendencies of the second logic of modernity, and in this sense they seem to be entirely subject to the technological imagination.

In the modern world need allocation has shifted dramatically from the traditional model. In all traditional societies needs, as well as what satisfied those needs, were allocated in qualitative bundles—different needs characterized the members of different estates. In the model of the modern social arrangement qualitative needs are no longer socially allocated, but—in principle—privately chosen, while need-satisfiers are allocated socially, not qualitatively, but quantitatively. To put it briefly, they are monetarized. The romantic movement fiercely attacked the new form of slavery introduced by the monetarization of the need-satisfiers, whereas adherents of the rationalized enlightenment hailed it as the condition of personal freedom in the form of free choice. Both were equally right and wrong. Obviously, the quantitative satisfiers have to be retranslated as qualitative ones. No one eats or goes to bed with money. It is in the process of retranslating quantum satisfiers into qualitative satisfiers that one can be guided by the technological imagination

alone, and also by the historical imagination (for example, tradition, including ethical traditions, art, religion, philosophy). The wrath of cultural criticism from Rousseau to Adorno and beyond has been directed against the market and social conformism—democratic egalitarianism included—because they are the main institutions of the technological imagination with the task of retranslating quantum satisfiers into qualitative satisfiers. Their battles were and are still being fought from the standpoint of the historical imagination. Cultural pessimists believe that this is a losing battle. I do not believe that this is the case, but I simply do not know.

According to the ideal model of the modern social arrangement it is the function one performs that determines one's place in the social hierarchy, a hierarchy constituted only within single institutions. To live up to this idea, positions need to be allocated to men and women "according to their merit or excellence," that is, according to their education, skill, and speciality. As a result, education and its institutions are increasingly promoting the technological imagination. Even the historical imagination, which has not yet been exiled from the curriculum, is being subordinated to the technological imagination. The idea that the school must, first and foremost, prepare boys and girls "for life"—that is, for the pursuit of utility, calculation, success, and access to the greatest quantity of satisfiers, rather than to the "best" satisfiers—is more and more being taken for granted. No wonder that romanticism launched several attacks on specialization, from Ferguson to Lukács and beyond. But it was not only the Romantics who were ill at ease with the prospect of modern specialization, which was at that time in *statu nascendi*. For example, Hegel termed modern society "the spiritual animal kingdom." For one thing, animals are specialized and incapable of transcending their allotted state: Arendt would have said that animals have life, but no world. By contrast, man is a spiritual being, exclusively able to "have a world" through many-sided *Bildung*. In the modern "animal kingdom," however, men have become specialized just like the animals, but very much against their spiritual nature. When human beings have lives but no world, they are not living up to their spiritual potential.

What we call culture (or "general culture") was born at the same time as the specialization of skills and professions. Culture is the most accessible contemporary institution of the historical imagination. It offers worlds that are of no "professional use"—those of history, poetry, music, and so on—to non-historians, non-poets, and non-musicians. It offers texts of different kinds and quality as objects for interpretation and meaning-rendering. After all, the notion that the beautiful delights without interests being at stake could occur only to someone who has already been granted an insight into the age of generalized utility. The greatest invention of the historical imagination is cultural discourse, the institution of general cultural conversation, which aims at neither consensus nor decision-making; which is an end in itself, and

is both delightful and instructive for that very reason. Whether this cultural discourse disappears, together with the cultural elite so necessary for the spiritual survival of democracies, remains to be seen.

THE LOGIC OF POLITICAL POWER

I shall now turn to the third logic of modernity. My presupposition is that the third logic of modernity requires a dual imagination—that it becomes evident here that modernity cannot possibly survive without the historical imagination. As I have already stated, the historical imagination appears both as tradition and as ideology, and can be mobilized both for the better and for the worse. I shall try to underpin these preliminary statements with a few ideas, observations, and stories.

Let me start with an observation that speaks against me.

Sometimes it looks as if state intervention in the pendulum movement of the second logic might turn out to be the sole remaining function of the state in addition to securing law and order. State intervention is a kind of problem-solving. Even if the issue concerns qualitative character, the solution of the problem boils down to quantitative measures. Due to the monetarization of need allocation, the process of redistribution itself—together with surveying the available resources—becomes a matter of calculation. This is how the malfunctions of modern society must be repaired. Sometimes an institution can be replaced by a "spare part."

But is the contestation of justice, this mobilizing force behind the pendulum movement, motivated only by pragmatic considerations, or also by tradition and ideologies? Or by an ideologically employed tradition? I have already mentioned that Freedom and Life (as equal opportunity)—that is, the foundations of modernity in general, and of the modern social arrangement in particular—if employed as ultimate value positions in terms of which norms of justice can be invalidated, belong among the essential items in the arsenal of the historical imagination. I shall now go further and turn directly to the interpretative employment of historical texts. Let me mention only a few cases in which the allocation of resources was contested—irrespective of whether I look at the use of the historical imagination sympathetically or otherwise. I might mention in this regard the case of the Northern League in Italy, and ethnic, gender, and religious conflicts in the United States. I shall not consider conflicts in which the (mis)allocation of resources served as an ideological argument to support otherwise traditionally or ideologically motivated conflicts, such as the movement for the secession of Slovakia. One could argue that in most cases—and not just in those enumerated—the technological imagination gets the upper hand. Conflicts of the land referred to

can also be termed "problems" and every contestant knows how his or her problem should be solved (because it can be solved). However, it will mostly—and usually after only a short time—turn out that the conflict in question cannot be described, still less handled by the technological imagination alone. For we are far from dealing here with problems that can be solved: we are dealing with social actors caught in the double bind, and modern life—any more than life in general—is not a problem to be solved. One conflict will perhaps disappear, without being solved, but then a new one will appear and perhaps at another place.

I have restricted myself to contemporary conflicts which (also) revolve around the allocation of resources. But many representative conflicts are not of this kind. They emerge from the general malaises of modernity, from the loss of meaning in life, of a secure life path, of faith, of spirituality. That is, the dominating role of the technological imagination itself resuscitates the historical imagination. Men and women, in their search for meaning, turn towards the historical imagination, but in terms of different contents. On the conscious level (I cannot say anything about the unconscious level), they restore ancient customs, they discover ancient enemies, and they recollect ancient wounds which seemed to have been healed, but are now reopened. The friend of yesterday becomes again the enemy of the day before yesterday. Bosnia is not mere folly; at least, it is no greater folly than the movements of the American revivalists. Modernity is not about perpetual peace. The dynamic of modernity can go on uninterrupted, despite bumping into limits in one respect or another: for example, in painting, inscribing a white circle on a white canvas, and in music, serialism, constitute virtual limits. When all rules, norms, codes, and canons have been negated or destroyed, what is left to negate? One can only negate the negation of common rules by re-establishing them, this time as contingent—one can return to the past and exploit it. This is how pastiche and quotation became fashionable. During a recent visit to Soho I noticed, for example, that impressionism had become one of the most exploited art genres, bordering on kitsch. This is a *volte face*, something which is possible on all levels, and it is not always innocent.

If one were to approximate the limit closely in politics, total chaos would ensue—"the state of nature" as the early moderns called it. Here one does not normally reach the limits, for fear of the total destruction of tradition; one either establishes limits (in constituting liberties) or turns to fundamentalism. Both the universal fundamentalist movements and fundamentalist totalitarian regimes in Europe (the Nazis and the Bolsheviks) were able to obtain mass support as a reaction to the fear of chaos. The fundamentalism of difference is another example of this. As long as there are sacred foundations, there is no fundamentalism: fundamentalism is a reaction to the paradoxicality of freedom and of truth.

Let me return to the case of the American revivalists. This and similar movements belong to modernity, and their disappearance is unlikely. But in America this kind of movement can be kept under control (although of course the unexpected can always occur) given that the American Constitution and its legitimacy fences off the extreme escalation of force and violence, and their establishment as state power. Now, we may ask, is a constitution the outcome of the technological or the historical imagination? Needless to say, this is also a question of legitimation.

The drafting or crafting of a constitution was described in Aristotle's determination of the active life as a kind of *techne*, rather than as *energeia*. In the Age of Reason the drafting of constitutions became something of a national pastime in France. All kinds of constitutions were drafted, although only a few were ever implemented. One can even say that problem-solving is prominently involved in the crafting process: for example, one might decide to combine the beneficial elements of democracy, aristocracy, and monarchy, and invent institutions which fit this project best.

Yet the technological imagination on its own can produce a constitution only on paper. Ideology and the ideological use of particular traditions are the same in this respect. The Soviet constitution of 1936, for example, was nothing more than a piece of paper. Arendt said that long-lasting constitutions (such as the American) constitute liberties, and constituting liberties is a new beginning. But if it is a new beginning, what has the historical imagination to do with it? Just as a newborn baby who starts everything afresh is born into a family, within the framework and with the encouragement of which she can begin, so it is with constitutions. I mention only in parentheses that it is mostly in times of new beginnings (whether the constitution of liberty or the constitution of slavery) that the sphere of absolute spirit, particularly religion and philosophy, can feed the historical imagination directly in the political life of modernity, both as practical tradition and as ideology. In so-called "normal" times—if they last long enough—the technological imagination normally gets the upper hand.

Let me give a contemporary example. Nowadays, the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe look for models first and foremost in the American, but also in the post-war German constitutions. But they cannot simply copy these models. Democratic constitutions—with the exception of Bohemia—are entirely new in this region, but the way of life of the citizens, rooted in specific historico-cultural traditions, can lend new constitutions legitimacy. Constitutions can easily be copied, but a merely copied constitution will not gain legitimacy—it will not function as a constitution—just as a precise imitation of a Rembrandt will not be a Rembrandt. I use the term "function" deliberately. Function is a term of the technological imagination. It seems as if the options of the technological imagination could not develop without the historical imagination. This means that in the political logic of

modernity the double bind is objective, as the condition of both durability and the ability to change. For a constitution to be able to perform its task—to be recognized as the fundamental law of a national community that is also an authority—it cannot be drafted if one restricts one's attention to the performance of this task alone.

This means that the universality of the third logic of modernity differs essentially from the universality of the first and the second. The same technological devices are used everywhere, and they perform the same function. In every mathematics department in every country on earth the same language of mathematics is spoken. The global economy is a reality. It is true that traditional economies can prevail—or rather linger—within the global economy, but only if they can find their proper place.

The technological imagination thus became empirically universal, but does it follow that the not directly economic aspects of the second and third logics—in their entirety—are, or can be, empirically universal in a similar way? Cultural pessimists of the romantic tendency would say "Yes"—under the weight of the steamroller of modernity, everything becomes equally flat and indistinguishable. The banal rationalist would also say "Yes," and that it is wonderful, for everyone will be just like us, with a well-equipped kitchen, fast food outlets, and broken English. As things now stand, America can easily export Coca Cola, television programs, and McDonalds—but the American constitution belongs to the American people and to them alone.

The moderns are extremely inventive in politics. To compile a short list, they have invented liberalism, parliamentary democracy, universal suffrage and the secret ballot, the constitutional monarchy, the federal republic, and the federal state. They also invented totalitarianism in its three major forms, and the political spectrum that extends from Right to Left. International political institutions such as the League of Nations and the United Nations, nationalism, and internationalism are also the offspring of modernity. This list could easily be extended, and seems to contradict my thesis that political constitutions cannot be exported. In fact, almost all the enumerated political discoveries appeared first in one place alone, and only later were taken up elsewhere. The list also seems to contradict my thesis about the free-floating historico-political imagination of the moderns. But even if particular institutions that are established in one country can serve as a crutch for social actors or drafters in other countries, the political institution will not be the same, and its relation to the political life of the state—and life in general—will always be qualitatively different. Is the Swedish constitutional monarchy like the English one?

Let me return for a moment to the question of ideology.

There are two basic ways in which the historical imagination is "present" in the third logic of modernity (although not only there). The first takes the form of the traditions of daily life, attitudes, and mentalities, which can be

both conscious and unconscious. I am not talking here about the unconscious in the Freudian sense, but in the sense of something not reflected upon, as taken for granted, and so on. The primary prejudices that we all have belong to this cluster.

There are technology-dependent (future-oriented) attitudes and tradition-oriented attitudes, both conscious and unconscious. In the case of technologically dependent attitudes one normally adjusts quite easily (as when traveling on a plane); in the case of tradition-oriented attitudes one adjusts painfully, and perhaps not at all (for example, assimilation to another identity). Moreover, very few doubt that the first kind of adjustment is profitable, but many reject adjustment in the form of assimilation, preferring dissimilation.

Ideology is rooted in collective historical recollection, the cherishing of collective memories, collective festivities, and common mourning. Historical memory retells stories, legends, and myths, and preserves symbols. The historical imagination offers the third dimension for the identity of a people and its life, in opening up a past world—or fragment of a world—which is also their present world. If recollections of this kind are mobilized for the sake of new actions and new initiatives, for the legitimation of the present (which they do not always do, even in politics), then we are talking about ideologies. Ideology itself is neither a good nor a bad thing, for the historical imagination can be mobilized for great and dignified actions, yet also for acts of pointless revenge and the consolidation of the friend/foe dichotomy; it can be mobilized for both liberation and enslavement. Still, no political action of any significance, not even an active political life, can do without the guidance of an ideology (as the manifestation of the historical imagination).

Ideologies (irrespective of their content and direction) are frequently unmasked because of their lack of reality and rationality. They can be unmasked as fraudulent, as merely a front for "naked" interests, or as primitive remnants of fairy tales that prevent us from pursuing no-nonsense problem solving. This criticism is foolish, if only because of its presupposition that naked interest alone is real and only problem solving is rational.

The modern world needs ideologies, yet it also needs critiques of ideologies, not because the argument that they are not real and not rational holds water or is conclusive, but because ideologies can indeed bring about a closure, in which a world of the historical imagination becomes isolated from all the others, and also from the first and second logics of modernity. In this sense, they can become void of security and rationality. But the absence of ideology would mean that collective actors—and political actors first and foremost—are left to be "enframed" by the technological imagination alone.

The double bind is also a double pull. There is a constant tension between the two imaginary institutions of modernity, the future-oriented and the past-oriented, the problem solving-oriented and the interpretation-oriented, the thing-oriented and the world-oriented, the infinite and the finite. It is in this

tension—by means of this tension—that the paradox of freedom is maintained as a living paradox.

Among all the political forms that the moderns have invented totalitarianism exemplifies the most extreme form of the double bind. The paradox of freedom disappears, together with freedom itself, in the attempt to unite both forms of the imagination, to totalize them. These attempts failed, at least in Europe. But the totalization of the imagination is still being attempted, and in all probability this will continue.

It has often been pointed out that the extermination of the European Jews by the Nazis was possible only with the means of modern technology. To a lesser extent, this is also true of the extermination of whole social, political, and ethnic groups in Stalin's camps. "Death factories" is not just a figure of speech. In the Nazi case the principle of "maxi-mini" (minimal effort, maximal results) was employed. What they decided upon was the final solution of the Jewish Question (or rather problem).

Still, to blame the technological imagination alone for the totalitarian (and particularly the Nazi) extermination machinery (as, for example, Zygmunt Bauman has) follows from a one-sided view of Heidegger's concept of "enframing." For something other than the technological imagination must set the task of eliminating a group of people or "solving the Jewish Question." The problem becomes technological as a result of the translation of an ideological system, an ideologically constructed world of the historical imagination, into the language of the technological imagination. It is perhaps true that the technological imagination on its own can also become lethal for modernity, although I doubt it—at any rate, the ecologists' negative utopias are an offspring of a very strong historical imagination, in effect evoking the image of the Apocalypse. The historical imagination on its own, however, can, to my mind, scarcely threaten modernity. People attempting to live in a "closed world" by means of rejecting the technological imagination and its logic are marginalized by modernity. They can commit collective suicide, but it is unlikely that they could persuade a whole people to join them. Of course, many things could happen in the future that our minds cannot now fathom.

But perhaps it is not an exaggeration to say that we have some idea concerning where the greatest danger is—to misquote Hölderlin and Heidegger. Not in *Gestell* alone, but in the double bind. And we can also say something about "the saving power"—*das Rettende*—although in a less festive mood. It is not *poiesis*—certainly not on its own—but what saves is also the double bind. The double bind is both the greatest danger and the "saving power." The double bind is one of the major manifestations of the modern paradox of freedom—perhaps the major one—the paradox of truth included. It is both the pitfall and the opportunity of the moderns. Problem-solving and interpretation, planning and recollection, calculation and thinking, reflection or unthinking madness. The danger of totalitarianism looms large whenever

the two binds are united and point in one direction. Liberalism and democracy (if joined together) can offer (perhaps) spaces in which they can coexist in tension. This is not a goal to be achieved, but a practice to be kept alive.

Chapter Ten

The Absolute Stranger

Shakespeare and the Drama of Failed Assimilation

One can understand Shakespeare's work as a unique way of showing how human beings cope when, as Hamlet says, "The time is out of joint." Time is disjointed in all Shakespearian tragedies and history plays. However, it is not cosmic time that is out of joint in these plays, but historical time. Shakespeare explores the historical confrontation between two kinds of rights or claims to legitimacy—one based on tradition, the other, modern claim, based on "nature." His most fascinating characters act under the weight of a *double bind*. They neither completely accept a way of life, which defies tradition, nor are they pure traditionalists. They struggle with the insoluble tension between the claims of tradition and the rights of nature, a conflict between pre-modern and modern principles of legitimacy. This double bind, so I believe, is a constitutive structural element of all his plays. In the following essay, I will explore the double bind in the context of *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello*. While Shakespeare's historical and political imagination mainly centers on the traditional character of the stranger or exile, these two plays stand out as dramas about a new figure, the *absolute* stranger. Shylock and Othello are not strangers in the traditional sense—they are not exiles from a home to which they can return—they are absolutely rootless and their relation to their world is purely accidental and contingent. The absolute stranger belongs to a new situation Shakespeare found in cosmopolitan Venice. Through Othello and Shylock, Shakespeare encounters the drama of the outsider's (failed) assimilation into cosmopolitan life. For Shakespeare, the figure of the absolute stranger is a representative illusion, and the two plays are dramas about the modern world.

CONDITIONAL AND ABSOLUTE STRANGERS

The stranger, the alien, the refugee, the homeless, the outcast, the man or woman in search of a safe haven, is perhaps the most traditional character of tragedy. In Richard Sennett's view, the drama *King Oedipus* is essentially not a family drama, but the tragedy of the stranger.[1] Oedipus is a stranger in Colonus. The same is true of many other Greek tragedies: Orestes is a refugee, Electra is a stranger in her own city, Iphigenia is a stranger both in Aulis and Tauris, Prometheus is an outcast, Dionysus and his cult are constantly referred to as "alien" in Euripides' *Bacchae*. These strangers, however, are not absolute strangers. They are outcasts from homes to which they can return, as Orestes and Iphigenia did alive, or Oedipus did dead. There are no absolute strangers here. Medea might be an exception, but even she suffers the lot of a woman, and not first and foremost one of the absolute stranger's. Shakespeare stands in this tradition, perhaps without being aware of it. But he also changes it.

In *Shakespeare's Politics*, Allan Bloom assigns a central place to *Othello* and *The Merchant of Venice* in Shakespeare's vision of politics.[2] I do not share his view. Rather, Shakespeare's political and historical imagination centers on the *conditional* stranger and not on *absolute* strangers like Othello and Shylock. Men and women who get caught in the double bind are always conditional strangers. Torn by two concepts of nature they are strangers among those for whom tradition is binding, and also among those who are committed to the right of nature alone. When a Shakespearian character perceives something done to him/her that is out of order, unexpected and incomprehensible, he/she is estranged from that world. However, only those characters can be estranged from their world who have once belonged and understood it, as, for example, Coriolanus could be alienated from Rome. One can also be estranged from the world if one feels entirely betrayed, like Timon of Athens. Similarly, Antony as a Roman, understood everything that the Romans did, and yet, nonetheless, felt himself estranged from Rome after having fallen in love with a stranger, and through her, with the East. Yet, as a Roman he was not a stranger. Nor was Cleopatra a stranger to her own world and was very much at home in Egypt. She was a stranger to the Romans, and would have been entirely estranged in Rome, and not just an exhibit in the triumphal march. A man or a woman, though, who becomes estranged, whether or not through love, is not an absolute stranger.

Furthermore, being or becoming estranged also means to act strangely or in a strange way. A person acts strangely when others do not understand him or her, when the act crosses all expectations, and defies the usual explanations. Yet men or women who act strangely are not absolute strangers. Their strange behavior is a puzzle, a puzzle to be solved. The entourage of an

estranged character is interested in solving his/her puzzle. Hamlet knows that his enemies try hard to open the hidden chambers of his soul. He is strange; he behaves strangely, yet he is not an absolute stranger, simply enigmatic.

Behaving strangely can also mean to behave ridiculously. Yet, too, ridiculous behavior is not always strange. If men and women of lower ranks use "elegant" or "foreign" words without knowing their meaning, if they argue in an illogical manner, or speak the language of their hosts improperly, they are ridiculous, yet there is nothing strange about them. In Shakespeare's plays they become strange whenever their actions go beyond comprehension or enter a territory they do not understand. For example in *Much Ado about Nothing* this occurs by accident when the ridiculous and honest officers discover and unveil a conspiracy by philosophizing a lot of nonsense. This is, indeed, a strange coincidence of accidents and character roles. Moreover, neither Dogberry, nor Bottom (from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), or even Trinculo (from *The Tempest*) are strangers. They belong to the places in the social hierarchy in which they normally move, they take one another seriously, and they roughly know what to expect from each other. They are ridiculous if seen by the eye of higher strata or classes (and the spectators who are sometimes like them) yet one knows what to expect from them, as long as they stay in their own situation.

Conditional strangers are the chief characters in many of Shakespeare's political dramas. However, there are only two absolute strangers in all his plays: Shylock and Othello. Importantly, both stories take place in the city of Venice, the cosmopolitan city. Of course, Shakespeare inherited the stories. However, he chose exactly these stories among many others for his dramas. I think this fact is significant.

Absolute strangers are not estranged from their world, because the world where they live has never been theirs. They are not strangers because they act against the expectations of others, just the contrary—they are expected to act as strangers. Their relation to their world is accidental, for the territory of their actions has nothing to do with their roots, upbringing, and tradition. Moreover, the whole world around them, with all their ranks and classes, is alien to their own tradition. There is no second Moor in the play *Othello*. Likewise, although there is another Jew besides Shylock in *the Merchant of Venice*, we do not see Shylock's behavior in the company of Jews. We only see him in the company of Venetian gentiles. The absolute stranger is an absolute stranger first because he is *employed as a stranger*; he is employed to do certain things that the natives of the cosmopolitan city will not do.

Othello is a *condottiere* of a kind who hires out his services to foreign cities—this time to Venice. The city hires him to perform dangerous tasks, to fight with the Turks and risk his life, to do things which the hedonistic youth of Venice are unwilling to undertake, for they only want to enjoy the sweet fruits of victory. He is hired, but he is also used; he is hired as long as he is

useful. He will be immediately dismissed from his command after having won the decisive battle (this happens, as we know, while the Venetian patricians are still ignorant about the fate of Desdemona).

Shylock is used in the same way as a moneylender. The merchants of Venice, who believe that it is below their dignity to accept interest on a loan, take his loans, and still harvest a greater profit after having paid the interest. It is obvious that the profession of Shylock is despised, but also needed. Shakespeare also makes it obvious that Shylock—although he lends for interest—does not hurt the economic interests of the merchants of Venice—but rather furthers them. The merchants are adventurers, whose ships take risks at sea, but who can also win immense fortunes if they are successful. Moreover, those ships rob the native people—as we learn, the people from the East—in fact, stealing their treasures, and trading in slaves. The merchants of Venice accommodate all of this with their pure Christian conscience. The people with whom they trade in the East are also strangers. The merchants of Venice may behave fairly towards their own folk, yet not towards the strangers. Interpreters of the play often neglect all of this, although it is in fact emphasized in it.

Similar things can be said about Othello. The war is fought against the strangers (mainly against the Turks), that is, against the people from the Orient, and the oriental Othello is used by the cosmopolitan Venetian patricians to fight against other oriental people.

If there is a political message in these dramas of Shakespeare, it is an unusual one. His typical politico/historical dramas are dramas of either the monarchy or the republic. Here we encounter dramas of cosmopolitanism. Shakespeare, who wanted to explore the essence of human characters in all significant situations, found a new situation and the new character of the absolute stranger in Venice. Normally, Shakespeare threw his characters into situations where they touched the seam between the traditional and the modern. However, in cosmopolitan Venice the old had already disappeared. The cards had already been dealt in a new way in the world in which the figure of the absolute stranger appears.

Othello and Shylock are absolute strangers because of their absolute rootlessness in the world which employs/uses them, and because they live off employment. Moreover, they serve their employers who legitimately despise them. For, no doubt, Othello the hired gun is as much despised by the Venetians as Shylock, the usurer Jew. Both are seen as pagans, non-Christians and as such different, entirely others. Furthermore, there is another important element in Shakespeare's portrayal of the essence of the absolute stranger, namely that their environment is not interested in understanding them. It is not interested in their person, just in their (despised and useful) function. Desdemona, one of the most beautiful and most betrayed girl/rebels in Shakespeare's plays, is unique. She is the only one in *Othello* for whom

Othello is not a function but a man. In *The Merchant of Venice* there is not a single person who is interested in Shylock as a human being, even momentarily. Shylock, as a man does not exist.

Of course, one can employ someone in one's service only if someone offers the service. Furthermore, one can offer one's service just as a service. But one can also raise higher or different claims. One can claim that through having performed the service, one becomes similar to them for whom the service was done. One can think that after having served Venice well, one is already a Venetian. Or at least one can become a Venetian. This is how both Othello and Shylock think; both are assimilationists. They entertain the illusion that the service they keep rendering to people suffices to make them part and parcel of the world to which they have rendered their services. Othello and Shylock do not see themselves inferior to others, only different; they are the kind of strangers who want to be regarded and respected just like natives, even though they also know that this wish is a vain hope. The tension in their character, their extreme irritability, their constant swinging between humble behavior and rage, are the psychological manifestations of the tension between situation and claim.

While Othello's assimilationist illusions can be followed by sticking to the text of the play, it is a matter of interpretation in the case of Shylock. In my interpretation, which is the also interpretation of the Budapest performance I saw in 1998,[3] Shylock is also an assimilationist. The whole Budapest performance is built around one significant and often neglected sentence. In Act IV, when Portia enters the scene as the Doctor of Law and for the first time encounters Antonio and Shylock, she first asks: "Which is the merchant here? And which is the Jew?"[4] She cannot tell one from the other by sight. Shylock looks like a merchant of Venice; he wears the clothes of a Venetian patrician. Neither his stature, his look, nor his face indicated that he was Jewish. Why is he then a Jew? What makes him a Jew? Even if Portia cannot tell the Jew from the merchants by sight, the merchants, the Doge, and all Venetians know who the merchant is and who the Jew is. *They see it, because they know it*. They see it because they expect that the Jew behaves as a Jew normally behaves, and that a Venetian patrician behaves as the Venetian patrician should. They know that they are entirely different. They know that Antonio is one of them, and that Shylock is entirely alien. Everyone hates Shylock *because* he is a Jew.

If one expects men to be different, they are different. In the case of Othello, the difference shows on the color of the skin. In the case of Othello, no one would ask who Cassio is and who is the Moor, because they could distinguish them at the first glance. Othello's drive to assimilate is already questioned by the color of his skin. However, he failed to notice the question. His naivety, his total ignorance of human character, his irritability and vul-

nerability played a great part in his crime and undoing. They were certainly not their causes, just their conditions.

Since, in Shylock's case one could not tell the merchant from the Jew, the *knowledge* that he was a Jew determined the behavior of the Venetians, including their knowledge of his profession. He was employed as a money-lender; he had no ships to send to the Orient, no arms to rob other people from their wealth, or to buy slaves. In short, he was not able to engage in adventures. As a Jew, he practiced a profession regarded as unworthy for and by the Venetian patricians. Venetians believed together with Aristotle that money cannot beget money, that money that begets money is unnatural. Obviously, there was nothing unnatural in sending ships to trade in gold, spices or slaves. This was regarded as a noble thing. Masters need slaves. This is a noble thing. Masters treat slaves as slaves. This is a noble thing. Adventure is noble. Risking wealth is noble. This is a merchant class which believes that there is a kind of wealth that does not debase a person, and one can gain enormous riches and still remain a decent man and a good Christian. Yet the one who gets rich in an unnatural way deserves contempt.

Yet, in Shakespeare, there is another aspect in which Shylock is a Jew. He looks as a Venetian, he behaves as a Venetian, he smiles as a Venetian, but he prays as a Jew. This is the meaning of the short scene between Shylock and Tubal, the other Jew: "Go Tubal, and meet me at our synagogue; go, go Tubal; at our synagogue, Tuba1."[5] When Shylock is compelled to become a Christian close to the end of the play, he in all probability is killed as his testimony is read in the last scene of the play.

Thus Shakespeare portrays Othello and Shylock as *absolute strangers in the process of (failed) assimilation*. They could not have been portrayed in any other way. Shakespeare could not have written dramas of a Moor or a Jewish community. These would not have been plays about absolute strangers.

In most of Shakespeare's political and historical plays two worlds are in conflict and neither one assimilates the other. This is why there are only two absolute strangers among all the strangers. Absolute strangers must lose, for they cannot win. They are characters of the dramas of failed assimilation. To be sure, not only absolute strangers attempt to assimilate in Shakespeare's plays. For example, some bastards try to assimilate to the world of their natural fathers. Sometimes directly, in getting the respect of the world of the fathers, at other times indirectly, in occupying the place of the legitimate world of the fathers. The two absolute strangers of Shakespeare, however, are engaged in a hopeless venture: to preserve strangeness (religion, skin color) and be entirely accepted. I do not think this is always an illusion. But for a long time it was. And Shakespeare presented it as a representative illusion.

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE AND THE DOUBLE BIND

Before seeing the new Budapest performance, I believed that *The Merchant of Venice* was an impossible drama. It glues together three stories, with the help of a single character, Portia. Two of the stories are parables, or rather fairy tales. The story of the gold, silver, and lead caskets and the suitors who have to choose among them in order to marry Portia and get her enormous wealth comes first. The story is not original, and Shakespeare does not make a grand effort to make it more interesting than it is. There is also the story of the ring with its expected happy ending. It seems as if the drama of Shylock and Antonio, the merchant of Venice, would be sandwiched between the two fairy tale-like love stories. The title of the drama, however, does not refer to Portia, but Antonio, for he is the merchant of Venice. Moreover, he does not attract our interest. Whenever Portia and her parables don't dominate the scene, Shylock does, which is why it was so frequently believed that Shylock was the merchant of Venice indicated by the title.

However, not only is the play's structure problematic, the question of its genre also needs to be addressed. What kind of drama is this? For a long time, *The Merchant of Venice* was played traditionally as a comedy. However, it is a comedy, or it can be played as a comedy, only if the spectator sides entirely with the Venetians golden youth and excludes the stranger. If the regard is one-sided, then Shylock is just a wicked comedian. He is wicked, because he wants Antonio's flesh, although he likes money best, and he is comic, because he loses and becomes the victim of a trick that he himself played. Good conquers all, and lowly, petty evil is vanquished. Laughter and celebration prevail. In this version, *The Merchant of Venice* is a *Fasching* play which thematized the defeat of the devil and the triumph of life with song and dance.

This is an interpretation that is no longer in fashion, and not just because of Auschwitz. It increasingly went out of fashion with each sophisticated reading of Shakespeare. In this instance, I will concentrate on my own reading, which comes from the perspective of the double bind. The double bind is the conflict between inherited rights and the right of nature, and revolves around two concepts of what is natural. The first concept identifies tradition and nature. It is natural that daughters obey their fathers; it is natural that wives subordinate their wishes to their husband's wishes; it is natural that brothers should love one another and protect their sisters. It is natural that estates and titles should be inherited by the legitimate sons of fathers, that men and women should live out their lives fully; that young men die on the battlefield with the enemy of their country or grow old and die a natural death. It is natural to use one's power absolutely, yet it is unnatural to abuse it; it is natural to forgive. "Natural" is thus identical with a hierarchical *order*

where the God-anointed king sits on his uncontested throne, where everyone has his or her place allotted to him or her by birth. Once having been born into a social role, one does everything in one's power to do what one should well, until one dies. All of this is natural also for Shakespeare.

According to the second concept of "natural," it is natural that everyone succeeds according to his or her talents, and not according to rank. One's body, *as it is*, is natural, one's spirit is natural, as is one's ambition and resolve to make a place for oneself with the help of those nature-given talents. It is also natural to follow one's desires, or to love someone whom one desires and pleases one the most. Freedom is natural because we are born free. In this version, "natural" is the contingent gift that nature endows each individual. All of this is also natural for Shakespeare.

Order is natural, but so, too, can be disorder; tradition and loyalty are natural, but so too is the quest for personal freedom and the self-realization of one's best capacities. *Everything is natural for Shakespeare—and yet nothing is.*[6]

Many of Shakespeare's heroes and heroines are great-among-others because they cannot choose between these two rights, the two interpretations of the "natural," or because they choose both. Moreover, Shakespeare does not present the choice between the two kinds of rights as a choice between good and evil. Rather, it is presented as choice that confronts men and women who make choices between different kinds of good and evil, different interpretations of virtues and vices. Men and women who are inclined towards evil will interpret traditional or natural rights as permissions or legitimations to do evil. Men and women inclined towards goodness will interpret traditional or natural rights as permissions or legitimations to do acts of goodness or decency, as a support for honesty and honor. Shakespeare does not disentangle interpretation/self-interpretation from moral/immoral desire.

There is an important difference, though, between choosing inherited rights or the concept of "natural law." Tradition offers less space for doing something new, for reinventing one's character. A purely traditional man or woman, whether good or evil, will not be center stage in Shakespeare's dramatic compositions. What is typical in the traditional perception is that crimes and evils result from the absence of thinking and from taking everything for granted. Denmark is *not* a prison for someone who obeys without thinking, who does something because everyone else is doing it and without asking whether it is right or wrong. To repeat, though, Shakespeare never presents the choice between two concepts of "natural" as the choice between good and evil.

Although Shakespeare never presents the choice between these two concepts as a choice between good and evil, we can still ask: with whom does he side in the conflict between the two conceptions of the "natural"? Does he side with the concept of the "natural" which identifies nature and tradition or

the concept of the "natural" as it appears in the in the ideas of "natural right"? I think that Shakespeare is first and foremost curious about the characters that are subject to the double bind, and he found them the most interesting and fascinating. It cannot be stressed enough that whatever Shakespeare's personal judgment was, his most fascinating heroes and heroines are the non-traditional ones, be they evil or good, comic or tragic. They act under the weight of the double bind, perhaps for moral reasons because of their unique responsibilities, because both rights are too simple for them to accept. Shakespeare's most brilliantly intelligent heroes and heroines are by far not the most rational ones.

If the double bind is a constitutive structural element of the Shakespearian drama, one can also interpret *The Merchant of Venice* from this position. This is all the more because the natural right argument, voiced by good and evil alike, by Edmund or by Juliet, as well as Henry V., is also voiced by Shylock. Even if the cards are reM dealt, and there is no tradition left, the world of domination can still be challenged with reference to natural rights. Let's continue our interpretation of *The Merchant of Venice* from the perspective of the double bind.

The Merchant of Venice cannot be easily played as a tragedy like *Othello*. This is not just because Othello is a general and as such noble and well suited to play such a tragic role, nor that Shylock, as a money lender and civic figure, who does not take risks, whose lowly trade does not fit into such a tragic role. But first and foremost, because in *Othello* two innocent women die as a result of Othello's jealous folly: Desdemona and Emilia, yet, no one is hurt in *The Merchant of Venice*, except Shylock. Thus, *The Merchant of Venice* is neither a comedy nor a tragedy. Nor is it a romance in the sense of the later Shakespearian dramas. It seems as if, because of the structural heterogeneity of the play, and despite the impression that it is loosely glued together from three different fairy tales, that in his portrayal of Shylock Shakespeare did something which became more forceful and more significant than the rest of the play. It is clear that Shakespeare let his characters create themselves not just in the moments of their soliloquy, but also in their intercourse with others.

According to the usual interpretation, Shylock, the moneylender is interested in money alone whereas the youth of Venice, although not faultless, are involved in far more noble things such as love and friendship. According to the usual interpretation of the drama, its central message is the conflict between justice and forgiveness. Portia speaks the rhetoric of forgiveness, Shylock speaks up for justice, and he fails to forgive. If read in this way , *The Merchant of Venice* becomes the companion piece of *Measure for Measure*, for there, too, the final showdown is played out between the principle of forgiveness and that of justice.

My interpretation is different. The base moneylender/decent youth contrast is not born out by the text. The forgiveness/justice contrast, however, is. This is the argument that Portia uses to persuade Shylock in our drama. It is also Isabella's argument when she persuades the Duke in *Measure for Measure*. Yet in Shakespeare an argument is never just a philosophical and religious statement. All arguments are arguments in a context, they are actions. Isabella implores the Duke for mercy and she is merciful, Portia reasons against Shylock for mercy yet she is not merciful. The contextual truth of reasoning is in both cases beyond doubt, but in a drama the truth of an argument depends also on its truthfulness. And there is no parallel between two plays in this matter. An advocacy or plea for mercy from the mouth of someone who will turn out to be unmerciful (Portia) is hypocritical, and from the mouth of someone who used to be unmerciful but became merciful, is a gesture of penitence (Isabella). *Portia and Isabella say the same thing but they are not doing the same thing*.

In my reading of *The Merchant of Venice* it is not Shylock who is obsessed by money. The whole of Venice is obsessed with money. The play begins with Bassanio blackmailing Antonio for money with love: "And from you love I have the warranty / To unburden all my plots and purposes / How to get clear of all the debts I owe."[7] He needs money to get Portia, and with her more money. The whole plot would not start to unfold without Bassanio's insistence to get his money urgently while Antonio's ships are still at sea, and without Antonio's desire to satisfy his beloved in everything he wishes.

Antonio is well known for his hatred of the Jews. The Jew is generally despised, yet Antonio's hatred is personal. He hates Shylock the moneylender who lends money for interest and not just as a friendly service, and yet his hatred grows and surpasses all limits and becomes entirely irrational. Antonio is an anti-Semite. This is not because he despises the stranger as everyone else does, but because the hatred is an obsession with him. Antonio, the merchant of Venice, is an irrational man. His love of Bassanio is also irrational, yet this love motivates him to the greatest generosity, to be ready to die for his friend, and ready to lend him money to marry a woman, a marriage which would also end of their relationship. Their relationship may or may not be homosexual; Shakespeare only hints at it. But that Antonio is in love with Bassanio, and promotes his marriage against his own strongest feelings, is beyond doubt. Yet as much as his love for Bassanio motivates Antonio to do irrational things and take irrational risks, so too, his hatred against Shylock assumes entirely irrational forms, as all obsessions do. This play ends with a Pyrrhic victory for the merchant of Venice. He can satisfy his hatred, but not his love. Moreover, he is the one who loses when Portia wins her plea. For it would have been better for him to become a victim to Shylock's knife, than to see Bassanio happy in the arms of a very wealthy woman, to see that his lover no longer needs his love, or his money.

Let me return to my point. From the first scene of the drama everyone is possessed with money, gain and wealth. Nothing else is on the agenda. Even love is always coupled with, or subjected to, the hunger for money. The difference between Shylock and the rest of the Venetians is not that they are not interested in wealth and Shylock is, but the opposite. Although Shylock is interested in interest, which is a matter of rational calculation, he becomes irrational in his confrontation with Antonio. He becomes like Antonio. In their personal showdown, their personal fight for life or death, neither of them is interested in money, but in flesh. The fight is the showdown between the irrational anti-Semite, who rejects the Jew's drive to assimilate and makes it clearer than anyone else that Shylock is not welcome in Venice, and the Jew, who hates Antonio personally and whose hatred will surpass all measures. The idea of getting his interest, not in money but in a pound of Antonio's flesh, shows that Shylock is "outside himself"—no longer interested in gain. Shylock is obsessed in taking Antonio's flesh as much as Antonio is obsessed in having Bassanio's. These two actors are standing in the center, obsessed, ready to kill or to be killed. They are the only ones who do not care for money anymore. All the other actors still care for it and become grey and secondary figures, spectators of a grand duel. The genius of Shakespeare is not the portrayal of the Jew, but the portrayal of an alien who transforms himself into a native in a fit of rage.

Shylock's rage denotes the radicalization of evil. The term "radicalization of evil" stems from Sartre when he says in his preface to Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* that the oppressed are determined by the gaze, or the regard, of their oppressors and that they must accept the role that their oppressors determine for them. The oppressed can liberate themselves only by accepting themselves as themselves and immediately turning the tables on the oppressor, by treating the ones who had treated them as objects, likewise as objects and not as subjects. According to Sartre, this radicalization of evil is the only way for the oppressed to liberate themselves both politically and psychologically, and that this (radicalization of evil) implies the act of violence; it occurs, in fact, through violence.[8]

Although I do not accept Sartre's last conclusion, I mention him only to show that this is exactly what Shakespeare portrays. In the state of rage and with a knife in his hand, Shylock is, indeed, ready to cut out the heart of his enemy Antonio. The knife is there, he wants to kill, he who has never killed. A man, who plays the humble, the subservient, who is pleased to be tolerated, suddenly behaves—like whom? Like a gentile, who never lets injury passed without revenge. But Shylock is a Jew, and he would never infringe the law. He does not hear his foe's plea for mercy, for mercifulness is a Christian virtue. Yet to obey the law is the Jewish obligation. The moment he realizes that the law is against him, he drops the knife, and signs his own death warrant. The parallel with Coriolanus's decision not to go against

Rome is striking. After a moment of grandeur, the moment of the radicalization of evil, he falls back to the role of the humble Jew who accepts everything others tell him, the role of the object constituted by the regard of his enemies. Yet after the radicalization of evil, the same is not the same. Shylock becomes a shadow of his former self.

How does the moment of showdown, the radicalization of evil, the sole tragic and wicked moment of Shylock's life come about? When will the Jew be enraged to the extent that he abandons even the pseudo-humility of his self and radicalizes evil with a knife, ready to strike? This does not happen right away. At the time of the contract Shylock assumes that Antonio's ships will safely return and that he will get back his money, only without interest. He claims the pound of flesh as interest to show Antonio that he is his equal. He is like him. It is not money but flesh that counts. He never thinks for a moment that he would really cut out a pound of flesh from the body of his hated enemy. Yet what happens in between? Shylock's daughter, Jessica, elopes with a Christian, with a Venetian. Moreover, she is not just kidnapped, but also takes her father's money on the Christian's advice. Jessica is a young girl. Her elopement is statutory rape. Now, let us imagine his only child is raped, elopes, and is persuaded to take a part of her father's treasure with her—for what is a Jewish girl worthy of without the money of her father? This is also Rigoletto's situation, and he used his knife. Shylock does not.

Shylock hears of the loss of Antonio's wealth at the time when his daughter is kidnapped. It is then that he decides to take revenge. It is then that he also uses the natural right argument. Listen to what Shylock says about Antonio:

> If it will feed nothing else, it will feed my revenge. He hath disgraced me and hind'red me half a million, laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends, heated my enemies / and what's his reason? I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? . . . If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? . . . If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? Revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? Why revenge! The villainy you teach me I will execute, and it shall go hard but better the instruction.[9]

Let us turn, for a moment, to Antonio's mock trial. The Duke, whilst acknowledging the validity of Shylock's bond, asks him to be tender. Tenderness is a catchword in Shakespeare; tenderness in the execution of justice is frequently claimed yet rarely granted. Shylock is in a rage; he is not tender, but instead is ready for cruelty. But, what is more important, no one expects anything else from him. They expect him to be like Turks and Moors and not like civilized Christians. None of those who witness the trial believe that the

Jew is capable of acting in a gentle way. The only thing they presuppose, if they offer him more and more money, is that he will yield. They do not see that by offering him more and more money to make him change his mind and spare Antonio that they push him into a deeper state of rage. They determine him, in Sartre's sense, as an absolute alien with their regard; a man unlike them, merely a Jew. Listen to the text:

Bassanio: "Do all men kill the thing they do not love?" Shylock: "Hates any man the thing he would not kill?" Then Antonio intervenes and says: "I pray you think you question with the Jew. / You may as well go stand upon the beach / And bid the main flood bate his usual height, / You may as well use question to the wolf, Why he hath made the ewe bleat for the lamb. . . . You may as well do anything most hard / As seek to soften that / what which what's harder? / His Jewish heart."[10]

What is interesting here is that Antonio also offers a natural right argument. However, it is used in the opposite way to Shylock's. Shylock says that we are—Jews and Christians—all alike by nature; the difference is just in the gaze, the regard. Yet Antonio, the racist—for he is a racist—says, that it is by nature that the Jew differs from the Christian, that it is by nature that he has a hard heart, by nature he is like a wolf. Antonio's argument keeps Shylock in the position of the absolute alien. And the more he is kept there, the more he desires to turn the tables and to kill. It is at that point that Shylock speaks of the hypocrisy of the world that surrounds him:

> You have among you many a purchased slave, Which like your asses and your dogs and mules / You use in abject and slavish parts, / Because you bought them. Shall I say to you, / "Let them be free! marry them your heirs! / Why sweat they under burdens? Let their beds / Be made as soft as yours, and let their plates / Be seasoned with viands?" You will answer, / "The slaves are ours."[11]

Portia arrives at this point and makes her plea for mercy. Mercy mitigates justice. It is a beautiful argument. Portia turns to Shylock asking him to be merciful. Yet Bassanio (her lover) immediately intervenes. He tells her that they have already offered three times the amount of money Antonio owes him, yet he has not accepted this. "O beseech you, / Wrest once the law to your authority. / To do a great right, do a little wrong, / And curb this cruel devil of his will."[12]

Shylock is excluded from this dialogue. They offer him money, he refuses it. They ask him to be merciful, he refuses. But while they are doing all this, they constantly continue to abuse him. I repeat, they determine him as someone who "by nature" cannot deliver the things they insist he should deliver. And when Portia's shrewdness makes Shylock lose his case, the storm breaks loose. Everyone who pleaded for mercy begins to act in the cruelest way. It is not enough for them that Shylock does not receive his so-called interest, that

is, his revenge, but that they also take away his own money against the letter of the law and divide his wealth among themselves. In fact they give half of it to the man who raped and kidnapped his daughter and robbed him. Antonio does not hide this when he says he has to leave after his death "unto the gentlemen, That lately stole his daughter."[13] (What gentleman steals a girl?) After having annihilated Shylock, Portia asks the question: "'Art thou contented, Jew? What didst thou say?' Shylock: 'I am content.'" Portia speaks, of course, mockingly. And it is of some interest, that she—as also most of those who are present—almost never addresses Shylock by his name, but calls him just "Jew" and nothing else. After Shylock is forced to do everything against his will, including becoming a Christian, he says: "I pray you give leave to go from hence / I am not well, and send after me, / and I will sign it."[14] Shylock dies; there is no question about this. In Act V. they read his testimony. But in the recent Budapest performance a pogrom breaks out after he is beaten to death. If one reads the text attentively and imagines how hatred gets out of hand in a scene of collective revenge, this interpretation seems correct.

I have dwelled on Act IV, Scene 1 at some length in order to show how the dramatic intercourse between the absolute stranger and the world develops. The two contradictory reasonings on the ground of natural law—Shylock: Jews are like gentiles by nature; Antonio: Jews are another race, entirely different and worse by nature—indicate the ontological and spatial position of the absolute stranger. In the case of a conditional stranger, identity becomes confused, and the two concepts of nature—one based in tradition the other by right of nature—collide or are in a state of discrepancy. In the case of the absolute stranger, though, there is no tradition; the traditional concept of the natural is absent. No one belongs to any tradition. Only "nature" remains, but nature itself is divided into identity / non identity. In *The Merchant of Venice* Antonio will be estranged, through his love, from Bassanio, and remains alone. Jessica, the traitor of her father also remains alone, another fool of love as so many of Shakespeare's characters are. Jessica, though, remains her father's daughter. Her case is also that of failed assimilation. For what Christian girl of honor, stolen from her father, would be persuaded to steal her father's wealth? Her act casts a shadow on her future that remains hidden on the stage. Only Portia is not a fool, and she is no fool of love either. She is in control of the play. She cheats, and not only in the game of caskets, because she always bends the law to her own will. She is a borderline case in Shakespeare's female Pantheon. A Rosalind, on the one hand, a Margaret on the other. Independent, stubborn and cruel, Portia is not just a modern woman; she is also a female Machiavellian. She is a woman of politics. But she is a woman. Her stake is private and so is her victory.

The Merchant of Venice, just like *Othello*, is a drama about the absolute stranger. Moreover, both are dramas about the modern world Shakespeare

could not see, but only feel. On the cusp between the premodern and the modern, two concepts of nature, the traditional and the natural right concept, collide. Yet in the modern world itself, a cosmopolitan world prefigured in *Othello* and *The Merchant of Venice*, tradition loses its hold and only the natural right concept has legitimacy. As we have seen, however, the right of nature can be interpreted in two opposite ways: as the claim for equality and for inequality. This time inequality is not inequality by *tradition*, but inequality by *nature*—it is inequality by race. The world of the French Revolution and the world of colonization are dawning simultaneously.

SHYLOCK AND OTHELLO AS ABSOLUTE STRANGERS

I have already hinted at several similarities between the treatment of Othello and Shylock by the Venetians. The resemblance is also striking if we consider the mode in which they are addressed. Just as Shylock is addressed, and also referred to in his absence, normally as "the Jew," so, too, is Othello normally referred to as "the Moor." Even Desdemona speaks twice about him as "the Moor" in Act I, Scene 3. And how is Othello first mentioned? This happens when Iago alarms Desdemona's father: "Even now, now, very now, an old black ram / Is tupping your white ewe."[15] The difference of race is again, hinted at with reference to the animal kingdom, just as it is by Antonio. In *Othello*, just like in *The Merchant of Venice*, "nature" as such (without tradition) is the protagonist. Brabantio, Desdemona's father, is certain that his daughter is victim of sorcery because it is absolutely impossible for him to believe that Othello could have won her without magic: "To fall in love with what she feared to look on! / It is a judgement maimed and most imperfect / That will confess perfection so could err / Again the rules of nature."[16]

As is well known, Desdemona fell in love with Othello's stories and not just with his body. She fell in love with him because he was a stranger, because he was an absolute stranger, so different from all the gentlemen of Venice she used to know. This was also the pitfall vis-à-vis the absolute stranger—to fall in love with the type and not with the man. Desdemona did not know Othello when she fell in love with him; she knew only his stories, his image, his pathos, and his non-identity with the Venetian golden youth.

This is true for both Shylock and Othello, the Jew and the Moor, whether one hates or loves them. Shylock and Othello appear to all the Venetians as representations of their races, representations of the absolute otherness, and not as individuals or such and such persons. To understand the individuality of a man one needs to know the man in his own context. If one knows many Jews one can also know Shylock as such and such a man, in his uniqueness,

not as "the Jew" and if one lives among the Moors one can get to know Othello as this and this individual person, not as "the Moor." But the fate of the absolute stranger is that he or she lives and dies with a collective and not an individual identity, even for those who are closest to, and either love or hate, him or her. The absolute stranger is a type in the eye of his surroundings. And this is why there is the temptation to depict them as types. In the case of Shylock, hunger for money; in case of Othello, the brave but naive stupid little soldier.

However, Shakespeare beats the system. Even if, in the eyes of the Venetians, Shylock is just "the Jew" and Othello just "the Moor"—not for Shakespeare. He brings the greedy moneylender into a situation where his irrational passion supersedes his greed, and he places the naive man and good soldier in a situation where his irrational jealously annihilates his dignity and pride. Moreover, neither will "represent" even their irrational vice. Othello will not become the embodiment of jealousy, neither Shylock the embodiment of cruelty. Needless to say, there is an enormous difference between the two figures. Shylock falls back into the state of humility, whereas Othello judges himself. Othello could not have been played as a comedy.

Human beings are complex, and one can never catch them. Not even if they are "typical" just like absolute strangers. Even less so if they cannot be addressed but by their proper name.

NOTES

1. Richard Sennett, *Blood and Stone: The Body and the City in Western Civilization* (New York: Basic Books, 1996).

2. Allan Bloom, *Shakespeare's Politics* (New York: Basic Books, 1964).

3. I cannot agree more with Geoffrey O'Brien when he says, in his review essay on Allan Bloom's book, that playing a drama changes the drama ("The Last Shakespearean. Review of Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human by Harold Bloom," *New York Review of Books*, February 18, 1999). A recent Budapest performance of *The Merchant of Venice*, directed by Robert Alfoldi, changed this drama for this spectator. When speaking of the absolute stranger in Shakespeare I cannot forget the way Shylock was portrayed in this version. I never would have thought of this interpretation without seeing it. Yet after seeing it, this interpretation became self-evident.

4. *The Merchant of Venice*, IV, 1, *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* (London: Hamlyn, 1976), 203.

5. *The Merchant of Venice*, III, 1, 197.

6. I think that the dialogue between Perdita and Polyxenes in *A Winter's Tale* formulates Shakespeare's deepest convictions about "nature":

> Perdita: For I have heard it said / There is an art which, in their piedness, shares / with great creating nature.
>
> Polyxenes: Say there be; / Yet nature is made better by no mean / but nature makes that mean; so over that art / Which you say adds to nature, is an art / that nature

> makes . . . this is an art / which does mend nature—change it rather but / Art itself is nature.
>
> Perdita: So it is.
>
> Polyxenes: Then make your garden rich in gillyvors / and do not call them bastards. (IV, 3, The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, London: Hamlyn, 1976, p. 302)

This is the philosophy in Shakespeare's poetry: there is no human nature without "art," yet "art" is human nature provided that it changes nature by the means of nature itself. Nature is also the limit to art, and art is the limit to nature. Each and every flower is the garden of the world, and history is both nature and art.

7. *The Merchant of Venice*, I, 1, 186.
8. Frantz, Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, preface by Jean Paul-Sartre, translated by Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1968).
9. *The Merchant of Venice*, III, 1, 196.
10. *The Merchant of Venice*, IV, 1, 202.
11. *The Merchant of Venice*, IV, 1.
12. *The Merchant of Venice*, IV, 1, 203.
13. *The Merchant of Venice*, IV, 1, 205.
14. *The Merchant of Venice*, IV, 1, 205.
15. *Othello, The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, I, 1, 982.
16. Othello, The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, I, 3, 985.

Chapter Eleven

The Gods of Greece

Germans and Greeks

In one of her early essays, Hannah Arendt makes the interesting remark that in ancient Greece, Athens included, there was no such a thing as culture, if we mean by culture the kind of taste, knowledge, activity and interest which is carried by the so-called cultured people, that divides men of culture from the rest, who can be wealthier or of a higher noble birth, yet have never immersed themselves in spiritual activities, this acquired privilege of the learned. According to Arendt, a civilization needs another civilization which offers texts and works their own cannot offer, texts and works they will regard as superior and that they will assimilate and try to emulate without claiming full success. Thus, Arendt says, the Romans were the first to be able to boast of a host of cultured people in their midst. They became cultured through the appropriation of Greek art, poetry, philosophy. A learned or refined Roman had at least to read Greek, to know famous Greek authors in the original tongue.

Thus the works by Plato and some by Aristotle became the holy texts for cultivated Romans. Roman Stoicism, Epicureanism and Skepticism all followed Greek examples, even if they took original forms. Cicero was the prototype of a learned, refined Roman. Latin dramatists, like Seneca, followed the models of Greek tragedy writers. Comedies were also meant to be written in the manner of the Greek so-called "new comedy," which has been lost.

I may add that the fashion for Hellenism expanded far beyond the ranks of cultured people. The whole Roman Empire, the Middle East included, was busy building amphitheaters, public baths where men bathed naked, and temples for the Greek gods. But Arendt was less interested in this broader

type of "hellenization," for she—this is only my guess—was also thinking about the German relation to the Greeks. There is an aspect in the German relation to the Greeks which is, indeed, similar to that of the Romans. This is the conviction that the Greeks are far superior in almost everything to the Romans. In fact, it is on this refrain that the German love relation to the Greeks begins, in the works of Winckelmann. But there is also another aspect of this love affair. And this second aspect brings the German love affair closer to that of the Renaissance than to the Romans. We know well that Renaissance authors, and especially artists, were enamored of antiquity, both the Greek and the Roman. They excavated their statues and adored them, exhibited them in their palaces and public places. The Florentine school discovered Plato and Plotinus. Ficino translated these "classic" authors into Latin and the vernacular. But, contrary to a Cicero, a Seneca or a Philo, they never for a minute regarded themselves as inferior to the Greeks. Not just because they were Christians, which meant already a kind of superiority, but because they considered their own creations just as perfect and splendid as those of the Greeks. In fact, they believed themselves to be some kind of "brotherly spirits," the only equals to the antique masters.

To use a frequently misused concept of Hegel: the German relation to the Greeks became a synthesis of that of the Romans and that of the authors and artists of the Renaissance. They regarded the Greek works as the unparalleled master models in their own genres, constant objects of a never-ceasing interpretation. Yet they were confident that in and through this love affair a great German culture would emerge, because only the Germans are like the Greeks, the Germans are the modern Greeks. Even the German authors who did not subscribe to the superiority of German culture and art had to deal with this conception, because, to refer to one of the concepts coined by Castoriadis, this idea became the imaginary institution of German self-understanding.

The Germans who discovered the Greeks and transformed them into Germans were also great storytellers. There were a few typical fictions, and I will talk about some of them in what follows. I mention only three features shared by all those fictions. One is nostalgia: even Hegel is sometimes nostalgic, not to mention Schiller, Hölderlin, Kleist, Nietzsche, Lukács, Heidegger. Greece is paradise lost. And in this respect it does not make much difference whether the fiction exhibits an idyllic or a tragic paradise. Paradise lost means for these Germans grandeur lost. The fiction runs: in Greece, especially in Athens, life was great, and this is why art was also great. In our modern German world, however, art must be great, because life is petty and insignificant.

The other significant common feature of these German fictions is not something that they all say, but something none of them mentions or discusses as an important aspect of Athenian life. And this is democracy. I do

not say that the German reception of Greeks lacks a political dimension. The Hegelian category of *Sittlichkeit* included it, and when he spoke about men who appeared in the public, in the light of day, he referred indirectly to democratic institutions. But not directly. Romantics, including the young Lukács, considered democracy banal, and so before him, of course, did Nietzsche. Heidegger for his part insisted that the polis has nothing to do with politics, and that Plato was not involved in politics at all. It was the influence of American democracy that made Arendt interested in Athenian democracy. Yet again, for its grandeur, symbolized by men like Achilles and Pericles. There is still much nostalgia in *The Human Condition*. Even if sometimes one cannot help noticing common emphases between the Plato interpretation of the later Heidegger and that of Castoriadis, an absolute dividing line remains, namely their essential difference in the understanding of Athenian democracy, most important for Castoriadis, nonexistent for Heidegger.

The third common feature of the German fictions about the Greeks is a sometimes not even disguised hostility against everything which is Roman, against the Latin spirit. This includes an aversion to legal thinking and also to rationality. And, mostly, an aversion to the Gallic spirit, to the French. Mostly, although not in all cases with the same force, the French are described as the heirs of Roman superficiality and rationality. Greeks and Germans are deep, Romans and French are superficial. Greeks and Germans are original and creative, Romans and French are imitative and characterized by mannerism. From *tragédie classique* via Descartes and Rousseau to Sartre, everyone is condemned. For Lessing, Diderot is the exception; for Nietzsche, Voltaire—for the others, no one.

All three common features point in one direction. The love affair with the Greeks served well in the war of liberation that the middle-class German intellectuals fought against the cultural monopoly of French language and art in the German courts. I cannot discuss in this article the polemics against French and Italian music, which went in parallel to the elaboration of a fictitious Greece, a polemics which helped German music to make a difference in Europe. The tendency to reinforce German identity, by means of identification with the Greeks, became especially strong during the Napoleonic wars, with the birth of German nationalism.

I mentioned the war of liberation of a cultured middle class from the cultural preferences and practices of the court, especially the Prussian court, where they spoke French, played French, dressed French, imitated French mannerisms and were enchanted by Racine. Lessing launched the first significant polemics against the cult of all things French, yet he, as I mentioned, also translated Diderot, and so did later Goethe. And both contrasted the truth in the dramas of the "half barbarian" Shakespeare as the manifestation of grandeur to the pettiness of French affectation. I do not want to assess this

polemic, only point at the historical origin of German hostility against French culture, which reinforced hostility to the Roman tradition and contributed to the vast idealization of the Greeks.

Why do I speak about idealization of the Greeks? How can they be more idealized than they deserve? After all, they invented the greatest genres in European art, genres which nowhere existed and which have characterized Europe since then: drama and philosophy. And they also invented democracy. Yet what I mean by the word "idealization" is by no means the expression of astonishment, of reverence, of surprise and of adoration for the Other, but the transference of the ideal German image most of these authors (even if not all) entertained about themselves to the ancient Greeks. By inscribing their identity on the body of the Greeks, German writers and philosophers constructed their own ideal types and, like Narcissus, fell in love with themselves while presenting the ideal of themselves in the garment of the Greeks. This seems to contradict my claim about a common nostalgia. But these two can go together, and, besides, no fiction is entirely consistent. One can present the German spirit as the rejuvenation of the Greeks, and one can also see the Greeks as the highest archetype that the Germans have now lost. We talk in both cases about identity narratives.

Germans needed at the time an identity narrative. This was the time for nations to emerge. And Germans emerged later than others. There was hardly a German national literature worth mentioning. Klopstock was believed to be the German Tasso, yet there was no Ariosto. And we are already in the last decades of the 18th century. The Bible had been beautifully translated into German by Luther long before Leibniz, the wonderful German philosopher, wrote all his significant works in Latin and French. By comparison, Dante wrote already in the Florentine language in the very early Renaissance and Descartes wrote *Discours de la Méthode* in French. I mention this only to point out why the idealization of the Greeks was sometimes utterly concentrated on the idealization of the Greek language. Greek and German—both Indo-German languages—are brothers, most suitable for the expression of deep thoughts. All other languages are inferior, infected by Latin. True, German classical philosophy begins with Kant, yet Kant was a cosmopolitan more than a German. And he did not care much about the Greeks. Despite his famous book on Laokoon, Lessing does not count among the forerunners of the German fictions on the Greeks, mainly because he was too much a man of the Enlightenment and an ironist to engage in any historical or philosophical fiction writing other than in a skeptical mood. Thus I begin with the case of Winckelmann. Winckelmann was the first who engaged in the game of contrasting Greek art to Roman art to show the incomparable superiority of the Greek. His infatuation with the Greeks had not only "national" but also personal motivations. As a homosexual he saw not just grandeur but also freedom in the Athenian way of life, where pederasty was seen to be as

normal as any other sexual practice. What is even more important, he was fascinated by the statues of beautifully proportioned, harmonious young male bodies. (He was killed in the same way as Pasolini by a beautiful young but living body.) Winckelmann set his mind on originality. Everything original is superior to everything which is done after an already existing model. This was a new idea, an example of a very forceful fiction. But Winckelmann proved the superiority of Greek sculpture through the evidence of a Roman copy. This seems ridiculous, although it is not. Not the example matters, but the idea.

In fact almost all Greek statues were at that time available in Roman copies. One could hardly guess from its marble copy how a bronze statue or a statue in any other material than marble looked. Some had no copies at all, or at least not in the original size. But some of us still believe Winckelmann. We believe, for example, that Athena Parthenon was a wonderful piece of monumental art, although it is lost and there are no available copies. Why do we believe this? Because we wish to believe, because the image of the majestic statue of Athena makes the story of Athens for us more splendid. (The two bronze statues which were recovered from the sea around a decade ago are indeed marvelous, but from them no conclusion can be drawn about the beauty of Athena Parthenon.)

Winckelmann was already involved in offering theories for the fine arts in modernity. While not directly related to his work, all German fictions about the Greeks have been inspired by a reflection on modernity. The German discovery of ancient Greek brotherhood was linked not only with hostility against the allegedly superficial Roman/Latin/French heritage but also with cultural criticism. Modern Germans—in the words of Heidegger, the "people of poets and thinkers"—are superior to others also for the reason that they have discovered the problematic character of modernity, the duplicity of progress, of rationality, and have constantly reflected upon the disenchantment of the world. Since German literature and German philosophy were inaugurated by German middle-class intellectuals, by burghers like young Werther, Goethe's ill-fated hero, at the time of the birth of modernity, this connection does not come as a surprise.

Contrary to the French, who, in the 18th century were no longer infatuated with Greek gods, the Germans into the 19th century entertained an almost Baroque image of Greek deities. Greek deities, beautiful and terrible alike, surrounded them or at least played a part in their fantasies. They adored them and bemoaned their demise, although mostly admitting the inevitability of the death of gods. Let me exemplify the complexity of this narrative first with Schiller's poem "The Gods of Greece."

In Schiller's fantasy, the Greek gods ruled a beautiful world, the world of poetry, of love, where everything in nature wore the trace of the footstep of a god. There was a constant interplay between heroes, gods and men, nothing

was sacred but the beautiful, gods were not ashamed of pleasure and temples resembled palaces. And so it goes on in beautiful verse. Then Schiller asks the question: beautiful world, where are you? It disappeared, leaving only its shadow behind. The beautiful world of gods had to disappear in order to make One rich among all others. And then, as today, the sun is just a fireball and in the place of gods only the slavish law of gravity remains. Christianity is but an intermezzo between polytheism, on the one hand, and the modern, dead Cartesian universe on the other hand. The poem ends with the thought that everything that remains immortal in poetry must disappear in life.

Three young boys planted a freedom tree celebrating the outbreak of the French Revolution: Hegel, Schelling and Hölderlin. They later parted ways. Yet each of them kept a smaller or larger corner in their heart or mind for the gods of Greece. Hegel was the one among the three for whom the story of the inevitability of the demise of Greek gods did not end in nostalgia or resignation. All the treasures of the Greeks were sublated, that is, preserved, even if negated, in the modern age. Yet his description and interpretation of the gods of Greece was very similar to Schiller's. The Greek artists were the masters of god, he writes. And he also speaks about the terrible shock when the cry "the great Pan is dead" echoed on land and sea.

Schelling, in his late, never finished and sadly neglected work on mythologies, successfully combined the interpretation of polytheism as the territory of mythology on the one hand and the revival of the life of the Indo-German deities on the other hand. As far as the German vision of Greek gods is concerned, his discussion of Dionysus stands out. He laid great weight on the distinction between three aspects of Dionysus as the god of the past, the present, and the future, two as the son of Semele, and the third as the son of Demeter. The last is the redemptive Dionysus, the parallel deity to Christ. This thread was taken up again by Nietzsche.

Hölderlin alone remained true to the ideas of his youth. In his novel *Hyperion* his experiences of the French Revolution and of love were transplanted to Greece. The novel presents the intimate relation between modern and ancient Greece. The traces of the footsteps of Greek deities are still here, they are still around us. Every spot in nature speaks about mythology, it is intense and mystical. Yet the political betrayal is modern. In his *Hymns*, Hölderlin thinks and desires as an ancient Greek and as a modern German simultaneously. In his drama *Empedocles*, he is also Empedocles. He translated Greek authors, like Pindar, Sophocles, and also *The Bacchae* by Euripides. Hölderlin never ceased to live among the gods of Greece. Yet this can end in madness. I said that in *Empedocles* Hölderlin is himself Empedocles. The modern "*Unbehagen in der Kultur,"* to quote Freud's expression, that is, the discontent with modern civilization, can be expressed in many different forms in fictions about the Greeks. Yet in the case of Schiller, Hegel and Schelling, those fictions were rather general reflections. General reflections

also include individual or subjective feeling, yet they are not autobiographical, they do not serve as the authors' mirror. In the case of Hölderlin, however, Empedocles served as a mirror. This will also be typical in the cases of Nietzsche and the later Heidegger. As Gadamer remarks on Heidegger in one of his studies entitled "*Heideggers Wege*": "Naturally the beginning of Greek thinking is obscure. What Heidegger recognized in Anaximander, Heraclitus and Parmenides, was certainly himself."

The philosophers for whom identification with, and distance from, the Greeks became one of the essential issues were Germans. I have first and foremost Nietzsche and Heidegger in mind. All the basic motivations of the Germans' privileged relation to the Greeks, from the suspicion of the Latin spirit's rationalism—Descartes included—to the rejection of the so-called technological imagination of modernity, are central in radical German philosophy. Since Athenian democracy does not play any part in the German fiction about the Greeks, the love of Greece and the contempt of democracy could easily be combined. From early Romanticism on there was no German poet or thinker who did not feel the necessity of returning to the Greeks, especially to Plato. Still, I would not count, for example, Hamann or Schleiermacher—who stood in the same tradition—among the typical German/Greeks, for they were Christians, for whom Christianity's truth was superior even to the chief philosophical achievement of Athens, to Socrates or to Plato's concept of truth.

As far as appreciation of the Greek heritage is concerned, the so-called genre difference between drama and philosophy or between mythos and logos is not of great importance. Especially not for Nietzsche. In his very early work on pre-Platonic philosophy he values in those obscure ancients a kind of *creatio ex nihilo*, a kind of unprecedented wisdom poetry. In his first significant work, *The Birth of Tragedy*, on the other hand, he devises a fiction of his own about the mythological roots, inspirations and presence of two main Greek deities, Dionysus and Apollo. The praise of polytheism runs through his whole work, especially in *The Gay Science*. Let me refer back to Schelling's distinction between the three kinds or aspects of Dionysus. The Dionysus of *The Birth of Tragedy*, the Dionysus of the spirit of music, is the second Dionysus, the god of the present, of wine, of sensuality, Bacchus. The Dionysus of the later Nietzsche, whose name he signed as his own with blurred mind, is, however, the third Dionysus, the son of Demeter, the god of the future—he is Christ and also Zarathustra.

Nietzsche's story about the Greeks is a strong one. For it is strongly related to his own present, that is, to his enthusiastic support for the rejuvenation of the Dionysian spirit by Wagner and to his passionate rejection of rationalism and democracy, represented in the figures and in the thought of Socrates and Euripides. That the dramas of Euripides are inspired by the spirit of democracy and rationalism and for that reason despicable was the

judgment of the contemporary Aristophanes, whose judgments all German thinkers accepted. The only philosophy to which Nietzsche had a passionate and personal relationship was the Greek and perhaps—at least in my mind—not just because he was a classical philologist and knew them inside out, but also for autobiographical reasons. Only ancient philosophy, especially the Socrates/Plato relationship, could serve him as a mirror fiction. He returned to this relationship several times, at one time identifying himself with the aristocratic Plato and Socrates with the plebeian Wagner; other times, however, identifying himself rather with Socrates playing music and rejecting Plato, the ascetic priest, as the prototype of an early nihilist. I refer to these well-known stories only to recall again the common ground of the German fiction about the Greeks: the rejection of the superiority of logos over mythos, disgust with the "laws of gravity" as the support of positivist philosophy, the courage to face "the death of God," this time the death of the Christian God, an event Schiller already hinted at and Heine described. But one can feel nostalgia for a very different kind of Greeks, one can recognize oneself in different mirrors, although all of them are called "Greeks." Schiller's Greeks are happy, loving, indulge in beauty, light, play and pleasure, whereas Nietzsche's Greeks are tragic, suffering, deep, unhappy and torn. The reversal of the fiction can only be partially ascribed to Burckhardt's histories, since Nietzsche's personal experiences played an equal role in it.

The happy Greeks were not entirely replaced by the tragic Greeks, they were just pushed back in time, into the remotest past. Even if the Greeks of the tragic authors were already unhappy, the Greeks of Homer were simple and happy. Hegel's remark about Greeks as happy children of the European history, echoed by Marx, referring to them as the normal children of the whole human civilization, pushed "happiness" or "normalcy" back into the times of the Homeric epics. Lukács, in his *Theory of the Novel*, tells us that since philosophy is homesickness, there could be no philosophy in those hallowed times of the epos, when the spirit was still at home. But he immediately "generalizes" his observation about the world of the epic, while contrasting the Greeks and the moderns. He says: "The Greek knows only answers but no questions, only solutions, but no riddles, only forms, but no chaos."

This sounds far more like Hegel than Nietzsche. Hegel's interest in the Greeks was mainly vested in the story of the Absolute Spirit, that is, art, religion and philosophy. Greek religion was essentially religion of art, the kind of perfection which is a thing of the past. Greek philosophy, however, is not "past" for it is philosophy, and philosophy remains and becomes absolute present tense. This is what Heidegger appreciated so much in Hegel, especially in his study "Hegel and the Greeks." He added, however, that Hegel's merit was also his shortcoming. For he built into his own philosophy, or rather into philosophy in general, four grounding words of Greek philoso-

phy—*hen, logos, idea, energeia*—all of them manifestations of *einai/eon*, on. However, Heidegger added, Hegel did not build into philosophy, and did not even mention, the Greek grounding word *aletheia.* And here Heidegger enters with his new version of the German fiction about the Greeks.

Although Heidegger's understanding of the Greeks was modified during his long life more than once, one of his basic tenets remained intact. I mean the one he, perhaps the last German/Greek, shared with the first, Winckelmann. Just as according to Winckelmann Roman copies distorted original Greek statues, so, according to Heidegger, the Latin translation of Greek grounding words distorted the original meaning of those words. European philosophy received the Latin translation of the Greek philosophical expressions such as *physis, aletheia, logos, techne, ipokeimenon* and *ousia*, and understood them as translated. Yet those Greek words were embedded in their own tradition, in the multiplicity of their uses in poetry or in everyday communication. All these connotations are hopelessly lost in translation. *Physis* is not *natura*, *aletheia* is not *veritas*, *logos* is not *ratio, hipokeimenon* is not *subjectum, ousia* is not *substantia*. One of the major tasks of contemporary philosophy, so Heidegger said, is to purify these concepts from their Latin distortion and to disclose the original meaning of these grounding words. The mere attempt at the unearthing of their original meaning(s) bring us already closer to understanding how they were meant in the context of philosophy in the making.

And so Heidegger came to associate French thinking with the Latin origin of the language, as opposed to German thinking, which is as deep and archaic as the Greek. This association was still at play in his university lectures about Parmenides at the time of the battle of Stalingrad. Germany may lose the war, yet in matters of poetry and thinking it remains superior to its enemies. But Heidegger's hostility against the Latin/French tradition also has philosophical roots. At first Heidegger speaks in the name of German/Greeks, yet later he will make also some distinction between Greeks and Greeks. It is not superfluous to compare him here again to Hegel. Hegel was also interested in so called pre-Socratic philosophy, especially in the fragments of Heraclitus. But for him Greek philosophy peaked in Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. The owl of Minerva begins its flight when the world becomes old, he says. The Greek world was already old at the time of Plato and Aristotle—they represent the owl of Minerva, the supreme wisdom of the ancients.

Since Heidegger never thought in terms of progress, he could have hardly subscribed to this proposition. Yet in the early years of his philosophical development he was still interested in Aristotle and in Plato, perhaps more than in any other Greek philosophers. In one way, he never changes his mind as far as the place of those thinkers in the development of philosophy was concerned, yet the role played by this great Greek tradition appeared for him more and more ambivalent. What those Greek thinkers had established was

the metaphysical tradition, which the post-Second World War Heidegger saw in a gloomy light. Metaphysical thinking, he claimed, is the very tradition that has led to modern technology through the domination of technological thinking; it is the essence of technology that has enframed modern men not just from the outside but also from inside. The longer Heidegger reflected on this, the more he came to the conclusion that since all philosophy is metaphysics, philosophy itself needed to be overcome and to be replaced by a non-metaphysical, non-philosophical thinking.

But is there a tradition for this kind of thinking? It is at this point that Heidegger reaches back to pre-Platonic thinkers such as Parmenides, Heraclitus and Anaximander. Not because he entertained the illusion that one can return to those archaic thinkers for instruction in a kind of non-metaphysical philosophy. He used their fragments in a very similar way to his use of some lines of Hölderlin's poetry as inspiration. To put it briefly, Heidegger's passionate interest in the Greeks had less and less to do with Athens, since he now believed that it was not only the Romans who had distorted the original message of thinking but also the Greek metaphysicians before them. Heidegger identified himself, in his later times, as Gadamer said, with non-Athenian Greek thinking.

This shift had several ramifications. I mention only one. Earlier in the development of his thinking, Heidegger accepted "*aletheia"* as a more relevant understanding of "truth" than any other. In his later writing he became historicist, at least in this respect: aletheia was truth for the ancient Greeks, the adequacy of intellect to the thing and vice versa the truth for the medievals and early moderns, whereas nowadays—Heidegger refers to Heisenberg—the question concerning truth cannot even be raised.

I mentioned Heidegger's traditionally unsympathetic relation to Latin culture in the case of the Latin translation of Greek words. But there was more to it. For Heidegger, Latin culture was too rational, too formal, too legal. At this point I return, for the last time, to the Hegel/Heidegger comparison, or rather contrast. When in his lectures on the history of philosophy Hegel arrives at Descartes, he feels like a sailor who sees shore and cries out "land!" We are finally at home, we have arrived. The philosophy of the same Descartes is, in Heidegger's mind, the original sin of modern European philosophy. Descartes was a rationalist, bad enough. But, in addition, he committed a more heinous crime by placing the concept of the "subject" at the very center of European thinking. The problem started, of course, earlier, when the Greek *hipokeimenon* was translated as *subjectum*. But ancient philosophy was still not epistemology whereas Descartes' understanding was. The *fundamentum absolutum inconcussum* of truth became the human subject itself. This was worse than superficiality. When Heidegger described Nietzsche as the last metaphysician, he referred mainly to Nietzsche's concept of power as the final consummation of the Cartesian subject.

Let me now come to the last point where Heidegger joined the tradition of German/Greeks, Nietzsche included. German philosophers after the Enlightenment—and there was no German philosophy before it—had a very problematic relationship to religion. I mean to Christian religion, because despite Nietzsche's remarks on Buddhism, this was the only religion that counted for them. In fact Hegel, Nietzsche and Heidegger shared the view that the Christian God had become by now irrelevant (this feeling or thought was shared also by Goethe, Schiller, Fichte and early romanticism in general). For Hegel, Lutheranism counted as the highest form of truth in any religion, yet he thought that philosophy was by now a more adequate form of the same truth-content than even the highest form of religion could be. Nietzsche's claim that the Christian God is dead is well known. Although Heidegger avoided such extreme expressions, the Christian God had no place in his philosophy. This makes Hamann or Schleiermacher, or even Rilke, although sharing Greek nostalgia, yet believing Christians, special cases.

Yet there remained an empty place after the Christian God left the philosophical world. Both Nietzsche and Heidegger tried to fill this empty place. As I already mentioned in the brief discussion of Hölderlin, the Greek gods came as possible replacements. But not all the Greek gods, only the one which resembled the Christian God. Thus the young Nietzsche found Dionysus as Bacchus, as the later Nietzsche found Dionysus, the bringer of the future, the son of Demeter. Heidegger, however, spoke about "the sacred." One needs to create niches for the sacred, because the "new god" can appear only where the sacred is already there, waiting for him. Yet in his last interview, published after his death, Heidegger utters the following sentence: "Only a god can save us." The imaginary institution of German/Greeks remained the same to the last. I dare to say "to the last," even though one can very rarely know when a story comes to an end. However, I can say with confidence that the story of German/Greeks came to an end with the twentieth century. After Heidegger only Hannah Arendt trod this path, yet not very typically. Although she still adored Achilles and had no great sympathy for the French, she also loved the republic, and liked to quote Cicero.

Shortly after the Second World War, Heidegger entertained the idea, that, in spite of its inferiority, French philosophy might impregnate the German and revitalize it, that it should become again as great as ever. Yet it happened the other way around. It was French philosophy which was impregnated by the German, greatly profiting from it. This German-impregnated French philosophy flourished throughout the second part of the twentieth century. Although Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger and Nietzsche were the masters, the French philosophers were not pupils—they were masters in their own right. This was already the case with the Cartesian Sartre, and also with Foucault and Derrida who, after a friendly relationship, inflicted serious wounds on

one another over the interpretation of a text by Descartes. The Germans meanwhile mixed a grain of American pragmatism into their soup.

And what about the Greeks?

For the Greek Castoriadis they were his own traditions, above all the tradition of democracy, the idea of autonomy. Thus he had no need to become impregnated by the Greeks, yet he needed to be impregnated by "another," most fundamentally by the Austrian Freud.

And what about the Greeks of the non-Greeks? They occupy a place of honor in contemporary philosophy, and culture in general. Yet so do the Romans, the Bible, the medieval sages and the mystics, the Oriental thinkers, and all the creative minds of all nations. Ours is an omnivorous philosophical and "cultural" universe.

Chapter Twelve

Self-Representation and the Representation of the Other

The title of this chapter, which refers to representation, is ambiguous on purpose. The English (or rather Latin) word "representation" is polysemous. In using this term I might, for example, refer to the artistic portrayal of something or somebody, of a person or a group of persons, or it might also refer to someone acting as a delegate or as a deputy for a group of persons, or someone embodying a group by his very person. There are many other sub-meanings of representation, mainly offshoots of the second kind.

However, it is not just the whim of the English (or Latin) language that connects these two seemingly different referents. The juxtaposition of hetero-representation and auto-representation that I chose as the title of my paper, became a political, or at least a highly politicized issue in whichever of the two meanings the noun *representation* is employed. In fine arts or in literature the question arises, as to whether an author will represent the wishes, needs, thinking, behavior, internal life of the members of the group to which he or she belongs better and truer than others do, and also better and truer than he or she would represent the life, thoughts and actions of the members of other groups. In the case of selecting, choosing, or electing a delegate the question arises whether a delegate or deputy who does not belong internally to a group can represent the needs or interests of this group. Furthermore the question also arises whether the opinions and judgments of the members of a group can be represented all. One can assert that the system of representation distorts politics by definition and that in an authentic political life each and every member of a group should participate in decision making directly without being represented. In the first case one makes the distinction between authentic or inauthentic representation, in the second case one rejects the possibility of an authentic representation altogether.

Although we deal with seemingly entirely different meanings of the noun *representation*, it is worth considering that the opposition of auto-representation/hetero-representation appears as an issue almost at the same time in both cases. It seems as if we were confronted with one of the dilemmas of democracy. In pre-modern times everyone represented his own estate—the king, the kingdom, the nobleman, the nobility, and so on. Similarly, prior to the emergence of the democratic age, the authenticity or the inauthenticity of the portrayal of members of strange and alien non-representative groups was not even raised as a question. For example, neither Shakespeare's portrayal of a Jew or a Moor was questioned on the ground that both the Jew and the Moor were depicted by a white Protestant Englishman as the typical representatives of their respective ethnic groups, which they were not. No one asked, whether Shakespeare, who did not know one single Jew or Moor, was entitled to portray individuals as typical representatives of the mores and behavior of the members of those groups. For some time now, however, people have kept raising such questions. "Uncle Tom" has become a name of abuse and a reference for the meek behavior of the hero of the novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, of a hero who was portrayed by an "other," an alien, namely by the white philanthropist Harriet Beecher Stowe, as sympathetic, attractive and good. African Americans of today would not recognize themselves in this old-fashioned representation of an honest black man. They would say, as they do, that because the representation of a black slave came from the pen of a white person, who had no idea about the inner life of black people, her portrayal of a black is therefore by definition false and phony—in this case sentimentalized beyond recognition.

Interestingly, very similar considerations gathered momentum in the case of representation understood as delegation. In pre-modern times, the representatives (e.g., of the Parliament) were in their very person as individuals, representing a rank or estate (e.g., the estate of the nobleman, of the Church or of the civic order). In democratic times, particularly in a fully fledged democracy with secret ballot and universal suffrage, though, the question of authenticity or inauthenticity of representation has become politicized, because it has become an issue. The deputy or member of parliament does not normally come from the group of people he represents. Moreover, it is questionable, whether anyone, even if he is a former member of a group of people, will be, in his attitudes, or behavior, his habits and needs, identical to the members of the group he formally represents. For example, within a political institution one uses a different language than is normally used by the average members of the group in their everyday reflections. More recently, and particularly in the United States, the principle of representation has assumed a new shade of meaning—it is demanded that every stratum of the population should have a share in the government in proportion to their percentage in the population at large. In the case of women, for example,

because they make up fifty percent of the population, fifty percent of the politicians should be women in an ideal government. In such instances such as this group identity overrules political ability, qualification and so on.

This concept of representation proposed by a movement or ideology is termed by me *fundamentalism of difference*. As in all kinds of fundamentalism, its principle is that of political correctness. However, the principle of representation has already been questioned and rejected by radical universalists in its entirety from the perspective of direct democracy, fashioned on the model of the idealized Athenian polis. Direct democracy was, and still is, mostly favored by intellectuals who rejected all kinds of political representation on philosophical grounds. Hannah Arendt and Cornelius Castoriadis, to name two such advocates of direct democracy are convinced that there is no authentic hetero-representation, at least not in politics. Every representation is by definition hetero-representation, representation by an alien, a stranger, by another, and as such distorts opinions and fossilizes political activity.

In the case of both artistic representation and the political representation of acting as a deputy or a delegate, the same question emerges, whether or not the representation of the other by another falsifies the image, opinions, acts, needs, and wishes of others, in other words, whether there is a true kind of representation and if yes, which is the one. In what follows I will more fully and critically discuss the most radical ideas which stand for the exclusivity of self-representation. I will not discuss the other extreme that recommends qualified suffrage, because it is now out of political fashion. I will, rather, consider a version of the liberal option as a counterpart, even though I am aware that its most recent of formalistic versions makes great allowances to fundamentalism on several issues, among them, the issue of representation.

WHO IS THE OTHER?

Who is the other? Everyone is another for another other. If the representation by another would be by definition held to be false, only autobiographies could raise claim to truth or rightness. Yet, on second thought, not even autobiographies would be eligible. While portraying myself I also portray others. Furthermore, when I begin to portray myself, I also alienate myself from myself to a degree. To remain identical with myself to a degree, which makes portrayal impossible altogether, I must remain without a grain of self-alienation.

If one also considers that to portray necessitates keeping some distance to ourselves, the category of self-representation encompasses much wider territory than that of autobiography. In a novel, particularly in ones of a tradition-

al kind, for example, one can hardly portray a person without also portraying the group characteristics of the person. If the novelist is rooted in the same milieu as her characters, the representation of the world by the novelist will resemble self-representation. One could speak about auto-representation in this wider sense, for example the case of the novels of Jane Austen, in spite of the contemptuous irony of the authoress in describing certain types of people who belong to her world yet whom she abhors. Given the commonness of their world and the strong emphasis put on certain status features, the individuals who emerge from this background are portrayed just as individuals, likable or non-likable in their own right. Moreover, in a good novel of such a type, every person can speak his/her mind. Speech also offers the single man and woman sufficient space for self-representation in a stricter, narrower sense, whether it take the form of self-justification, narrative or conversation. Thus all of the characters have an opportunity to contribute to their portrayal in speaking for themselves as in a diary entry, only in a better style. This kind of a novel resembles a sort of direct democracy among people of a select group, Even if one person convenes the meeting, the authoress, during it everyone can speak in turn, defend their opinions, justify themselves and debate the issues at hand.

A more serious problem arises when a society becomes more and more heterogeneous, when entirely different social classes, ethnicities, religious denominations and other groups, who are in contact and interact with one another, will be portrayed in the same story by the author of the story. Even if one presupposes that all the single members of every group are represented in a way that they can speak for themselves, defend their causes, describe their motivations, tell stories about their sufferings and joys, the suspicion still arises, that all those words are put into their mouths by the transcendental narrator who stands above them, and allegedly knows them all. However, she—the narrator—cannot know or like them equally well. We believe that the transcendental narrator gives more convincing lines to people she knows or likes best, and unconvincing ones to those whom she does not know or dislikes.

To be sure, knowing well and liking well do not always coincide. I can know my own people best without liking them best, and as such my representation, even if critical, will not put false phrases into their mouths or the mouth of the community. Alternatively, one sometimes portrays a stranger whom one hardly knows, with sympathy, yet in a way that none of their group members would recognize as their own way of speaking, thinking or acting. This was already the case in the abovementioned *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

I have already pointed out that language use or discourse is an important issue in the debate centering around political representation, for a representative coming from a different milieu than the one represented will speak a different language. The institutions of representation, themselves, superim-

pose a special kind of discourse, even a jargon, on the members of those institutions. The people, for example the working people who are the one to be represented, will perhaps not even understand the language of their Member of Parliament. This is even more so when immigrants who do not understand the mother tongue of their host country, will be represented by a Member of Parliament who, on his part, may not understand their own native tongue.

However, let me briefly return to representation in *literature*. The most radical adherents of self-representation contend, that, in the portrayal of the members of other groups, particularly those of alien or strange ethnic and religious minorities, the eye of the other will not just misrepresent or falsify the other, but will portray her through the magnifying glass of his—the portrayer's—prejudices. They contend, first, that he will gather together the national or ethnic, positive and negative stereotypes about the aliens, the ones which are taken for granted in their own group or milieu, and that these will be deployed as the portrayal of the members of the groups. Alternatively, they can also act as traditional anthropologists, basing the representation of the other on external observation rather than on hearsay or personal contact. In both cases, though, pre-judgments turn into prejudices almost naturally.

Similarly, in the debates conducted around *political* representation, the view is now generally held that religious groups or ethnicities should be represented exclusively by the members of their own group, optimally by men or women who come from its innermost circle. In both cases (artistic representation and representation as delegation) internal experience is contrasted to an external one, daily contact to mere observation. It is taken for granted that without sharing some internal experiences one can hardly understand the wishes, interests, and attitudes of ethnic or religious minorities, groups of a minority sexual orientation, or members of the other gender.

PARDOXES OF LITERARY REPRESENTATION

Let me now briefly elucidate the dialectics of representation in our first case, primarily in the case of literary representation, in a pseudo-Kantian manner. Only self-representation is true. This opinion has become widespread in the recent upsurge of fundamentalist group-identity politics. Only women can represent women, only African-Americans African-Americans, only Jews Jews, only homosexuals homosexuals. Naturally, the adherents of political correctness are also aware that neither ethnic nor religious groups nor homosexuals and so on, can be portrayed in hermetic isolation from other actors, and of members of other groups. A Chinese woman who writes a novel about

a Chinese woman in America will normally depict both Chinese men and non-Chinese men and women. At least in narrative genres there is no auto-representation without hetero-representation. In this case, however, so the politically correct men and women argue, the minority represents itself in contact with the members of a majority. In the works written by the members of the majority (and this is the majority literature) the authors coming from the majority will present themselves always in a more flattering light than the members of minorities. They always misrepresent minorities (women are discussed as if they were a minority). It is now high time for the minority to take revenge and to restore justice, by reversing the "we"—"them" relationship in representation. Certainly it is still the case that a minority can live in such isolation that all shades of their culture and all kinds of characters from their rank can be portrayed without ethnic hetero-representation. This happens in several, although not all, novels and short stories by I. B. Singer. However, for the artistic success of such an undertaking, one needs Singer's incorruptible and unflattering eye. And this is exactly what is not welcome by the adherents of self-representation.

Needless to say, the "politically correct" position that favors self-representation and rejects all kinds of hetero-representations of members of minority groups (and of women) is fatal to all artistic practices and especially to literature. First and foremost because—as was the case in Soviet literature—assesses works of art exclusively on the ground of the so-called content. This is irrespective of whether the hylomorphic tradition of content/form distinction makes sense in art and literature at all—a problem I cannot tackle here. The authenticity of a work is then not decided by any internal criteria of the work, but by and through a criterion external to the work. However, even apart from this most serious criticism, the political message of "political correctness" seems to be phony. If hetero-representation distorts the picture of the members of a group, so does self-representation, if it is willed, ideological/rhetorical and not spontaneous. We frequently understand ourselves as much through framed stereotypes as we understand others. Our pre-judgments about ourselves can as frequently become distorted into prejudices as with hetero-representation. Both flattering and unflattering prejudices are prejudices. There is no essential difference between self-representation and the representation of the other as far as our inclinations towards prejudices is concerned. Both self-representation and the representation of the other can be authentic and inauthentic, true or untrue—the criterion is inapplicable and irrelevant.

To be sure, these delicate questions do not arise if we discuss the issue of self-representation and the representation of others in the mass media, including television, rather than in painting or literature. In this case, we can hardly say that the ideological demand for the exclusive auto-representation of minorities (women included) destroys the genre, as I believe is the case in

fine arts or literature. However, something similar happens all the same. If the question as to who is represented and by whom becomes a pivotal issue in the mass media, the propaganda aspect of entertainment will gather momentum, and strong, ideologically motivated rhetoric will permeate all televised reports. However, didactic entertainment is not very entertaining.

It seems as if I have answered to the initial question in the following way: the advocates of auto-representation are wrong. One can keep the distance necessary for the portrayal of everything, especially of characters, in both hetero-representation and auto-representation; and one can also apply stereotypes and be led by prejudices in both cases. The yardstick itself is wrong, and, perhaps, the distinction itself is also wrong. One may be able to avoid fundamentalist rhetoric if one asked another, although similar, question in a different register. Instead of asking the question of which of the two kinds of representation are real, truer, more "correct," and less prejudiced, one could ask the question whether self-representation and the representation of the other are different. Or if there is a difference, whether it makes a difference? Will it be different if a woman portrays a woman or if a man does it? Whether it will (or can) add to the artistic quality of a painting or of a story, that the author and the character share an essential identity which might be important for the portrayal of the character so that one could say that the person is portrayed "from the inside," rather than on the basis of interaction or observation? One could also ask whether the possibility to write and to portray consciously, so that one emphasizes the commonness of experience and lifestyle with one's characters, adds something to, or enriches something as "literature," if there is something that one can call "literature"? One may also ask whether there is such a thing as "woman's literature" distinct from men's literature, or homosexual literature, distinguished from fiction written by heterosexuals, or Jewish literature?

It was always taken for granted that there was French and Russian literature, although Goethe had forged the term world-literature; the latter seems to exist in the literature departments of universities alone. It is also taken as self-evident that a work of literature written in a specific language is the literature of that language. Yet this is not as simple as it seems. There is American literature and Australian and English and Irish, and also Indian literature written in English—the same language, yet not the same literature. English men and women are portrayed in novels written by Australians, Indians, Irish or Americans. Would it be absurd here to distinguish between auto-representation and the representation of the other? Would it be absurd to say, that, although even if the language is roughly the same, different life experiences distinguish one literature from an other, and would it be relevant to speak of an Indian's portrayal of the life of Indians, whether in Mumbai or in London, as self-representation, and about representation of the other when Englishmen portray Indians whether in Mumbai or in Oxford? Of course,

authors, as all almost all of us, have multiple identities, which may include multiple national or ethnic identities. It is difficult to tell whether Henry James' portrayal of Englishmen is hetero-representational or rather auto-representational. Can one maintain that his portrayal of Americans is always better, truer, or more authentic than the portrayal of Americans by an Irishman or by an Englishman, for example, George Bernard Shaw and John Galsworthy? I think not. But one can still say that there is a difference and that this difference enriches literature. Is it true that only women can portray giving birth authentically because only women do give, or can give birth? This is sheer nonsense. Yet one can still admit that women who have given birth to children and who describe their own life experiences can portray childbirth in a different way than men usually do. Thus, although the distinction between auto-representation and hetero-representation does not yield a criterion for authenticity and truth, for it does not provide a criterion for comparison, the distinction still makes sense. The multiple perspectives in representation enrich understanding and self-understanding in a hermeneutic sense.

It is interesting to see how this difference is spontaneously acknowledged. There is one case where there always remains an asymmetric reciprocity between self-presentation and the representation of the other, namely in the case of the relation between adults and children. Adults portray children. There are very few novelists who authentically portray children, and even painters paint children with an adult eye. Children are not in the position to represent themselves and the others (the adults) as they see and experience them as the representative other. Adults, though, exhibit children's drawings and paintings, not because they believe that they are "better" paintings than those painted by adults, but because there is something in their representation about themselves and the adult world that adult drawings and paintings on children cannot match—not because they are more authentic but because they are different.

After all this had been said one could ask: is there a women's literature, a special Jewish literature or homosexual literature? I do not think that there is an unequivocal answer to this question. If, in a poem or novel, the female experience is put into the center point, then this poem and novel belongs to women's literature. However, it may also belong to French or English literature, for example. Moreover, if it is also a work of high culture, that is a work that invites practically infinite interpretations, it will speak to everyone who turns towards it. But if the woman's experience does not play a central role in the novel, even if it is written by a woman, I would hardly say that it belongs to woman's literature, but rather to Latin American or Russian literature, and as such can also belong to high culture to which everyone may or may not have access.

REPRESENTATIONS AND MULTIPLE IDENTITIES

My question is whether this model can also serve as the model for the second—political—meaning of "representation," that is, whether political self-representation is by definition more authentic and more just than being represented by another? Second, I am also asking whether there is a difference between self-representation and the representation of the other also in the political field, and if yes, what this difference may consist of? Finally, I am also asking whether there is something in the case of political representation that would serve as the analogy for "high culture" and as the analogy of "national literature."

I came to the conclusion in the previous discussion, that to make the distinction between self-representation and hetero-representation essential for judging artworks such as painting or literature, is a gesture hostile to art. Political content cannot guide aesthetic judgment. Max Weber would say that one should not superimpose the rules of one sphere on another sphere. I would go a step further and ask whether those rules that proved false in judging artworks are not also false in the political sphere. The connection between them is obvious. To press for the self-representation in art belongs to the strategies of political correctness, whereas the trend towards political correctness is essential in modern and postmodern fundamentalism. I have termed the second the fundamentalism of difference. Nowadays, it is fundamentalism based on difference that also calls for auto-representation in the field of political representation.

In this narrow framework I cannot discuss postmodern fundamentalism in its entirety, although I will enumerate some if its constituents. As with all kinds of fundamentalism, postmodern fundamentalism is based on identity politics. It differs from modernistic fundamentalism insofar as it is has no universalistic ambitions, and differs from romanticism insofar that it is not hostile towards modern science and technology. Rather, postmodern fundamentalist movements are interested in closure, self-isolation, self-imposed apartheid than in world mastery. They claim to be superior, not on the ground of their universality, but on the ground of their difference. Since isolation and self-imposed apartheid are allegedly the necessary condition of the preservation of a group identity, the declaration of identity here becomes the major political issue. Political correctness is, however, not exhausted by a mere declaration of identity; it requires the identification of all members of the group with all the issues that their ethnocracies or religious leaders have already identified as being crucial for the group's identity. Their main slogan is, just as in the case of literature or fine arts, that only self-representation is authentic, true and just. I think that this claim is also wrong.

I suggested that as far as art and literature is concerned, to regard the question of self-representation and hetero-representation as a crucial one, is in itself destructive and self-destructive. I now add that the same holds true about the issue of political representation, although in a different way. If the choice between self-representation and auto-representation became the central issue in politics, and self-representation were given absolute preference as against all forms of hetero-representation, this would mean the demise of politics. Politics lives in and through the actions among citizens as citizens. However, in the case of the policy of auto-representation, no one can act in his or her capacity as a citizen, just in their capacity of being a member of one or another group. Citizens *qua* citizens would deal with one another in mutual and total distrust. The representatives (of a group) could never be concerned with the well being of the city, of the body politic, but would stick exclusively to promoting the advancement of their own group. Although lobbies and parties now do this, this is not their principle; rather their practice violates it. To make this practice the principle makes politics resemble a football match where every team wants just one single thing, to win. Politics is competitive, yet it is also a collaborative and cooperative enterprise. In the case of an all-compassing acceptance of the principle of self-representation, the question of justice cannot be raised for every group claims—through its representatives—absolute rightness to its own form of life, thus rejecting the form of life of all other groups as wrong and false. This alone excludes mediation and discursive interaction altogether.

Moreover, since the politics of self-representation, as all fundamentalist politics, promotes strong, extreme rhetoric, all prejudices become open prejudices, accepted as legitimate propaganda tools in the battle of suspicion, ruse and ruthlessness. It is always presupposed that others hold opinions they do just because they are alien, just because they are not us, and this is why they are wrong. No one then is duty bound to understand the other's point of view. Let me mention a few simple rhetorical devices from the menu card of identity politics in the United States. In our common European tradition that puts a premium on objectivity, if someone says that X did A because he was angry, we will not assess anger as an alleviating circumstance. Nowadays, in the United States, if someone says that X did A because he was angry, it means that he was justified doing A. Anger as a gesture of self-representation entails a man doing things he is otherwise not entailed to do. I could also mention the Simpson case, where the selection of the jury could serve as a typical case for the system of auto-representation, this time on the judiciary. The public in the state of total mobilization by the mass media, behaved as the fans of two football teams do. The issue at stake was not justice, but which of the teams will win. Everyone wanted his team to win—no one was interested in justice. The old maxim that right is might is the fundamental

thesis of all the fundamentalist groups who now stand for auto-representation.

After having made the suggestion that the policy of self-representation destroys art, I added that the policy of self-representation also destroys political life. I will now go through the same steps as in my discussion about representation in art and ask: is it true, that in the case of auto-representation the interest, needs, opinions of a group are better represented than in the case of hetero-representation? Second, is it true, that auto-representation differs sometimes from hetero-representation, and that this difference can add to the richness of politics?

The very question whether a group's interests, needs, and opinions are best represented by the member of the group than by anyone else, and that the member of the group will represent the group, is fundamentalist in its conception. It presupposes that a "true" member of a group will, by definition, regard their group identity as their foremost identity, that is, if they want to be represented, they will be represented as member of this group and not in any of their other capacities. If we assume, however, that men and women have multiple identities and that one of their identities will gain preference in one situation, and the other in another, every auto-representation will be also a hetero-representation. For example, retired men can be represented by retired men, but retired men are also men of culture, and they want to be represented by men of culture, and they can be of Irish origin, and they want to be represented by people of Irish origin, and so on and so forth. They are not just Hungarians, Jews, blacks, homosexuals, women and so on. If someone declares that he or she is just this or that, he or she stands already under the influence of identity politics. Ethnocracies and fundamentalist religious leaders consider men and women whose opinions diverge from theirs in several issues as traitors, they press them towards uniformity, and so do mostly their fellow group members.

I said that the call for the exclusivity of auto-representation in politics is self-destructive. But is it not justified all the same? There can be moral conflicts where there are no good choices, where self-destruction is justified, for the alternative is as bad if not worse. In other words, who was right and who was wrong when, for example, the prophet Jeremiah implored his people to compromise with the intruding stranger-other, or the stubborn people who let Jerusalem be destroyed? There are tragic situations when there are no good choices. Cities have often been destroyed when citizens have fought for their liberty or when a minority group is oppressed by a majority which despises or is frustrated by it. In the latter case, one can be sure that the minority group will always be misrepresented by the majority group (and perhaps even vice versa). The call for self-representation is, then, also the call for the preservation of identity. The group will act in a fundamentalist way in the spirit of self-preservation. There are two stakes here, though—one

is self-preservation, whilst the other is the destruction of the democratic/liberal political mores. Which one to choose? None of us can give a general answer. It depends. Seemingly we could answer that even in such a case one can hold to the proper balance between self-representation and hetero-representation and avoid fundamentalism. Unfortunately, only a few or many, but always exceptional individuals avoid it. The group itself, under the pressure of bad alternatives, will not be sensitive to nuances, but go in one direction without being aware of the stakes. Tragic situations exist. And no theory can get rid of them.

But tragic political situations are not frequent in already functioning liberal democracies. In a plebiscitary democracy, men and women normally understand themselves as a bundle of multiple identities. As a result, the difference between hetero-representation and auto-representation becomes smaller. It is the main tendency of modern democracies that deputies stand for issues, and that they, as well as lobbies and groups represents me in one of my identities, whilst others in another. In other words, no one represents me fully. No one single party can represent an individual fully. This is why nowadays, when citizens vote, they normally vote for the relatively better, not for the best. The principle of auto-representation, in its fundamentalist extreme version, does not only claim that there is such a thing as the best, but also tells you what it is. It is because of our multiple identities that the self-representation/auto-representation dichotomy becomes more and more chimerical. The more chimerical it becomes, the more fervently it gets promoted.

Let me return, however, to the resemblance of self-representation—and it became obvious that this is not just resemblance—to art and literature: can self-representation enrich the palate of politics with a new color? Is there still, sometimes a difference between self-representation and representation by the others? In this sense, does self-representation deserve our attention and can we even attach some hopes to it?

I said that modern democratic politics relativizes the difference—someone represents me in one of my identities, the other in another. Yet there is an area, which can also play a role in politics that is not about an issue as it is more holistic. I refer to a way of life. Although issues and identities become diffuse and fragmented, differing yet overlapping, there are still certain dominant ways of life which are different for all, and similar for some. It happens sometimes that voting preferences can be understood only in terms of references for this or that way of life. There is a modernist, easygoing, a fairly cynical way of life. There are certain religious creeds and affiliations that promote strict mores, as well as ethnic groups with strong traditional systems of customs and ethos'. It is not necessary that people who share an image of a global way of life should isolate themselves from the rest and promote theirs alone. However, a way of life remains important for those who share it. If a

particular way of life remains in a minority, the claim for some form of auto-representation is far from being fraudulent. This is not only because others, the outsiders who find the way of life of this group fairly strange will develop prejudices and disadvantage the members of groups they do not understand, but also because they actually do not understand them well, and, thus, can also misrepresent them. In such and similar cases auto-representation introduces difference into political life and makes it richer. Self-representation, then, is not the principle; it is not all-encompassing, it is not the good thing one needs to contrast to the bad. But in certain cases auto-representation can supplement the general system of representation, which, on its part, cannot be described anymore in terms of auto/hetero, at least not as far as the principle of representation is concerned. Auto-representation in politics should better remain supplementary. It is not more just than hetero-representation, but, as I said, it can enrich political life, just as it enriches literature.

I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter that the principle of representation itself has been criticized and rejected by many radical thinkers. They have recommended that the system of representation be replaced altogether with direct democracy. Only they who participate in politics day by day should have a say in politics. Others should do what they like to do best—for example, write books on representation, promote their business and so on, but they should keep their hands off politics.

In my mind, this suggestion resembles too closely identity politics. It has nothing to do with fundamentalist identity politics of difference, for it is of a universalistic character. It does not promote any content, but it promotes a form, namely a form of action. Still, the model of direct democracy suggests that men and women should give absolute preference to something on life, commit themselves absolutely to this preference, a form of life. Hannah Arendt distinguishes among three forms of active life (*vita activa*). The political person gives preference to action among the three options of *vita activa*; this is their identity. Only those men and women who have committed themselves to *vita activa* against *vita contemplativa* have a right to political participation of any kind, and to action as against mere labor or creation (work). If there is no representation at all, all those who do not choose as their absolute and continues identity politics as action, will be excluded from politics altogether.

Let us imagine a literature where there is only autobiography, painting limited to auto-portrait. No one who has no capacity, wish or interest to write autobiographically or to paint herself, or to write or to paint at all, would have no access to literature and/or painting. No one else but the writer and the painter could be represented in writing and painting. Direct democracy raises a similar claim. The exclusion of representation is by definition the exclusion of the representation of the other. Yet, as autobiography enriches literature and auto-portraiture painting, so too can direct democracy supple-

ment the systems of representation. If you identify yourself with it, you can be part of it, if not, not.

In the model case of literature, I suggested that there might be something as women's literature that is also a German or an English or an Australian one, and that it also belongs to high culture open to all those who are thrown into the world as strangers and who are never tired to explore the human condition. Fundamentalist identity politics, insofar as it appears in literature or in the media, bars the way to the access of other differences and also through it to universal meaning and concern. Literature that keeps the doors open lets books enter the avenue of universal concern. Chinese students from Beijing whom I have taught have gladly discovered the resemblance between the *Story of the Stone* and *The Remembrance of Things Past*. This is not because these novels portrayed something universal, but because they left the door open for everyone who was passionately interested in the human condition. The same can hold true of political representation. The alternative is not between difference and universality, between internal and external, but between closure and openness, between fundamentalism and an invitation to a voyage where we never know ahead whom we are going to meet during our journey, whether we will recognize—as once Iphigenia and Orestes did—our brothers and sisters among the strangers.

Chapter Thirteen

Where Are We at Home?

About thirty years ago I became acquainted with the middle-aged owner of a little trattoria in Rome's Campo dei Fiori. After a lively conversation I asked him to advise me about the shortest way to Porta Pia. "I am sorry, but I cannot help you," he answered. "The truth of the matter is I have never ever in my life left the Campo dei Fiori." About one and a half decades later, on board of a jumbo jet en route to Australia, I discussed the then current affairs with my neighbor, a middle-aged woman. It turned out that she was employed by an international trade firm, spoke five languages, and owned three apartments in three different places. Recalling the confession of the trattoria owner, I asked her the obvious question: "Where are you at home?" She was taken aback. After awhile she responded: "Perhaps where my cat lives."

These two people seemingly lived worlds apart. For the first, the Earth had a center, it was called Campo dei Fiori, the place where he was born and expected to die. He was deeply committed to the geographic monogamy that wedded him to his tradition. His commitment stretched from the remote past, the past of the Campo, up to a future beyond his own, the future of the Campo. For the second, the Earth had no center; she was geographically promiscuous, without pathos. Her whereabouts made no difference to her. My question surprised her because the loaded concept "home" seemingly had no significance for her.

This was confirmed by her wittingly unwittingly ironical answer. As long as there is something called home, our cat lives in our home. So when my interlocutor said, in reversing the signs, that "My home is where my cat lives," she had deconstructed the concept "home." Her geographic promiscuity symbolized something uncanny (*unheimlich*), namely the abandonment of, perhaps, the oldest tradition of the homo sapiens, privileging one, or certain, places against all the others.

The privileged place could be the father's tent, the native village, the free city, the ethnic enclave, the nation-state, the territory of the holy shrine-and much else. Either one never left it (as my friend from the Campo dei Fiori) or, one returned to it, from Odysseus to Peer Gynt. And if the privileged place was destroyed by war or a natural catastrophe, or if necessity or curiosity compelled a group to abandon it for good, the spirit of the ancient home was normally carried on the back of the community to a new dwelling place, as it happened in the case of the old colonists of Sicily or the early modern colonists of New Amsterdam, New Orleans, New Haven, or the Jews always and all over Europe.

"Home" seems to be one of the few constants of the human condition; thus my middle-aged neighbor on the jumbo jet looks like a kind of a cultural monster. But she is not a monster; she is just a very lonely person, one end product (although not only the end product, and by far not the final product) of two hundred years of modern history.

As a geographically monogamous person, our restaurateur of the Campo dei Fiori could identify the center point of his life: a locus, a geographic point, a point on Earth. Our middle-aged woman from the jumbo jet turned out to be geographically promiscuous. When I asked her about her home, she pointed not at a place, not at her husband or at her child, but at her cat. What could it possibly mean to emphasize "my cat"? A cat is unlike a dog. A cat is not faithful to her mistress; it does not accompany her on her travels. Yet, a cat is not geographically promiscuous; it is a homemaker. On a jumbo jet a geographically promiscuous person referred to "her" cat as her homemaker. The sentence: "My home is where my cat lives" is not just the deconstruction of the concept "home" but simultaneously the manifestation of a deep nostalgia: the cat has a home; the creature of nature has a home; I do not have a home; I am a monster. Still, she is not a monster; she is a paradox.

We came to the preliminary conclusion that a geographically promiscuous person cannot account for her living-center on Earth, for she has none. The conclusion is, perhaps, too hasty. Brief mention was already made of human groups that, under duress, or perhaps also in search of a more dignified living, migrated from the place of their birth to faraway countries, while carrying their home on their back. We could say our middle-aged woman does something similar; just that she constantly migrates, and among many places, and always to and fro.

She does it alone, not as the member of a community, although many people act like her. But what kind of cultural baggage does she carry with her? The answer is simple: none. She does not need to carry any. The kind of culture she participates in is not a culture of a certain place; it is the culture of a time. It is a culture of the *absolute present*.

Let us accompany her on her constant trips from Singapore to Hong Kong, London, Stockholm, New Hampshire, Tokyo, Prague and so on. She

stays in the same Hilton hotel, eats the same tuna sandwich for lunch, or, if she wishes, eats Chinese food in Paris and French food in Hong Kong. She uses the same type of fax, and telephones, and computers, watches the same films, and discusses the same kind of problems with the same kind of people. She has a "home experience" of a kind. For example, she knows where the electric switch is; she knows the menu in advance; she reads the gestures and the allusions; she understands others without further explanation. Nothing is uncanny in sheerly functional relationships; they are unlike dark rooms, foreign lands or rain forests. They are not foreign. Even foreign universities are not foreign. After one delivers a lecture, one can expect the same question in Singapore, Tokyo, Paris or Manchester. But there are no house cats in business hotels, trade centers, and universities. They are not foreign places, nor are they homes.

My fellow woman-traveller has not really travelled. She has stayed put. One cannot say that she remained at one place, for she moved between many. But she still remained, as if all those remote and less remote places moved towards her and not her towards them. What she carried on her back was not a particular culture of a particular place (or places) but a particular time shared by all the places. She remained always in the present. She remained herself insofar as she moved together with all the present times common to all the places she ever visited.

Let me exemplify the issue on the university. After having delivered the same lecture twenty years ago in Tokyo, Melbourne, Cape Town, Paris, Delhi or Honolulu, we can be sure that students will ask the same or similar questions in all those places. At the present, students will ask quite different questions than twenty years ago, yet again the same questions or similar ones will be asked in each of those universities. Could we possibly say, that those students who asked their questions twenty years ago, lived in a different world than the students who ask their questions today? Could we assert that our contemporaries, whom I would call for simplicity's sake "postmoderns," are at home in *a* time and not in *a* place?

THE AWARENESS OF CONTINGENCY

Modern philosophy increasingly privileges time over space. The great speculations about space, with all its beautiful geometric metaphors, have given way to similarly great speculations about time. Time and temporality were presented to the common mind as elegant and deep themes in comparison to the pedestrian topic of spatiality. The spirit of Hegel, Marx, Flaubert, Nietzsche, Freud, Bergson and Proust shaped the experience of the moderns. The shift in the "*Geistige Situation der Zeit*" ("the spiritual situation of the

Time") as Jaspers put it, endangers the familiarity experience, and transforms our world into an uncanny (*unheimlich*) place. Several shifts have taken place in the time/space perception of the moderns since Jaspers' warning of the totalitarian threat was committed to paper, but all of them were deeply intertwined with the changing perception of the "home" by subsequent generations.

Yet all the shifts accompany and also manifest the fundamental experience of contingency. The contingency awareness is of course, not new; it appears with the first stirrings of a new social arrangement we have since termed "modernity." The farther the modern social arrangement reaches the more cultural spheres it encompasses, the more general and widespread contingency-awareness becomes. Now, it is not just the denizens of so-called "Western culture" who experience their initial existence as contingent but so do many millions of others.

The original, traditionally European, contingency-awareness hit as an earthquake. With some simplification, we could refer to two major shocks. First came the experience of cosmic contingency, resulting in the loss of the metaphysical home or at least of the taken for grantedness of this home. The belief in the pre-set telos of our earthly life was then gone.

Our telos, destiny, is henceforth unknown, so we have either to find our destination or to create the image of our perfection before we can begin to fulfill it. Nietzsche said in modern times a question mark has replaced God. I would add, a question mark has also replaced the imaginary space where our life was supposed to become fulfilled, the self-appointed spot of our perfection. The term space or spot can indicate here the point or level of the social order of rank where the person finds her self-appointed task or destiny. It can also indicate the geographic space, that is, the city, the country, the territory of one's final destiny.

Modern men and women begin to experience their social contingency as the question mark that now replaces the fixed spatiality (country, city, rank) of their appointed destiny. The future is opened up as undetermined space, which is, at first, an uncanny space, the dark niche that may contain the riches of the Orient, yet also contain unforeseeable doom. If one accepts one's appointed place on earth, the fixed framework of all the person's choices, whether easy or difficult, are set. Moderns perceive this limitation as unfreedom. The appointed place is unfree—the self-appointed place is free. Freedom, in this sense, means one embraces contingency as the opening up of infinite possibilities. The choice of a self-appointed place against an appointed one, already introduces the time-element as one of its essential determinations into the contingency experience. We can grasp the time, the time that will carry us upon its waves, towards the self-appointed place. The self-consciousness of historicity is thereby born.

In the last two hundred years modern social arrangements broke through many lines of resistance with increasing speed. The first modern time-experience, namely the exploitation of time-rhythm, gave way to the general consciousness of historicity. The mystical actor, "Time," whether hailed or hated, has occupied the central point in the web of our imagination. The slowly emerging tendency to privilege time against space also changes the orientation of phantasy. In premodern times phantasy lifts people out of the place of their actual social standing; slaves dream of having been born free and burghers of living as a prince or a nobleman. Moderns also have other dreams; they dream of having been born in other times—in the past or in the future.

The tension between spatial and temporal home-experience is strongest in the nineteenth century. It is then that the question "Where is our appointed home" emerges with great urgency. One can answer: my appointed home is the place where I was born; I do whatever my father did. This is the well known attitude of our restaurateur from the Campo dei Fiori. One can also answer: my home is appointed by my personal destiny; I follow my destiny on the wings of Time, and while exercising my talents, I will find my appointed home. Nietzsche would say: *amor fati*. Where was Napoleon at home, in Corsica or in Paris, in a country mansion or in the Emperor's palace? There was certainly just one real Napoleon, but in phantasy there were millions.

The nineteenth-century novel, before Flaubert, shows spatial and temporal home-experience in a momentary balance, although not without tension. In many novels of Balzac, for example, there is almost an either/or: whoever throws himself into the stream of time loses his homeland; whoever sticks to his home, will lose touch with time. The conflict between fathers and sons also contains a conflict of home-experience: the son feels at home with his fellow student, whereas his father becomes an alien.

Most features of spatial home-experience can be carried over to time-experience, although the quality of the experience will be modified. Familiarity is the most decisive constituent of the feeling of being-at-home, but it does not account for the latter in full. First of all, the sense that we are at home is not simply a feeling but an emotional disposition, a framework-emotion that accounts for the presence of many particular kinds of emotions like joy, sorrow, nostalgia, intimacy, consolation, pride, and absence of others. This emotional disposition, as all emotional dispositions, includes many cognitive elements, that is, evaluations. For example, whether one, or another, among the feelings or emotional happenings triggered by the emotional disposition (such as the sense of being at home) is intensive, strong, or subdued also depends on the character of the cognitive/evaluative elements that inhere to the emotional disposition.

What is familiar? Sounds (of the cricket, the wind, the stream, the bus, the quarrel of neighbors), the colors (of the sky, the flowers, the tapestry), the

lights (stars, city lights), smells (the city you know well has an unmistakable smell of its own), the shapes (of the house, the garden, the church, the curves of streets). These and similar signs of familiarity distinguish one place from others. They are eminently sensual experiences. That is in a spatial home-experience, sensual impressions are loaded with meanings that are drawn from the cognitive/evaluative elements of the emotional disposition. This kind of spatial home experience cannot be transferred to temporal home-experience. For example, the Second World War belongs to the past of the present of my own generation. The sound of bombs or sirens, the smell of the burning houses belong to our common sensual experiences. These and similar sensual experiences have no local color, and they are exclusively time bound. Moreover, they are mostly threatening or unpleasant. There are also pleasant sensual experiences of a temporal kind, but they are not elementary in the sense spatial home experiences are; they mostly include a narrative element (for example, the first day of peace).

The second element of familiarity is language, the mother tongue, the local lingo, the nursery rhymes, the commonplaces, the gestures, the signs, the facial expressions, the minute customs. One can speak to the other without providing background information. No footnotes are needed; from few words much is understood. And we can remain silent. Where silence is not threatening we are certainly at home. On the first level, the familiarity of language cannot be fully transferred onto the temporal home-experience. But the more we move from the sensual experience towards the cognitive, the more this transfer will be possible.

With my neighbor on the jumbo jet, I discussed the then current politics. She will discuss the politics of the day with everyone. There was no need for footnotes, no background information was required. Similarly, if I would mention Heidegger's turn in any university around the globe tomorrow, there would be no need to provide background information either. From this we can draw the preliminary conclusion, that the home provided by any universal discourse, be it functional or transfunctional, is located in time, not in place. One participates in it by leaving behind all the sensual experiences that make our home in space. To avoid misunderstanding, I do not have in mind here only the counterfactual ideal of the Habermasian universal discourse, but all the empirical versions of universal communication. When I speak about universal communication in this context, I do not attribute any particular value (positive or negative) to "universality." I call every communication universal that abstracts from the sensual spatial home-experience of the participants, taking place in an immune, indifferent, or abstract space of no particular home (on a jumbo jet or in a hotel for example), that still has a temporal home: the absolute present.

If this is so, why have I said that the woman on the jumbo jet is a living "paradox," albeit not a monster? My fragmented narrative would suggest

otherwise. If we assume, that the spatial time-experience has given way to the temporal home-experience, there is nothing paradoxical about this middle aged woman.

She has lived in the abstracted place of nowhere and everywhere, and as a rule, her sensual experiences were also abstract. She was a lonely woman, no husband, no children. Perhaps, a lover in one or other hotels or apartments. But this was not enough for the home; the cat made her home. As a compensation, she had a strong temporal home-experience, and she could communicate her thoughts with practically everyone. She spoke five languages, though, perhaps, she knew no nursery rhymes. But, we should not forget, that she had no children, and even if she had, in her time and in her immune space, children do not recite nursery rhymes anymore. My neighbor's life presented itself as a paradox, for she presented herself—with the following sentence, "My home is where my cat lives." She has not answered: "My home is the wide world" or "My home is my firm" or "My home is the present age." No, she said "My home is where my cat lives," where a natural being, a homemaker lives. The animal keeps home for (wo)man: deconstruction of the term "home," nostalgia, yes, but also something that appears as regression—back to the cat. The two together make the paradox: to live proudly in the desensitized world of an absolute present and to long for the animal warmth of the body, of the herd.

Let me guess what these two people, the restaurateur from the Campo dei Fiori and my neighbor on the jumbo jet are now doing. The trattoria is run now by the son of my old friend, but he is still helping out and between two meals, he sits in his chair and engages in lively conversations with passersby. The business woman is sent into early retirement since our encounter, and now she conducts research about her roots.

So she travels still. She returns to small villages in Romania (where she does not understand the language); she digs in the parochial archives for certain birth and death certificates, to discover something, perhaps a scratch of paper with the name of her great-grandfather on it, just to find out where did she come from.

Till now, I have exemplified the two representative kinds of home-experience, the spatial home-experience and the temporal home-experience, on two simple ideal types. I hope that I made three points clear. First, there is a general tendency to move away from spatial home-experience towards temporal home experience. Second, all home-experiences, conservative life forms included, are more or less successful attempts at coping with contingency; as a result, with the exception of some remote places, a mere spatial home experience is no longer possible. Third, a merely temporal home-experience is a limit; it requires a total abstraction from sensuality/emotionality, and this is how it triggers its own (seeming) opposite, the regression into the world of body health, biological fraternity, and mere corporeality. The

old warning that civilization begets barbarism must be heeded, with an important proviso: not every mode of returning from the temporal home-experience into the once familiar world of spatial home-making is regression into barbarism.

THE HOMELINESS OF ABSOLUTE SPIRIT

To this point I have discussed briefly two ideal-types of home-experience. Now I turn to a third kind. There is a topos, a metaphorical place, that the moderns began to term "high culture"; I prefer Hegel's expression and will refer to it as the territory of the absolute spirit. Philosophy is homesickness, said Novalis. When the temporal home-experience loses its density, men and women can still find their home "up there," in the high regions of art, religion, and philosophy. When I say men and women, I mean dwellers of the European continent. For this third home, as I call it, is an eminently European dwelling space. It was, for example, never representative of North American modernity. Religion, for example, remained one of the aspects of spatial home-experience or was carried as cultural baggage on the back of the religious community. Philosophy, in the form of pragmatism, was just one, although brilliant, actor in the political space and arts were, with the exception of the artists' work which was attached to Europe, deeply embedded in the everyday space. Even where and when good philosophy and arts had been practiced, it never occurred to North Americans to seek there, "high up" in the realm of absolute spirit, their real home. It is easy for American students to shout "Western culture has got to go"—for what they now wish to abandon had never been their home. Yet is it still a European home?

At the onset of modernity the distance between the three homes (the spatial, the temporal and absolute spirit) was negligible. Whoever dwelled in the regions of the absolute spirit, dwelled in the present, or the past and the future of the present, yet by far not in an abstract, sensually empty present, for they were still bound to their spatial home. But soon, time and space travel began. Europeans became engaged in their never-ending digging into the past, and they embarked on their never-ending expeditions towards the most remote regions on Earth. In one century, European high culture became omnivorous. And now, even the dividing line between high and low culture shows signs of cracking. There is nothing below taste, and everything is worthy of interpretation. European culture became dominated by hermeneutics, whether they call it by name, or not. Hermeneutics performs the task of a cultural blood transfusion. Moderns render meanings to their joys and sufferings, that is, they keep themselves culturally alive through the continuous

absorption and assimilation of the spiritual food that had been prepared in the past, or in the present, yet alien, worlds.

Absolute spirit, the third home of the European moderns, is sensually dense; moreover, sensual density is one of its greatest attractions. Our remembrance of an encounter with this world always contains a grain of nostalgia. We desire to return. Modern nostalgia proper is, however, unlike the desire to return to the mother's womb; it wills to experience the same as different. The exact repetition of what one desires does not satisfy. Every repetition is to be unrepeatable. This is not simply a quest for novelty, but a quest for novelty within the familiar. This desire is one of the motivations that pushed moderns, in their quest for novelty, increasingly into the past.

Every new interpretation of an ancient text satisfies the desire for the unrepeatable repetition. So do all so-called "citations" in literature, music, and fine arts. This is just the tip of the iceberg, for the desire to combine the sensual experience of novelty with that of familiarity characterizes, on a banal and pedestrian level, all those many million practitioners of mass tourism who are wandering from one spot to another while taking pictures and buying souvenirs.

Absolute spirit, the third home of European moderns, is not just sensually satisfying, but also cognitively rewarding. The things, the single works that occupy the space of high culture, are dense with meaning. The density of meaning is not an ontological attribute, even less an ontological constant, nor is it a matter of subjective evaluation. The manifoldness of interpretability, plus the existential weight of the single interpretation, together make up this density. If, after one thousand interpretations of a work, interpretation one thousand and one can still say something new, the work is dense with meaning. But if after three interpretations we get entirely satiated by the work, the meaning is relatively meager. The third home of the denizens of Europe is populated by the kind of works that have been interpreted for many hundreds of years, without the imminent danger of hermeneutical satiation. But this population of works of high-density meaning is by now not big enough to satisfy the hunger for novelty and repetition. To keep up with the demand, our omnivorous culture throws away the standards and looks for works that are not yet hermeneutically exhausted, for they were not regarded, until now, as worthy of being interpreted as carriers of meaning.

Modern hermeneutical practices, deconstruction included, are special postmodern cases of interpretation. But every interpretation, even the most spontaneous and naive, performs a cognitive/judgmental labor on the text. We should not forget, the third home is a modern home and serves eminently the metaphysical convenience of the denizens of Europe. This home is not private, everyone can join it, and in this sense, it is also cosmopolitan. The assurance that everyone can join, refers both to the works that this home entails and to the visitors who enter with nostalgia and a quest for meaning. I

could have reversed the order in the preceding sentence. For the visitors decide, although not without any sense or reason, who will be admitted among the works to the third home. At the outset few works were admitted, now almost everything is. At the beginning there were also few visitors but later their number began to grow. Now, this, originally European, third home is visited by millions with all possible cultural backgrounds. Cultural critics, from Nietzsche to Adorno, predicted the collapse of the third home under the weight of too much furniture and too many visitors. Their anxiety was not unfounded.

Let me return to the chain of thought that was abandoned too soon. The two elements of the home-experience, namely the heightened and densified presence of sensual impressions, and the intensification of reflection and interpretation, are equally important in the household of our third, eminently modern, home.

If the feeling of familiarity is the sole source of sensual experience, the experience itself can remain unreflected (for example, when we listen to the *Volkslieds* of our childhood). But then, we cannot speak of a genuine experience of the "third home," for we remain in the first home (spatial home-experience). On the other hand, if the feeling of familiarity appears exclusively on the reflective level, we do not dwell in the third home but remain in the second one. For example, everyone in the world now talks about Salman Rushdie so we read a few pages of his controversial novel and are then able to join the talk; the sense of familiarity comes from reading the daily papers and being well informed about an issue of the present day. Sensual experience is close to zero, the discursive space encompasses all who live reflectively in the absolute present.

Still, one cannot dwell in the third home of European modernity without constantly practicing one's judgmental and reflective powers. A home is always a human habitat, a network of human bonds and ties, a community of kind. At home, one talks without footnotes but one can talk without footnotes on the condition that one talks to someone who understands. And if one understands the other from a few words, allusions, and gestures, a common cognitive background is already presupposed. Imagine, someone offers ten people ten quite different works of philosophy and tells them that each work is available only in a single copy, yet, they must burn the book that has been read.

Imagine further that all ten readers get deeply attached to the work they received, for example they had a deep philosophical experience. All of them also express their experience for they exclaim "how wonderful!" but do not give an idea about the content of the book or about its arguments in their own interpretations. One could hardly say that these ten people share a home, although all of them had an experience in the territory of the absolute spirit.

The realm of the absolute spirit can serve as the third kind of home if men and women share at least some aspects of the experience. For example, Shakespeare's work unites all men and women who have ever dwelled in the world of Shakespeare's work. Every Shakespeare enthusiast has a different experience, but all those who dwell in Shakespeare's world understand each other from allusions, without footnotes; they can elicit chains of associations in the other's mind just by reciting a sentence; they can confess love with a Shakespeare quotation which does not contain any direct reference to love. The third home is a home like others, it must be shared. For the visitors (and everyone is a visitor who is not an artist, a philosopher or a theologian), it is the place where they desire to return, and where they actually return, to repeat an unrepeatable experience. The experience is lived; it lives in remembrance and recollection. The experience needs to be recollected together even when it was not experienced together. The visitors of the third home together re-enter this home and, in reflection and discussion, they keep the vision of this home alive. What we used to call "high culture" is not just the sum total of works that certain

Europeans had placed onto a pedestal, but it includes all human relations, be they emotive or discursive, that happened to be mediated in and by the world of the absolute spirit.

The fictitious story about the ten men and women who, from a generous experimenter, receive ten marvelous, yet different, philosophical works for their private enjoyment and edification, is not a parody. In our omnivorous culture, where the whole past has already been absorbed, where there are no more privileged works, ages, or texts, the common homes, the various levels of the absolute spirit, have fallen into mini-worlds, or, if you like, into mini-discourses. If ten people on a similar level of cultural interest meet, you can be assured of not finding even two among them who share an artistic, religious, or philosophical experience. The first might say, I read X book, "how beautiful," the second will add, I went to concert A, "how wonderful it was," the third, I went to concert C, "how wonderful it was," and so on and so forth. It occurs to no one that an experience could be shared; there is no cultural discourse; there can be none. If this is so the personal experience too fades, and even if it does not, it will never provide a home where one can dwell. It is more in one's power to teach the cat to listen to the same music one does, than to expect the same from one's fellow creature. Absolute spirit, so Hegel said, is about recollection. One recollects a past that one does not remember. This is what interpreters are doing. But if there are no privileged common texts that most interpreters try to decipher, the past too falls apart into series of mini-interpretations. One recollects one past, the other some other past; no path leads from one to the other.

Every mini-discourse reminds us of the Campo dei Fiori. If you ask someone where the Porta Pia is he will answer "Porta Pia is not my special-

ty" or "Porta Pia is beyond my interest." Or, he would generously add "ask rather those who are living there, they will know." But they can also answer "Porta Pia is the enemy." The same mini-discourse reminds us also of our woman traveler.

There are everywhere in the world people who share one's specialty. One finds them in Mumbai, Singapore, Oslo and Lichtenstein. But in an omnivorous culture, even those who dwell in the same little niche as their spiritual home could hardly communicate, for ten people would still read ten entirely different books, and a hundred people a hundred different ones. Their readings and thoughts need to be synchronized. And, in fact, they are synchronized. Different powers take care of the synchronization. Two stand out among them: historical events that change people's perception of the world almost simultaneously, and fashion. Although an omnivorous culture does not recognize the justification of the spiritual staple, the actual restaurants of the third home normally provide a card that consists of staple foods of the present age, the present moment, the absolute present. Next year, there will be another menu. Current interpretation gives significance to all those ancient texts. It seems, once again, as if we were at home in the absolute present.

THE HOMELINESS OF CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACY

We may briefly consider democracy as a worthy applicant for the status of the fourth home of moderns. Just as the third home was erected in Europe the fourth home was raised in North America. To explore the issue, one can use America as an ideal type, without the slightest claim for historical exactitude. Let us ask the simple question to an imaginary American: "Are you at home in (a) democracy?" or, rather, "By the virtue that you are living in a democracy, are you at home (there)?" The issue is not whether someone can feel at home in X democracy, but whether the democratic institutions themselves should be considered as basic, or almost sufficient, homemakers. The United States of America is a constitutional nation; there are advocates of constitutional nationhood also in Europe. A constitutional nation is not a nation without nationalism; nationalism, called jingoism, is widespread in America. But the home-experience in a constitutional nation differs from the home-experience in a typical European nation state. Neither common language nor dominating national culture and religion are required here for a strong home-experience, as, for example, in France.

And what is more important, no collective past justifies the present. The absence of historicist justification shortcuts the past-dimension. The home is established by the constitution, everything else is prehistory.

Democratic constitution is a home insofar as it is the tradition. Yet it is not a tradition in the same sense as a Charlemagne or the troubadours are tradition for a French cultural or historicist "home consciousness." If the tradition begins with the acceptance of the constitution (*ab urge condita*), the balance between new and old will be entirely different. The constitution is amended but never abolished. If it were, Americans would lose their home. Countless French constitutions were annulled; there came another and another. But the existence of "la nation" was never called into question. France remained the home of the French emigrants.

Democratic institutions are the homemakers for Americans, not just because they are democratic institutions, but because they are founded by their own constitution, the framework of their broadest identity. Broad identity is not necessarily abstract. There is such a thing as democracy-experience. Americans have this experience. Their self-understanding is presented by the court drama, in the confrontation of persecution and defense, and in the unanimous verdict of the jury. Their ideal is embodied in the man or woman of civic courage; their political truth comes from the newspapers, irrespective of ethnic background, native language, local customs, or the kind of music they prefer to listen to. These experiences are sensually dense since they provide excitement, cause suffering and joy, and will be remembered.

Michelman, one of the most representative American communitarians, once said that democracy has to be regained every day. This is so, and it is a deep truism. Yet perhaps this deep truism rings a different bell in Europe than in America, at least for the time being.

Just the other day a friend asked me to describe my experiences in America. I did so. After listening for a while my friend exclaimed "but this is Tocqueville!" "Of course," I answered, "nothing has changed since Tocqueville." This does not mean nothing has happened. But the course political events take in America is very similar to those in a pre-modern body politic, such as, for example, the Roman republic. This pattern differs radically from the pattern of historical changes that Europe underwent during the same centuries of the common calendar. While Europe lived history, America already lived post-history. The exceptions are the two World Wars when America entered into direct political contact with European and Asian history.

In America nothing has changed; democracy had to be re-gained every day. Violence was rampant; society pushed the pendulum of modernity in one direction, almost to the point of self-destruction. Then, the pendulum was pushed back, and a momentary balance was restored. In America we have encountered, in the last two hundred years, a world Hegel saw settle the apocalypse of the French Revolution. Negation is built into the system. And the system is also a system of *Sittlichkeit*, yet a system of *Sittlichkeit* without the (European) third home. This is why the majority is regarded as an ethical

authority. The value is put on consent, not dissent, just as prior to the development of modernity.

The democratic constitution is a home that one cannot carry on one's back. One is at home through one's daily practices and commitments. In this respect, the fourth home is like the first, space bound. It could be represented as a gigantic Campo dei Fiori. But a gigantic Campo is unlike the Roman Campo. In the Roman Campo every person, every face is familiar. On the gigantic Campo everyone is a loner. Still this is not so, for this gigantic Campo is divided into small farms, called grassroot movements, lobbies or communities.

Since a democratic constitution must be re-established every moment, one could say, without exaggeration, that one who lives in this home is at home in the absolute present. There is no other past than the past of the present, and no future, just the future of the present. Maybe, this development signals the return to normalcy. Europeans were seeking their home in history for about two centuries; they lived in their grand narratives; this seems to be over. The American democracy never needed a grand narrative. American citizens were in this respect like Athenian citizens or the citizens of the Roman republic. Yet all the other cards are now dealt in an entirely new way. The ancients had a common metaphysical home. They headed towards an appointed destiny that they received at birth. They were bound to their genus, to their ethnos, and to their tribe. Modern men and women are contingent and suffer or enjoy all the consequences and from the enumerated determinations above they receive none. But what one does not receive by birth one can still achieve by choice.

It had been indicated, that the gigantic Campo dei Fiori, called American democracy, has not changed since its conception, although many things have happened since. Not just the constitution, but many other things have been amended; it is just that the ways in which society copes with conflicts and with the dramas remained the same. The gigantic Campo had always been divided into small Campos, small camps, communities, and pressure groups. It is in and through these little Campos that the regression into barbarism constantly takes place. The small homes, where the conflicts of the Big Campo are constantly created and carried out, are, by definition, anti-universalistic. They push their interests and grow big on *ressentiment*. They treat others with suspicion. They mobilize their own camp through suppressing individual taste and opinion. They produce deviants, enemies. They also constitute "races" from ethnic or religious groups. Nothing is simpler, after all, than to produce an alien race. One observes a few features of behavior, gesture, speech of another group, declare them to be repulsive and organic, and a new race is born. In addition to alien religions, ethnic groups, men and women of another color, more recently, in the midst of American democracy, even the other gender is perceived as an alien race.

Thus, it is not just a figure of speech if an American tells you that she is at home in American democracy. Democracy in general is not a home, but one or the other democracy can be, if their citizens, their present founding fathers and mothers, re-found it every day. If there is such a home, it is spatial, for you cannot carry it on your back, and also temporal, insofar as it lives in the absolute present. But a democratic home does not warrant in-itself the end of anti-democratic, even totalitarian mental attitudes, it does not prevent physical violence used as the weapon in the exercise of force. Democracy easily goes with racism; the relapse into barbarism seems to belong to the democratic civilization in a contingent world. If one seeks remedy against intolerance, narrow-mindedness, prejudices, and blind hatred, one should turn to liberalism. But liberalism does not offer a home; it is not a home; it is just a principle, a conviction, and an attitude. One can be a liberal in all homes. Yet, first one needs one. Democracy, as the adequate political form of modernity, could become the home of all moderns, liberals and anti-liberals alike. Europe might be Americanized at this point. The European democracies will then compose a territory, a huge Campo dei Fiori, where the various powers of tolerance and intolerance will fight their battle for ever changing stakes. One can surmise that this is a no win battle on both sides. But one can still hope that hatred, resentment and enmity will not get the upper hand in our home.

HOMEMAKERS OF EUROPE AFTER THE GRAND NARRATIVES

When I began to ponder the question "where are we at home?" I first tried to explore the quality of home-experience. I spoke first about the sensual density of the spatial home-experience, about familiar fragrances, sounds, and things. We carry them in our memory, it is to them that we return. This becomes hardly possible today.

The aspects of the primary home-experience enumerated above come from our daily encounter with things such as: furniture, kitchen utensils, tapestry, toys. While Europe underwent the dramatic and painful transformation from the premodern to the modern social arrangement, the things of the everyday habitat provided constancy. Napoleon's grand army invaded Europe, yet the same watch was inherited from the grandfather by the father and from the father by the son. Not just the mansions of the English gentry but also the cottages of the French peasants remained populated by the same things. When the son returned home from his wanderings, he could find everything at its old place, even if their historical luster was sometimes gone. Interestingly, the more European history has settled down after the new Apocalypse of the Holocaust and the Gulag, the more the things of everyday

habitat began their own historical wandering. The son, who now returns from his wanderings, will not recognize the home of his childhood. There is still remembrance without the possibility of recognition. Thus the tokens of recognition are artificially produced, by photography and in exhibitions, by films (e.g., the German film, *Heimat*), and by nostalgia trips in general. The passion triggered by ecological movements cannot be understood by rational considerations alone. The protection of the environment is also the protection of the home, of the habitat where one could still return.

Home sweet home-but is it so sweet, or has it been so sweet? The familiar fragrance can be the smell of burning flesh. The familiar gesture can be the hand raised to beat. The color can be dark and grey. Home is where we were weeping, but no one listened, where we were hungry and cold. Home was the small circle one could not break through, the childhood that seemed endless, the tunnel without exit. It was, after all, in a world where we all had a home where the metaphor of the earth as the valley of tears so fully described our experience. How good not to return, not even on the couch of the analyst. We can acquire the lightness of Being, the unbearable lightness of Being, just like the woman on the jumbo jet en route to Australia.

"Where are we at home?" The "we" can stand for "we moderns," or "we, moderns in the twenty first century," or, "we European moderns in the twenty first century." "Being at home" can stand for "being at home in space" and "being at home in time." I now reformulate the question: "Where are European moderns in the twenty first century at home in space and in time?"

The answer seems obvious. European moderns are at home in Europe in the twenty first century. But this sounds too simple. In the last two hundred years, all the representative modern European cultures have been stricken by longing; longing for another place, another time, for a real home. Metaphysically uprooted, displaced by historical earthquakes, plagued by dissatisfaction, the home experience of a typical modern European man or woman was plagued by ambiguities. Familiarity was perceived as an alien obstacle. The unfamiliar appeared in the light of the home, of peace and rest, security and love, from Rousseau to Gauguin, up to the third-world romantics jut a few decades ago. Not feeling at home in Europe was a typical home-experience for Europeans. But the fading of the grand narrative, this immanent form of European self-consciousness until recently, signaled the emergence of a less dramatic and less ambiguous European identity. Signs of an "Americanization of Europe" appeared simultaneously.

The waves of the real, not just fictitious, grand narratives are gone, but their results became our tradition. Let me recollect a few of them. We have a "third home," the home of the absolute spirit, and we can still choose to dwell there. In this home, we can be at home at all places and in all times. The single concrete worlds of this third home can hardly be termed "European," for they belong to different national cultures. But the constantly

present possibility to dwell in a third home, or to visit it from time to time, belongs to the home experience of Europeans in general. This constitutes the third and fourth dimension of the European home-experience, and of no other culture. From this view, we could, perhaps reverse the initial question. Instead of asking "Where are we (European-moderns in the twenty first century) at home" we could rather ask: "Who is a European in the twenty-first century and could possibly answer: "A European is a person who can be at home in the third home (of the absolute spirit) or who visits this home regularly." Needless to say, not only these kinds of people are Europeans, but they are the homemakers of Europe. The common market or the European Parliament does not make Europe—the cats of the third home do.

The habitat, the time-space continuity, the tribe and the gods of the tribe, they, together, made a pre-modern home. This home is now preserved and occasionally restored in the third home, in the living museum of recollection. To preserve the pre-modern home experience offers here, we saw, a third and fourth dimension of our postmodern lives. Restoration work is a European invention. It is also here where the idea of the new "urbs" was conceived, yet the modern urbs was erected on virgin land. Past is preserved there in the absolute present. Democracy is the absolute present, encompassing the past of the present and the future of the present. The third world, however, preserves the past in the present. The future that reaches *beyond* the future of the present, is gone. In the premodern home, the future was always there, as the future of the place, of the tribe, of the gods of the tribe. The grand narrative made a brilliant effort to stretch our imagination to the future beyond our horizon. Yet this is gone. Modern men and women are incarcerated into the prison house of historicity, and they became also aware of it. In the broadest sense, we can call precisely this prison of historicity our home.

Where are we at home? We can be everywhere, that is, nowhere, free-floating in the absolute present. Geographic promiscuity is a possibility open to all, but our time we cannot choose. Moreover, it is eminently the experience of universal contemporaneity (which is not caused, only easily disseminated, by telecommunication) that triggers the wanderlust of the geographic promiscuity. The cosmopolitanism of things we use (cars, televisions, kitchen utensils, magazines and the like) and the phantasies that surround them, belong to the experience of universal contemporaneity. *All geographically promiscuous people become geographically promiscuous for different reasons (each group or person has a different motivation), but geographic itself became a world-phenomenon.* As geographic second and third marriages do. There is no more "till death do us part" in matters of "being at home." This is not simply a metaphor. Where my family is, there is my home. When, at the first sign of discomfort, marriages break down, a home is lost without much ado.

But in a contingent world all possibilities are open. One can choose to settle in a kind of Campo dei Fiori, one can choose not ever to settle, and one can also choose to be at home in different places at once, without becoming geographically promiscuous. One can, after all, be at home in one's spatial home, in the absolute present as one's temporal home, in the realm of absolute spirit, that is in the third home, and also in the democratic culture of one's own constitution simultaneously. Yet also in one's own national language, in the habits of one's ethnic group, in the community of one's religion, within the walls of one's alma mater, or in the intimate circle of one's family. One of the homes can be carried on one's back, to the other one desires to return, the third one has never been left behind.

If all these make sense, then the question, "where are we at home?" is wrongly put, at least if the referent of the "we" is modern Europeans in the twenty-first century. There are, perhaps, no two people who would give exactly the same answer to the question. The density of our sensual home-experience varies from home to home. One home is closer to the logic of the heart, the other to the logic of reason. There is a multiplicity of hierarchy among these homes, crisscrossing one another. This hierarchy is strictly personal and not normative. At least it should not be normative; non-normativity is the norm. For if the hierarchy of home-experiences is established normatively, the contemporary modern culture enters the state of civil war. I can perceive my ethnic belonging as my main home among all of my homes. But if members of my community so command that I should prefer this home or to resign all the others, then we enter the state of civil war. No subjective preference, but normative insistence, triggers civil wars among ethnic, religious, and other communities and groups. Democracy, as we saw with the example of America, is not a safeguard against weakly sublimated, or not sublimated violence. I mentioned liberalism as a possible antidote.

Liberal principles allow that everyone answer the question "Where are you at home" in his or her own way. One is at home here rather than there, the other in reverse. One is at home on the Campo dei Fiori and does not care the slightest for the Porta Pia, whereas the other is at home nowhere, if not there where her cat lives. Homes become matters of subjective preference and the danger of fundamentalism, of the new civilized barbarism, is so prevented.

Although the question "Where are you at home" may be answered by each person separately, and the hierarchy of home experience may be idiosyncratic for each, homes themselves are not. Homes are shared, and they are shared on all levels. To live in a home, be it one's nation, one's ethnic community, one's school, one's family, or even the "third home" is not just an experience but also an activity. In acting, one also follows standards, one complies with formal requirements, one participates in a language game. X can say "this is my home," but if others (members of the family, religious

community and so on) do not cosign the sentence, he will not be at home there. In a home one needs to be accepted, welcome, or at least tolerated. All homes are tyrannical to a point; they require commitment, a sense of responsibility and also some assimilation. The question is not the quantity but the kind of assimilation. If the demand for assimilation comes with a hidden or overt demand that the person should dissimilate himself or herself from all other homes of his or her personal preferences, the quest for assimilation is not just mildly tyrannical but becomes strongly illiberal. This is equally true on all levels. It is true whether the nation state pushes for assimilation so that subjects should dissimilate themselves from their ethnic community, or whether ethnic groups push for assimilation and put pressure on their members to dissimilate themselves from a national culture. Much has been said lately about the tyrannical inclination of universalism and justly so, but particularism can be as tyrannical as universalism. They are just two sides of the same coin.

Not all homes require commitment or responsibility. Once when my plane flew over the Mediterranean, and I saw below me the blue of the sea stretching between the grey contours of the continents and islands where my cultures had originated, I was grasped by strong emotions for I felt that here I had encountered my deepest, primordial home. This was a free-floating experience, it did not oblige me. But the homes where one really lives and dwells, do oblige. In the world of the absolute present even the song of the nightingale and the shade of the chestnut tree oblige, for we cannot take it for granted that they will be here tomorrow.

Where are we then at home? Each of us is in the world of our self-appointed and shared destiny.

Index

About the Author and Editor

John Rundell

is associate professor of philosophy at the University of Melbourne.

Agnes Heller

is an influential and internationally recognized philosopher and frequently writes on such diverse topics as ethics, modernity, and political theory. In 2005 she was awarded the Sonning Prize. She is currently the Hannah Arendt Visiting Professor of Philosophy and Political Science at The New School in New York City.