CULTURAL STUDIES

A series of books edited by Samir Dayal

Crisis of the European Subject
Julia Kristeva

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Crisis of the ~~European~~ Subject

Julia Kristeva

Translated by Susan Fairfield
With an Introduction by Samir Dayal

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Cultural Studies: Series Overview

In recent decades, the field of cultural studies has emerged as a vigorous forum for the study of culture in the era of globalization. Other Press's new series on cultural studies offers fresh and provocative approaches to the study of contemporary public and private life, focusing particularly on the intersections of literature, film, psychoanalysis, philosophy, and postcolonial theory.

If there is a single defining feature of the field of cultural studies, it is the energetic interdisciplinarity that has galvanized and enriched the many narrower fields that are articulated together under the broad rubric. The series is motivated by a conviction that the reach of even such a broad field can be widened by fostering a wider critical conversation on race, gender, sexuality, and citizenship as it is actually experienced in daily life.

Books in the series will reflect this interdisciplinarity. Some will enliven, broaden, and challenge the central tenets of the field, recasting the foundational ideas of self or subject, the family, or the nation. Others will put in fresh perspective the unstable and contested terrains of

"the political" in multicultural societies—societies being transformed by immigration and other demographic shifts. Still others will track the vicissitudes of subjectivity in a world undergoing changes brought about by globalization: the clash of cultural values in transnational contexts; the different charge of sexuality in Western and in non-Western visual media; or the asymmetries in the understanding of psychic life in different cultures inhabiting the same metropolitan zone.

The series seeks to present analyses of contemporary cultural phenomena, analyses that recognize the continuities of the past with the present, and of the present with the future. At the same time it is important that these analyses respect the materiality and specificities of cultures and the often contradictory ways in which a given culture is "performed" by those in whom it is embodied. This multifaceted goal entails responding on many fronts to the challenges and ideas that have emerged, at the dawn of the new millennium, as definitive of modernity and contemporary experience.

Introduction

Samir Dayal

Julia Kristeva's *Crisis of the European Subject* inaugurates a new series on Cultural Studies published by Other Press. It is especially appropriate to begin with a book by a major thinker and psychoanalyst of our time who takes on some of the key questions concerning the global community as we enter a new millennium. In the four essays collected here for the first time, Kristeva reflects on contemporary cultural issues that pose a challenge to European society and to the European subject. Her fundamental question is, What will it mean to be European in a new, unified Europe, and in a new, increasingly globalized world? Such a question, Kristeva recognizes, requires not only a sense of the complex European past but also a recognition of the delicacy of raising it in a time when the nation and nationalism are focal points for a great deal of controversy across the globe.

Kristeva's book is also an appropriate beginning for the new series because the series seeks to draw attention to the elective affinity between psychoanalysis and Cultural Studies. Both of these approaches to understanding cultural life are equally concerned with the theme of subjectivity, even if that concern is expressed in different ways. Both have a stake in understanding the way the subject is interpellated within an ideological formation as they explore the subject's potential for

resisting the power (or the spell) of dominant ideologies. Both seek to keep abreast of the proliferation of hybrid subject positionings in an increasingly globalized cultural economy. This disciplinary affinity of psychoanalysis and Cultural Studies is all the more noteworthy in an era in which symbolic paternal authority (as represented in psychoanalysis by the oedipal complex) is widely thought to be in decline, as Slavoj Žižek observes in his recent work, *The Ticklish Subject*. Psychoanalysis has a greater, not a smaller contribution to make today to understanding the place of the subject in contemporary society. As Žižek puts it, "psychoanalysis and Marxism, as a rule dismissed by theorists of the risk society as outdated expressions of the first-wave modernization (the fight of the rational agency to bring the impenetrable Unconscious to light; the idea of a self-transparent society controlled by the 'common intellect')," have much to say about the "impact of the emerging new societal logic on the very fundamental status of subjectivity" (p. 341) and about the socioeconomic origins of what has been called the "risk society" (Beck 1992).

It is difficult to think of a prominent contemporary thinker who writes more evocatively about subjectivity, especially about the subject in contemporary Western Europe, than Julia Kristeva. In the four essays in this volume, she sees with unsurpassed clarity what is at stake for that subject at the dawn of a new millennium,

and for European culture at the cusp of the new, globalized century. The original implied audience of her reflections was clearly European, but, gathered together here for the first time, these reflections appeal to a wider readership and require a wider global contextualization, implicitly invoking the non-Western world on the one side and the United States on the other.

The Essays

Kristeva's work, it is often remarked, tends to divide itself into three parts: semiotics, psychoanalysis, and politics (Moi 1986, p. vi). The essays in this collection are devoted largely to contemporary political issues, although psychoanalysis and semiotics are always inextricably woven into Kristeva's prose. Kristeva's main problematic has to do with the subject and the *polis* ("the political"). Yet many of the ideas and motifs developed elsewhere in Kristeva's *oeuvre* also appear here, with a clarity that (by contrast with so much that goes by the name of either academic or journalistic prose) should prove equally inviting to the specialist and to the general reader.

The collection opens with a meditation on Hannah Arendt, a thinker who for Kristeva has a particular resonance, because she too had thought deeply about the European subject under totalitarianism, and because her

thinking remains suggestive under the rule of a different total regime of capital and information technology. In her second essay, "The Meaning of Equality," Kristeva contemplates European citizenship, a difficult and highly charged issue, in a world with increasingly porous national and economic borders, and revisits the argument for gender parity in the context of universalist theories of the citizen/subject. The focus of the third chapter, "Europe Divided: Politics, Ethics, Religion," is on the current status and future for the European citizen/subject as Europe faces major political, economic, and social change from within and on a global level. The final chapter, "Bulgaria, my Suffering," envisages a regeneration of a European subjectivity in crisis. Returning in imagined sympathy to her country of origin, Kristeva also turns to explore in a moving and extraordinarily personal way the promise of Bulgarian Orthodox Christian tradition for the damaged subject's healing, despite Bulgaria's "suffering" as a nation that has only seemed to be intensified in the post-communist geopolitical vacuum, and after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Arendt, Narrative, and the Psychic Life of the Subject

To focus only on the historical or the sociopolitical dimension of civic life would be to externalize the crisis of the European subject. Kristeva's psychoanalytically in-

spired reflections on the crisis of European subjectivity take the interiority of subjectivity to be the key to understanding the crisis, and her approach is predicated on the psychoanalytic diacritic that the subject is always a divided subject and always a subject of language (1989a, p. 265). To review these features of her work is to freshly see that she, almost alone among the major commentators on the contemporary crisis of the European subject, highlights the psychic economy of the subject as the obverse of the political economy.

Thus, in "Hannah Arendt, or Life Is a Narrative," while Kristeva's stated goal is to account for certain ambiguities and problems in Arendt's thought, she proleptically articulates an authentic, and post-oedipal, European subjectivity. Just as for Arendt the individual European subject was imperiled by totalitarianism, for Kristeva that subject today is confronted by the prospect of globalization and must imagine its regeneration. Kristeva shows that Arendt thematizes the polis, and the agency of the citizen-subject within it, as being animated by the act of narrative. Narrative, in Arendt's view, enables the public sphere to function as a space where shared interests as well as conflicting agendas can emerge; narrative is the indispensable medium for the institution and preservation of civil society and European democracy. Kristeva adduces Arendt's writings as an exemplary commingling of political commentary and sustained reflection on the centrality of narrative

to human society (narrative being conceived as a common story, a shared meaning-making).

Kristeva stresses that Arendt does not simply present an aesthetic argument for narrative but envisages the very transfiguration of the political by revealing the *supplementary* relation of narrative to the polis. Without narrative, the political remains incomplete. Thus, according to Kristeva, the charge of Arendt's thought is to summon forth a wisdom embodied within a "veritable politics of narration"—*phronesis*—as distinguished from the *sophia*, or theoretical wisdom, that has traditionally been the presumed modus operandi and avowed object of the philosopher. It is *phronesis*, or practical reason, as distinct from *sophia* that completes ontology. Phronesis is ultimately superior to sophia because sophia is no guarantee against the *thaumazein*, the "mute amazement of the philosopher" when he is staring in the face of the unnameable: death.

As Kristeva develops Arendt's notion of the transfiguration of the political through the agency of narrative, it becomes evident that a distinction between *poiesis* (the activity of producing) and *praxis* (action in a socially or politically significant sense) is foundational for Arendt. But it is a distinction with a well established provenance, growing out of Aristotle's *Poetics* and *Nicomachean Ethics* and traversing Martin Heidegger's Platonism. Poiesis, because it ends in the production of works or products, tends to reify human experience and

lends itself to a utilitarianism that, in an Aristotelian calculus, is inferior to the autotelism of authentic praxis. That is to say, authentic praxis, as Aristotle had argued in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, is its own end and justification (p. 309). Kristeva finds a confirmation of her credo in Arendt's emphasis on the autotelic nature of Aristotelian praxis, which includes activities that are not goal oriented and "leave behind no work" (*par' autas erga*) but find their fulfillment in themselves. This autotelic and self-determining praxis constitutes the true polis, and therefore is the essence of the political as well as the foundation of life for the human being as political animal (*zöon politikon*). It is in action interpreted as "capacity for beginning" that "the human condition of individuation is actualized."

This is an idea Kristeva finds Arendt confirming, just as Hegel confirms it in *Reason in History* (p. 35). The freedom of the free subject, Kristeva suggests, consists in autocommencement (self-determination) and reflexivity (judging and representing, especially judging and reflexively representing one's own subjective experience). Reframing these ethics in a cultural context, Kristeva's argument is that the threat to free subjectivity in contemporary Europe lies in the imminent loss of "the capacity to elaborate an inner life and communicate it, whether through a free activity or a creative one." A life lived reflexively, and as praxis, enables the continual regeneration of the subject. As if recasting the philo-

sophical adage that an unexamined life is not worth living, Kristeva holds that what impoverishes life is a failure to grasp it reflexively, through narrativization. Such a life is mere biological subsistence rather than an authentic existence, "simple *zoé*" as Arendt put it, following Aristotle, rather than *bios*—a life that is reflexively grasped and lived as praxis. A life that deserves to be described as *praxis* is a life constituted by action. Arendt advocates action, as long as it is narrated action, as the route to authentic subjectivity.

The existentialist echo is entirely deliberate. In trying to highlight Arendt's development of the importance of narrative to political and personal life, Kristeva painstakingly traces the way in which Arendt takes up the Heideggerian *Abbau* (the strategy of deconstruction) and repetition of metaphysics, and other Heideggerian themes of *Erschlossenheit* (revelation) and *Unverborgenheit* (uncovering), as well as Heidegger's emphasis that human freedom depends on taking into account the conditions of finitude, contingency, and worldlessness, Kristeva demonstrates that Arendt seeks to knot these various strands into a new textual density and thereby to transvalue Heideggerian existentialism, to show its potential for a fuller conceptualization of the political. Most particularly, the polis in Arendt is conceptualized as a site of inter-est, as Kristeva puts it (exploiting a Heideggerian pun on *inter-esse*)—a kind of literalized, radical intersubjectivity *avant la lettre.*

Admittedly, narrative can also be manipulated for ideologically questionable purposes. But since poetry is "unworldly" it lends itself neither to reification nor to utilitarian or propagandistic ends. As a pure form of narrative, poetry better permits us to see the centrality of narrative to civic life. It is therefore "the most human art." On the other hand, if it is so unworldy in its pure form, how can it have an effective role in the polis? How can narrative be the source of authentic praxis? This is a question Kristeva engages by developing Arendt's notion of the "inter-ested" space of the polis. The polis is the intermediate space where beings (*ta onta*) come to be as free, authentic subjects, and where heroes can inhabit their heroism, where they can "reveal" who they are—not just what they are. Arendt emphasizes that if "ontology" is understanding of being, it is an understanding of how we are *who* we are. And who we are is above all defined and determined in the field of *praxis*, or action.

Actions, in particular heroic actions, great and shining deeds (*megala kai lampra* in the words of Democritus cited by Kristeva) must be re-membered by the narrator/spectator to give retrospective meaning to the action; by extension all experience needs remembering—in other words reflexivity—to endow it with its full meaning. However, if it is narrative that remembers and embodies the meaning of experience, the *address* of narrative is to the reader or spectator. It is the reader

or spectator who witnesses and thus gives meaning to action in the act of being an active recipient of narrative, or a participant in shared narrative. As Kristeva explains, "it is not the actors but the spectators, if they are capable of thought and recollection, who make the polis a creative organization of memory and/or of history, histories, stories."

And there can be no more sensitive witnesses to the history of human action than the great poets and writers. Indeed, as Kristeva notes, Arendt herself invokes Randall Jarrell, Robert Lowell, and Emily Dickinson along with Rilke, Yeats, Auden, Mandelstam, Proust, Kafka, Valéry, Sarraute, and Brecht. For Arendt the pantheon of witnesses to the progress of human history must include the great philosophers, who were poets, too, after a fashion, in particular Nietzsche but without question also Heidegger, not to mention the line of thinkers from Plato and Aristotle through Kant and (at least implicitly) Hegel. What is remarkable in Arendt's work as a political thinker, then, is her fundamental commitment to art, to language as the matrix of experience. If narrative is an art as well as praxis, it is art that can provide the best witness to human experience and action, and the creation of a truly free public space would itself be a work of art. But Kristeva suggests that even Arendt fails to appreciate fully the superiority of the poetical over and above the philosophical mode of narrative. Kristeva by contrast values poetry above all else.

Even at the level of style, Kristeva's work is often rich with what might be called a poetics of indirection, allusiveness, and elusiveness.

Why is this relevant to Kristeva's discussion of the contemporary crisis of subjectivity in Europe? The relevance emerges if one recognizes that a premise of Kristeva's argument is that Europe today lacks a narrative, a discourse comprehensive enough and particular enough to give meaning to the diversity and the specificities of European subjectivity. This is what is being obscured by much of the excited talk about unification and globalization. The subject's self-sufficiency and sovereignty, if not dignity, is being undermined by a global cultural logic that flattens and homogenizes all subjects. This culture of "forgetting" threatens ultimately to obliterate particular cultures as well—this is an argument usually applied in discussions of marginal cultural identities that are overwhelmed by the encroachment of hegemonic cultures, but Kristeva shows that it is also true of cultures that are not described as marginal in world-historical terms. Arendt's emphasis on anamnesis (remembering) through narrative is therefore attractive to Kristeva. For Arendt, as we have seen, the emphasis on action is the revelation of the who. It is the who, the subject-agent of history, that should not be forgotten.

Arendt's example can therefore be instructive in an age that has witnessed not only what we might loosely

call the desubjectivation of the (European) subject but also the ongoing depoliticization of the public sphere and the decline of the general public's participation in the public discourse. Such a depoliticization is not only the effect of apathy or consumerism, it also occurs as a result of ideological manipulation of public discourse. This effect can be seen for instance when the sphere of the family is cordoned off and "family values" are reproduced as being matters exclusively of private morality and private "character." One way to resist such a depoliticization of the family is to reinvest it with its full political density and with its full psychic resonance. Is this not the ultimate message of Kristeva's insistence on the need to re-cognize (by a fresh narrativization as it were) the role of the mother, the more so precisely at a time when the reign of the Oedipus complex over the family dynamic is widely assumed to be in decline?

But what gives piquancy this broad argument about Arendt and the significance of narrative to redeem the human condition—indeed, to make the human condition human—is a psychoanalyst's conviction or instinct that it is "talk" (surely one permissibly naïve interpretation of "narrative") that renders human intersubjective existence meaningful. It is also narrative as "talk" or public discourse that sustains civic life and the public sphere. The polis is the space for the free agency of a subject, where the subject begins from himself or herself. The public sphere, in Arendt's Heideggerian conceptualization of it, is the clearing in and into which the subject emerges.

Plurality and the Polis

Kristeva acutely remarks that Arendt, faithful to Aristotle, emphasizes difference and plurality more than does Heidegger, just as she emphasizes the network of human relations (the polis) more than does Heidegger, with his ontological obsession with Being. Kristeva suggests that the obsession with *Dasein* "suppresses plurality" and promulgates a "unanimous and mystical passion" of the people, *das Volk*. Arendt's idea of praxis, even as autotelic activity with no end other than itself, is less solipsistic and more suspicious of tyrannically singularist understandings of how human meaning can be constructed in civil society. And this is ultimately why Kristeva champions Arendt.

It is well to step back from this line of argument to see how fundamental the emphasis on plurality is for all of Kristeva's work. Her preoccupation with pluralization or plurality is as vital to her argument in this book as her argument for "polymorphism," difference, and "openness" has been throughout her career. And the argument for plurality appears throughout in a variety of theoretical registers in support of the theory of the constitution of the subject. Writing elsewhere about the novel, Kristeva has stressed a Bakhtinian understanding of its

dependence on the carnivalesque and the dialogical, its potential to undermine presumptions about the fixity and stability of identity and therefore to subvert attempts to police the citizen-subject. She has exhorted us to be mindful of the polyphony and intertextuality of language and about the polymorphic plasticity of subjectivity (see for instance 1993, p. 63; 1990, p. 12; 1984, p. 182; 1980, esp. pp. 64–91; and 1969, p. 194; see also "Editor's introduction," 1996, p. xii). This emphasis on the pluralization of subjectivity has strong, and generally progressive, implications for a politics, for a vision of the polis where social justice is realizable.

The complication that Kristeva emphasizes as a coda to Arendt is the "intrapsychic" dimension of plurality. This complication is necessary, Kristeva reckons, because Arendt herself overlooks the intrapsychic and historical necessity for periodic restructuration and renarrativization of the polis and a resubjectivization of the self. This could almost mean approaching the pattern of melancholia at the social and the individual level, from which a regeneration (Kristeva's notion of *mourning* is analogous) or turning could take place. This trope of a crisis from which the subject (re)turns is true to the etymological origin of "crisis," *krinein*. The transvaluation she pursues is a critical turning of the subject in crisis towards the subject's resubjectivization. It is the imaginative act, including its "poetic deployment in a narration," that enables us to move through crisis, just

as an individual could move through melancholia or a culture through collective depression, and through the process of mourning become able to confront the specters that haunt us, to "think horror." This is not yet a mere irrationalism, but an "enlarged rationalism" that is in turn the ground for a rare "enlightened atheism, without nihilism." Yet beyond even narrative, the last refuge of the human is poetry for Kristeva, and this even Arendt could not bring herself to affirm. But then, as Kristeva notes, neither could Primo Levi affirm poetry in the face of "irremediable disenchantment" with human plurality.

Kristeva stresses the discovery or production of meaning through participation in the pluralized public sphere. Yet, as she recognizes in these pages, the public sphere is not a space of pure Heideggerian *aletheia*: it is not a forum for the effortless "appearance" of truth or social justice. Rather, it is an agonistic space, constituted through narrativization of the political, a process that cannot but speak the truth of human conflicts. This aspect of Kristeva's argumentation is an index of the relevance of this book to contemporary political discussion. The agonistic conception of the public sphere has been the topic of much vigorous discussion among political theorists (see, for one preeminent instance, the collection edited by Seyla Benhabib (1996), entitled *Democracy and Difference*). As many of these theorists observe, the agon of intersubjective or intercultural communi-

cation is the foundation of community—whether in a domestic or a global frame.

This returns us to the primacy accorded to narrative as supplementary to the political. The *agon* of the political is also a struggle to narrativize, to grasp experience and the spirit of praxis in reflexivity. Both these valences of the agon are active in Kristeva's usage. If the subject is always and only a subject of language, then without narrativization, experience is dead to the subject (it is merely what "happens" to the subject) just as the subject remains dead to the meaning of experience (the subject is unable to represent it and therefore to understand it reflexively). The analogy Kristeva develops to represent this challenge of representation is that of Orpheus, who must choose between Eurydice, or the underworld, and the world of language. To narrate (that is, to re-present) the sensory world of subjective experience in its fullest meaning, the creative imagination must also "desensorialize" it: Eurydice can be reached only through the dying of the everyday world. And narrative can come into its own only through the relinquishment of Eurydice. This is recognizably a turn on Adorno's argument for the condition for music to come into its own. Music, Adorno insists, is irreducibly of this world. The maker of music, even if he has been vouchsafed a transporting vision of an other world, must forsake it to produce music. It is precisely the loss of a world glimpsed in a rare moment of unworldly

vision that compels the musician to make music and the poet poetry. An angel or god would need neither music nor poetry, let alone politics, because he would have perfection.

Gender Parity and Universalism

And what of Eurydice? What about the woman in all of this? Perhaps, Kristeva reasons, the only way to recover the full meaning of the subject's sensory experience is to "make Eurydice into an Orpheus, able to tell the story of (narrativize) desensorialization." But she goes on to say that "Eurydice, the sensory, and the feminine are not volatilized under the pen of our political narrator." They are not sacrificed. They are reflexively recuperated as metaphors. The political too can be recovered, and the free subject can be provisionally completed, by narrativization. Kristeva can thus conclude with Arendt that there is no life (*bios*) "except in and through narrative rebirth."

Yet if it is only Orpheus who can sing, or narrate, perhaps Eurydice and Orpheus—women and men—can never achieve precise equality. But should they? However we answer this question, we cannot forget Arendt's own sense that being a citizen was more important than being a man or a woman. Ensuring full citizenship would have had greater political urgency for Arendt, a German Jew facing persecution by the ascendant fascism of the

time, than ensuring gender parity. For Kristeva, too, there are some feminist issues of greater moment than others. In "The Meaning of Equality," Kristeva takes up the political issue of gender parity (*parité*) in political representation. There is no question for Kristeva that women and other minorities are structurally excluded from full citizenship within the borders of most Western nations, to say nothing of the developing world. But for Kristeva the issue is not so much a specifically feminist concern as it is a concern for social justice, a concern for the dignity of the individual.

Citizenship in the West is often understood to be founded upon a universalist premise (Rosanvallon and colleagues 1988, p. 115). And it is this principle of universalism that Kristeva believes is deserving of attention from feminists and other thinkers. Universalism in Kristeva's words "descends in a straight line from the One, the unity of the Intellect and Being that, ever since Plato's metaphysics, and passing through the autarchy of late Hellenism, constituted the foundation of Roman citizenship." Metaphysics underlies the "cult of the One," as a sacred law undergirding appeals to universal principles, because it presumes the unity of Intellect and Being in any approach to Truth and Beauty. But debates in the public sphere tend to obfuscate this cult of the One. Furthermore, this "One," being monological, is vulnerable in its exclusivity. It depends on exclusion, and singularist regimes must expend considerable energy to

remain impermeable to those elements that threaten the purity of the One. As postcolonial and other contemporary theory has shown powerfully, each reiteration of power distorts its unity, betrays its anxiety about its own integrity. Varieties of nationalism are one instance of the attempt to maintain the integrity of the One in the face of increasing globalization. The question is how to avoid the pitfalls of nationalism.

Kristeva argues for the primacy of a nation-preserving *esprit général* over against the particularist claims that undergird identity politics, such as the claims of women and minority constituencies. In an earlier work (in *Nations without Nationalism*, for instance), Kristeva has aligned herself with Montesquieu and against the contemporary multiculturalists on the left who "flatter" immigrants and run down the "national reality"; she has expressed support for an *esprit général* that normally takes precedence over particular rights and to which everyone including the immigrant can pledge herself or himself under the sign of the nation. This is worth recalling because it sets out clearly what it means, for Kristeva, to belong to a nation—to be French, for instance—and to defend the erosion of the nation against the depredations of globalization and European unification. In this connection it is interesting that she distances herself from Johann Gottfried von Herder's *Volksgeist* (*Nations without Nationalism* pp. 28, 33), while at another point mentioning with approval Samuel Huntington,

who is famous for recently writing about the imminent clash of civilizations, an apocalyptic vision of world war on the racial and cultural fronts.

Kristeva's arguments for an *esprit général* must nevertheless be understood in the context of her allegiance to universalism and pluralism as counters to the regime of the One. This double voicing aligns Kristeva with a particular kind of universalist. As Françoise Collin has observed, some women who are universalists are at the same time essentialists: they believe that both men and women belong to the human species and therefore deserve equal consideration as citzens too, but they demand parity because they believe only women can truly represent women (Rosenvallon and colleagues 1988, p. 115). In the case of Kristeva, this is not evidence of confusion. For Kristeva what is crucial to see is that this essentialist presumption of singularity (under the rule of the One) is a false presumption. A historical perspective will reveal that the West has experienced social changes that have effected an evolution in the idea of citizenship. Today policies on citizenship are more open to plurality. As Collin observes, "the call for parity injects new life into the prematurely closed debate between the idea of the One and the idea of the two . . . [and] calls into question the monism of democratic 'universalism'—without, of course, admitting the big bad wolf of American multiculturalism" (pp. 123–124).

The universalist idea of citizenship, while in principle gender neutral, actually relegates women to a secondary

or marginal status when it does not simply exclude or overlook them. Universalist notions of citizenship often suppress the issue of the status of migrants and other undocumented persons. Thus Kristeva returns here to the curious structural location of the stranger (he or she who is made exorbitant by the universalist conceptualization of citizenship), the stranger having long been a personal and theoretical icon in Kristeva's thinking, particularly in her book *Strangers to Ourselves* (1991).

This argument reveals a critical move in Kristeva's rhetoric. Whether she is writing about the marginal location of women with respect to the universalist idea of the citizen or about the supplemental relation of Bulgarian subjectivity to European subjectivity as such, the thrust of her argument takes the form of a call to recast the European citizen/subject and to transvalue the values to sustain Europe within the globalized world order through the agency of the outsider. In the process universalism—commonly but often deceptively construed in terms of the "general interest" or common weal that is de facto culturally hegemonic and slanted in favor of men—itself needs to be transvalued so that it becomes more respectful of a plurality of subjectivities and more wary of its exclusions.

This possibilist and even utopian spirit of Kristeva's reflections on parity emerges as modulated through another leitmotif of her thought. Just as she has written in the past about the maternal, the "semiotic" and the

"chora" (1980, p. 133) to emphasize the centrality of the mother in the emergence of subjectivity, here, in the essay entitled "The Meaning of Equality," she makes the centrality of the mother–child relationship the medium for a transvaluation of values, for the "free fulfillment of each woman and an essential contribution to civilization." She argues that the mother's love for the child fleshes out, while giving new meaning to the religio-civic ideal of "Love thy neighbor as thyself" so that it becomes a dramatization of ethical praxis in the psychoanalytic sense. The mother's love for her child is an ideal but not merely idealized virtue. It provides a universal instance of the realization of the ideal: the subject's constitution by means of an openness to the other and a relational, "intertextual" or intersubjective construction of meaning. In the fullest sense this is how we ought to understand what she has termed the "civilizing" role that mothers play (see also 1996, p. 10). The mother's love for the child enlarges the universalist principle of unconditional or unselfish love for another subject, and so functions as an exemplum of love and of intersubjectivity. Fully recognizing and respecting women in their difference can therefore transvalue universalism itself and foster what Kristeva describes as a "new thinking about the human race."

This grand project is continuous with Kristeva's ambition to open up possibilities for the regeneration of the subject in a time when the subject's "symbolic and imaginary capacities have become atrophied" (Lechte, p. 25). Women's social inclusion requires a symbolic and political recognition, and the politics of this recognition can point the way to a better future, a position Kristeva has also developed elsewhere (1995, pp. 201–224, esp. 216 ff.). "The Meaning of Equality" can be described therefore as a meditation on universalism refracted through a psychoanalytic understanding of what Kristeva terms "psychic sexuality."

The Contemporary Crisis of the European Subject

One of the salient features of these essays is Kristeva's interdisciplinary approach. On the one hand, she considers the theoretical question of the contemporary political citizen/subject, and on the other hand she poses the geopolitical question of the post-Enlightenment subject as a figure situated at a crossroads in history. Kristeva approaches European subjectivity not only as a semiotician but as a psychoanalyst; not only as a theorist of gender but as someone who sees in complexly articulated religious traditions of Christianity the potential for the secular redemption or recrudescence of an attenuated subjectivity; and not only as a cultural critic but also as a profoundly "worldly" philosopher returning to the age-old question of the beautiful and the good life. Thus, while Kristeva expresses her concerns and her hopes for Europe's future, she also looks backward, like the

proverbial angel of history, to the legacy of the equally proverbial unfinished project of the Enlightenment.

In the third essay in this volume, entitled "Europe Divided: Politics, Ethics, Religion," Kristeva poses the critical problematic of a divided Europe, ironically, in terms of the prospect of financial and political unification. Such a unification could subsume the ancient and diverse cultures, as well as the economies of Europe, within a greater and (from Kristeva's vantage, lamentably) undifferentiated supranational identity. In this sense, paradoxically, may be a source of fragmentation and a spur to virulent ethnonationialism. The European subject is brought into crisis by this paradox. This is an echo or parody perhaps of the paradox Hannah Arendt saw in the articulation of the global and the national: "When a movement, international in organization, all-comprehensive in its ideological scope, and global in its political aspiration, seizes power in one country, it obviously puts itself in a paradoxical situation" (Arendt 1966, p. 389). But in any event the question of what it means to be a European subject is in fact coming more and more to a crisis. On May 7, 1999, the German Parliament by a vote of 2 to 1 overturned the 86-year-old law of blood (*jus sanguinis*) in favor of a law of territory (*jus soli*) as the standard for German citizenship. France, like the United States, already uses the territorial standard for determining citizenship, but now for the first time anyone born to parents who have lived and worked

on German soil for eight years is eligible for German citizenship. This change has not been greeted with universal alacrity in Germany. European Union rules permit dual citizenship, and this has exacerbated the crisis, as Seyla Benhabib points out, of "old ethnic foundations of citizenship and national identity" (1999, p. 6). In Austria, Georg Haider has recently (in 1999) made considerable gains as a leader of a far-right party hostile to a loosening of such old ethnic foundations of European citizenship.

But the crisis is not a crisis just for the right. Many observers, including some on the left of the political spectrum, have pointed out that globalization exacts a high cost in economic and cultural terms even as it is celebrated by New Democrats (including Tony Blair and Bill Clinton himself, who counted the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement and the approval of the World Trade Organization among his major achievements early on in his tenure as President). Euroskeptics in Britain and advocates of a German third way have for some time taken a dim view of the prospect of a new, unified Europe. In the United States too there is a healthy skepticism about those who make a religion of globalism, even in the pages of progressive publications. Recently Patrick Smith, in *The Nation*, expressed just such a healthy skepticism about the optimistic globalism of Thomas Friedman, columnist for the *New York Times* and author of the recent celebration of

globalism, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree.* Not only have jobs migrated from rich countries with high labor costs to poorer countries with lower labor and other production costs, but the economic downturn of the "Asian Tiger" countries and even Japan have shown how tenuous the promise of globalization remains. In many developing countries globalization has come to be associated with the depredations of international capital as it moves rapidly in and out of the country without a building-up of local infrastructure. In some instances it has also meant the ruthless exploitation of female, child, and sweatshop labor (the case of Nike's labor practices yields an object lesson).

So Kristeva is not alone in feeling that the specter that haunts Europe is fundamental socioeconomic and political change. Writing as a French citizen and as a progressive intellectual, she is concerned with understanding citizenship as historicized within the particular formation of a globalized world and within the theoretical framework of the idea of universalism. But what is different in Kristeva's approach is her insight that an even greater cost may be exacted at the level of the individual psyche. And moreover what Kristeva offers, unlike some of the other critics of European unification, is an extremely nuanced understanding of what could be lost at the collective cultural level, without slipping into the advocacy of a mere protectionism or a virulent nationalism. Even more significantly she, unlike many Euro-

skeptics, undertakes a reflection on what might be required for the European subject's regeneration, without advocating a simple return to a simulacrum of the past, without cleaving in a reactionary way to the shibboleths of the right or of the left. Neither is Kristeva following a trend. Quite the contrary. Kristeva's work evinces a respect for the human person as the ultimate social "glue" and the mainstay of a society built on the democratic values of human rights, equality, and the rule of law. Besides, the dignity of the human being for Kristeva is founded on the value of freedom; it is a matter of taking the individual psyche seriously. Is this not ultimately the justification of a psychoanalytic approach?

Any project of the present kind must attend to the question of perspective and the question of address. Kristeva's essay on a "divided Europe" was originally delivered as an address on the occasion of an European conference whose title, she tells us, turned on the opposition of "they" and "we." We may infer from this and much else in this collection of essays that because her reflections are tightly circumscribed within a European frame of reference and addressed primarily to a European audience, they are invulnerable to the possible charge of Eurocentrism. Kristeva is no doubt well aware that just such a charge was brought against her, in another context, by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988). American readers will inevitably approach Kristeva's challenging position from a different set of premises, but

it would hardly make sense for American readers to expect her to address concerns closest to their own hearts and in their own terms. After all, one of the fascinations of these essays, in their appearance together for the first time, is that they are firmly "situated"—historicized—and at the same time make imperative both a wider view of the study of contemporary cultures and a greater self-reflexivity on the part of Europeans. By the same token, they also invite scrutiny from a wider readership. If Kristeva's premise is that we live in an age of globalization, her approach also makes it imperative for a reader to ask: how might non-Europeans see the questions of European unification and of globalization differently? How might the crisis of the European subject look to someone across the Atlantic (in North America or in Latin America), or indeed to someone in Russia, Africa, the Middle East, or the Asian and Pacific Rim countries?

But even within a European frame of reference, the collection is sensitive to the complexities of European identity. Appropriately, Kristeva's own perspective is an exercise in brinkmanship. No other major thinker writing about this topic confronts the reader more directly than does Kristeva with the threat of the waning of European civilization "as we knew it." But that directness is matched by a panoply of her self-positionings as an academic, as a French public intellectual, as a woman, as a Western European person who is not quite that because she is also a migrant from the margins of Europe.

She counterposes a Cultural Studies perspective on the global cultural and economic landscape and a psychoanalyst's perspective on the dynamics of subjectivity in contemporary European civilization. The point of this plurality of perspectives is to stress that the cultural and economic crisis cannot be adequately addressed unless one attends to the psychoanalytic dynamics of subjectivity. Her brinkmanship is also staged as a fascinating play of identifications in order to complicate ideas about the stranger and about belonging, in that her reflections are at once intimately personal and of some current theoretical interest. In speaking about her own cultural location Kristeva performs, for instance, a dance of identification: France, Bulgaria, or cosmopolitanism?

She luxuriates in such self-positioning on ideological and other borders. But it is no mere game. Her adroit use of paradoxes to cut across cultural and political divides confounds the simple seductions of ideology. Kristeva is interested in teasing out the subtleties of subject-constitution as it is overdetermined by social, political, and especially psychic factors. Density is all. Density means attentiveness to the complexities and even the contradictions of the historical place and time of the subject's interpellation, to the multiple dimensions defining the European subject's crisis today, in the era of globalization and of the waning of the symbolic oedipal father. And density also entails a certain solidity, a discursive resistance to the potentially overwhelming

tide of cultural change sweeping Europe. In emphasizing such a density, Kristeva is registering her distaste for the coarseness and superficiality with which questions of identity and the psychic core of the subject are discussed in the public sphere, not to mention issues of authenticity, gender, and nationhood, all key themes of contemporary cultural debate. For the degeneration—the attenuation—of the shared narrative of public discourse leads inevitably to the decay of civilization, because civilization is robbed of its specificities, its density. At the same time density need not mean a deadening weight; indeed, to balance the density and complexity of her prose, Kristeva strives for a lightness that is almost playful. Her lightness is a kind of insurance against the pieties of the left, but neither is she committed to the nostrums of the right. Rather what we see in operation is an analyst's acutely reflexive self-positioning in an "inter-ested" and ambivalent space that deploys ambivalence precisely to destabilize the calcifications of ideology and the ossifications of power hierarchies.

And it is from her carefully modulated critical stance that Kristeva addresses the crisis of the new divisions threatening European subjectivity. She is able therefore to ask or suggest extremely pertinent questions about the meaning of European identity in an age of increasing globalization and, from her point of view, creeping European Union, but her own subtle, doubled perspective forestalls any sense of the predictability of a satisfactory answer. Nationalism or no? Expanded liberalism or statism (the state being far from defunct in the era of transnationalism)? Europe divided within its continental space or united? If united, should Europe seek to define itself against the non-European East, on the one hand, and on the other hand against the universal reach and the culturally "flattening" effect of Americanization, which is fast becoming the discomfiting synecdoche for Western democratic capitalism? Such questions are always made more tantalizing by Kristeva's manner of posing them. A risk she always takes, quite deliberately for the most part, is that of courting a nostalgia for a Europe where the lines between "them" and "us" seemed clearer to "us," however the "us" was defined, and however anxious that signifier was in fact. This risk is productive as well as provocative in the work of a thinker of Kristeva's sophistication.

Kristeva's tantalizing questions, premised on the articulation of the economic and the cultural, recur in the public discourse about European Union, although they may not carry the same edge. For instance, the former German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, in a recent address, sought to assure audiences that in a unified Europe regional and national identities would not be lost. The people of Europe would continue to be Luxembourgers, Italians, or Germans and at the same time all of them would be Europeans. By contrast Kristeva offers a much more unsettling exploration of what is at stake. She

maintains, for instance, that cultural memory in France is imperiled by the advancement of the new macrological, even macrophage, entity that will be a fully unified Europe; she also raises sharp questions about the impact of non-Western European immigration on a given Western European country's culture. The challenge one faces in raising such issues is: How does one avoid a neo-isolationist position? While for Kohl it is inconceivable that Poland's western border should continue to be the eastern border of the European Union in the long term, Kristeva sees the inclusion of countries "to the east" as posing a set of questions having to do chiefly with infrastructural underdevelopment and "deficiencies in public morality of the countries that have just left totalitarianism." The vicissitudes of identification are utterly neutralized in Kohl's framing of the question (there is no question that Kohl speaks with the confidence of Western Europe behind him), but Kristeva's question of what it means to be a European subject has a personal *frisson*.

Yet it is not just the personal nature of her question that makes her approach compelling: it is the cultural depth that Kristeva is able to uncover the genealogy of the question of the subject, as it were. Kristeva maintains that freedom, the guiding principle of her own reflections on what it means to be European subject, is a (Western) European contribution. Her privileging of the cultural value of freedom constitutes a return to Kant

as the source. Yet in her work it takes on a decidedly Hegelian cast. It is from Kant that she draws the idea of freedom as a positive virtue, for had not Kant affirmed that "man (and every rational being) is an end in himself" (1993, p. 138)? Yet her emphasis on freedom evokes Hegel's rhetorical emphasis on the essence of Spirit, "Being-within-itself" (1953, p. 23). The trajectory of Kristeva's argument retraces the Hegelian argument that Spirit "knows itself," is self-conscious (reflexive), and auto-productive: it is able "to make itself (actually) into that which it is in itself (potentially)" (1953, p. 23). For Hegel, the more self-conscious (reflexive) he or she becomes, the more the human being becomes himself or herself: he or she finds freedom. Insofar as history progresses, it takes the form of the progress of the consciousness of freedom.

Kristeva assumes her self-appointed role as provocateuse with enough seriousness and relish to remark that there are also "downsides" to the European idea of the free subject. These are to be numbered among the "new maladies of the soul," also the title of a book by Kristeva that appeared in 1995. In this connection, too, Hegel's own recognition of an implied contradiction is worth recalling: "The will of the individual is free when it can posit abstractly, absolutely, and in and for itself that which it wills." How then can the universal, the rational in general, be "determinant in history?" (1953, p. 34). By way of an answer he reasons that while action is always

individual, "the universal must be actualized through the particular" and even through the destruction of the particular (p. 35; also pp. 38–39, 43). The world-historical subject, in becoming conscious of his or her freedom, and in acting freely, becomes a citizen of the Hegelian moral state. For Hegel, the "material" in which the "final end of Reason" is to be realized is in the first instance the individual, the willing (volitional) subject as political actor (p. 49). But "the subjective will has also a substantial life, a reality where it moves in the region of essential being and has the essential itself as the object of its existence. This essential being is the union of the subjective with the rational will; it is the moral whole, the State" that ultimately resolves the contradiction between the individual and the universal (pp. 49–51).

If we overlook for the moment Hegel's notion that "our" (modern Western European) models of statehood are to be distinguished from the inferior varieties to be found in "the Orient," Rome, or Greece (p. 61), we might still say that the moral state inevitably tends to contract, or at least crystallize, into a nation state, sometimes in a less benign form than Hegel's rhetoric would suggest. Politics in such cases tends to occlude ethics, and this is something one must always be attentive to. Other important voices have exhorted us to be attentive to the ethical, voices ranging from those in the environmentalist camp to Vaclav Havel (1999), and many of these voices, including Havel, stress the role of the conscience

and the price the subject has to pay for freedom. Kristeva conceives the ethics of the subject in a more psychoanalytic sense, as the duty of the subject to regenerate itself continually through a faithfulness to one's own culturally determined economy of desire, and to be prepared to do so through the crisis of subjectivity. This is really the nub of the psychoanalytic ethics of subjectivity.

The Regeneration of the Subject

How then does Kristeva see freedom as being a key to the regeneration of the European subject? Is there a way to resist or repair the damage sustained by the European subject? To approach an answer to this question with characteristically provocative indirection, Kristeva describes a different division, which is the cleavage of the Slavic societies of the Orthodox tradition from mainstream (Western) European cultural life. Those Slavic cultures are in "disarray." In the wake of the recently discredited Communist regimes, the Slavic peoples who adhere to Orthodox religion may be politically liberated. But they are not free. Their disarray mirrors the incompletion of Western European subjectivity. Yet if European culture and subjectivity are incomplete, Kristeva presents the Eastern European Orthodox traditions as their necessary "supplement" (in the sense that Jacques Derrida used that term). This is the germ of her final essay in this volume, "Bulgaria, my Suffering."

No reader of Kristeva's earlier and formidable body of work can fail to be struck by her unusually intimate tone as she self-deprecatingly and even affectionately upbraids her "fellows" and "brothers" for sloth and "lack of taste" in that moving final essay. No reader can fail to notice the circumspection with which she identifies herself as "cosmopolitan." But again the danger she warns her audience about is the prospect of a cosmopolitan, rootless, "globalized" culture in which national European boundaries become more permeable or even disappear into a unified Europe. This paradox persists, but Kristeva transforms this very thwarting of subjectivity into the condition that enables Bulgaria's depressed subject to emerge as a possible catalyst, or "supplement," for the regeneration of the free European subject.

This is the compensatory logic undergirding Kristeva's "Bulgaria, my Suffering." Here she more fully explores the significance of the "doubleness" of Bulgarian "suffering." Just as she had argued in her influential essay "Women's Time" that women represent the unconscious of the symbolic order, its other (1995, pp. 209–212), so also she presents Orthodox Christianity and "Bulgaria" as representing the unconscious—the other—of Western European Christianity and "Europe." Kristeva suggests that suffering Bulgaria, with its Orthodox Christian spirituality as a bulwark against moral deracination, offers a model for returning the European subject to moral and psychic wholeness and European democracy

to cultural regeneration. On this account Bulgaria is a doubled signifier, a signifier of the feminized but necessary supplement of the normatively masculine if infirm European subject, an answer to the "impasse of the West" ("Why the United States?" in Moi 1986, p. 273).

Why do we need this gendered logic to think the political? Couldn't a gendering of the political, predicated as it is on a notion of the "normal" structure of relations between and among men and women, lend itself to an oppressive hegemony of a heteronormativity, an abjection of other forms of human connection? Further, is this gendered logic not founded on the oedipal structure that, as Kristeva remarks, "in the European domain itself . . . is in grave crisis" ("Europe Divided")? An answer to such questions may be approached though Kristeva's own self-positioning as a psychoanalyst. First of all, it is symbolic authority and not the oedipal structure as such that is today on the decline, as Žižek has been at pains to argue (1999). Besides, Kristeva observes that if the oedipal structure were to break down entirely we would have not only psychic but political anarchy, indeed the optimal model of free subjectivity itself would be undermined. Even more significantly, Kristeva's strategic placement of the Mother in a pre-oedipal space suggests why a gendered logic of politics remains indispensable. If it does nothing else, the crucial role of the maternal in Kristeva's thought should prompt readers to ask fundamental questions about not just sexual

difference but also about the position of women in the public sphere. For Kristeva, the truly free agency of women is a type of the freedom that would redeem the European subject from the crisis it faces today, and she would certainly say that no society that denies meaningful freedom to its women can claim to be enlightened.

The same goes for the freedom of other minoritarian groups either within a given Western nation or at the peripheries of Europe, such as in the former Eastern bloc. In a modest form, the German Social Democratic-Green coalition, in collaboration with the Free Democratic party, has offered one example of how, even as Europe moves toward a new order, "a multiethnic, multilingual, multifaith democratic polity" might be brought into the world and nurtured into maturity, without guarantees that it will live forever (Benhabib 1999, p. 7). If we are to have such a profound change in Western European polity, then Eastern Europe, rising like a phoenix out of the ashes of Communism, has a (Hegelian?) world-historical role to play in this projected transformation. Kristeva develops the idea that the modern Orthodox (and particularly Bulgarian) subject may itself be fundamentally damaged, but is by the same token poised for a *metanoia* or profound transformation. And this *metanoia* also holds out promise for the transmutation, more generally, of the imperiled European subject as such. Indeed, Kristeva intimates that if Bulgaria fails to inhabit its suffering in this double mode, it will have forfeited the

opportunity to rejoin the European tradition of "auto-commencement," of self-regeneration and self-re-creation.

If *jouissance* is invariably a kind of suffering, as psychoanalysis reminds us, then perhaps suffering can engender or be the route to *jouissance*, an enjoyment that requires a new subjectification. What does this mean? Just as she had revealed that Arendt envisions a resubjectivation that passes through melancholia, Kristeva believes that precisely the suffering of Bulgaria, because it plumbs the profound depths of inwardness, can become through *metanoia* the road to an approach to the Real of the European crisis. The Real hides behind the Symbolic paraphernalia of social and economic public discourse. It is through a confrontation with the Real that the subject might emerge to a new subjectivation. In earlier work, Kristeva had posed the category of the semiotic *chora* as the preverbal space, analogous to if not identical with, the Real, access to which can be extremely productive for the subject. American readers will be interested to note her double-edged compliment that it is just because American culture is "nonverbal" that its access to the semiotic is facilitated, although there is also the ever-present danger that nonverbalization may produce its own "maladies of the soul," its own pathologies ("Why the United States?" in Moi 1986, p. 275). In contrast, in Kristeva's estimation, the damaged European subject today experiences division and fragmentation, and is not only threatened by external cultural and political threats (such as immigration and

European Union), but is also not harmonized by the capacity for self-recreation and reflexivity, a capacity that in the final analysis has to do with language.

This confrontation of the Real is analogous to what in Lacanian terms would be a traversal of a fundamental fantasy (at the level of the individual subject), and perhaps at the level of collectivity something on the order of a transvaluation of values. But, as Lacanian psychoanalysis teaches, the transvaluation of values is not a matter of abandoning the Law. The proposed transvaluation of European values, as she herself insists, does not entail the annulment of values. Specifically, the European value of freedom founded on autocommencement and reflexivity must always be safeguarded. The waning of the symbolic power of the Oedipus does not mean that the oedipal law itself has ceased to exert its force. The free subject must "freely" uphold the Law, even the oedipal law, and thus safeguard the capacities for autocommencement and reflexivity: this is in psychoanalytic terms an ethical injunction, because it is the sine qua non for an authentic subjectivity.

This volume, then, is a wide-ranging but also unified set of reflections on the political meaning of the citizen–subject. Kristeva's intense focus on subjectivity, as this introduction indicates, does not detract from her discussion of myriad related issues in nuanced and often profuse detail. These broader issues are of much contemporary interest. She herself has recognized that her prose can be dauntingly complex and "poetical," and can sometimes seem an almost asymptotic approach to her declared subject. By contrast, and despite the wide range and depth of its cultural references, her prose in these essays is deliberately, strategically accessible, and often compellingly personal. But this does not mean that the author takes no chances. Indeed, one of this book's many distinctions is that it is unafraid to take an intellectual or political stance that is bold and even unfashionable—even on the "left." Kristeva proffers this political challenge as an invitation to read.

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1 Hannah Arendt, or Life Is a Narrative

The missing link connecting the youthful writings of the political scientist of totalitarianism to her world-famous works would seem to be her conception of human life as a political action revealed in the language of a story/history. It is therefore necessary to attempt to trace what seems to be an apologia for storytelling on Hannah Arendt's part, one that traverses all her research, before reading the political texts of her maturity. These later texts will then recover their original philosophical and ethical objective, which will perhaps clear up a number of the problems and ambiguities for which they have been criticized.

Arendt and Aristotle: An Apologia for Storytelling

> The chief characteristic of this specifically human life, whose appearance and disappearance constitute worldly events, is that it is itself always full of events which ultimately can be told as a story, establish a biography; it is of this life, *bios*, as distinguished from mere *zoé*, that Aristotle said that it "somehow is a kind of praxis." [Arendt 1958a, p. 97]

Thus telling the story of one's life is, in the end, the essential act for giving it meaning. Arendt admires the

narrative skill of Rahel Varnhagen, which lets her escape the mere banal flow of life, or oblivion, and to become part of history (Arendt 1958b). Is the philosopher, then, offering an apologia for the *oeuvre*? Not exactly, for after singing the praises of narration, the biographer ignores it, not only because Rahel's "rather mediocre" stories are "a desperate game," but more fundamentally, as she will later argue, because narrative alone, however brilliant, cannot save a life. What Arendt advocates is *action*, in anticipation of the arguments in *The Human Condition* (1958a). Storytelling is important, but action takes precedence, as long as it is a narrated action. Echoing this Aristotelian position based on the *Nichomachean Ethics* and the *Poetics*, Arendt discusses the Platonism of Heidegger.

Critics of Arendt's work were quick to contrast her own Aristotelianism and Kantianism with Heidegger's Platonism, when they do not, on the contrary, attribute her alleged political irrationalism to the influence of Heidegger's political thought! These two opposing, and entirely schematic, readings have been the subject of discussion[1]: indeed, Arendt adopts the Heideggerian strategy of the deconstruction (*Abbau*) and repetition of

1. See especially Villa 1995, who carefully demonstrates Arendt's indebtedness to Heideggerian philosophy while showing that she appropriates it in a personal way and with regard to a particular political context.

metaphysics, as well as the Heideggerian themes of revelation (*Erschlossenheit*) and uncovering (*Unverborgenheit*) and his emphasis on finitude, contingency, and worldlessness as intrinsic structures of human freedom, but she lifts them out of their existentialist context and transposes them to a political frame of reference. It is nonetheless true that it is precisely a *rereading* of Aristotle and Kant, the result of her familiarity with Nietzsche and Heidegger, that guides Arendt in this task of appropriation and transposition.

Her reading of the *Nichomachean Ethics* leads her to make a distinction, in *The Human Condition*, between *poiesis*, the activity of production, and *praxis*, the activity of action. Arendt warns against the limitations inherent in the production of works: works, or products, reify the fluidity of human experience into objects that are utilized as means to an end; the reification and utilitarianism to which the human condition succumbs are already to be found in embryonic form in *poiesis* taken in this sense. On the other hand, from within the *polis* as a space of appearance or public space, there develops action (*praxis*), which is not a fabrication but the highest possibility of the human being. Conceptualized in the notion of *energeia* (actuality) by Aristotle, *praxis* includes activities that are not aimed at a goal (*ateleis*) and leave behind no work (*par' autas erga*) but "are exhausted in action that is itself full of meaning" (1958a, referring to *Nichomachean Ethics* 1094a, 1–5 and other passages).

The *polis*, the model for which Arendt seeks in Homer's Trojans, in Herodotus, and in Thucydides, is the optimal site for action understood in this sense. This polis is not a physical location like the Roman City founded by a law but an "organization of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together," one that can appear "anytime and anywhere" if "I appear to others as others appear to me" (1958a, p. 198). It is thus a site of *inter-est*, an intermediate space, and a political model of this kind is founded on nothing but action and speech, and never the one without the other. What speech?

Faithful to the teachings of Heidegger, Arendt emphasizes that poetry, whose material is language, is by this very fact "the most human of the arts" (1958a, p. 169) and stays close to the thought that inhabits it. Accordingly, poetry is not reified into a utilitarian object. Condensed, turned toward memory, it actualizes the essence of language. But, on the other hand, it is also "the least worldly," remaining in the background of the *inter-est*. How can this poetic speech be manifested in the polis so as to reveal the virtuosity of its heroes?

It is *phronesis*, practical reason (or prudence, or discriminating perspicacity), to be distinguished from *sophia*, theoretical wisdom, that provides the support for speech in the network of human relations. We must find a discourse, a *lexis*, to answer the question "Who are you?," a question implicitly addressed to each newcomer

concerning his actions as well as his words. This is the role of *narrative*, of the invented story that accompanies true history.[2] In interpreting Aristotle, Arendt proposes a connection between these two stories or histories, a connection whose originality sets it apart both from formalist theories of narrative and from the theory of Ricoeur (1983).

The discrepancy between true history and invented story is implicitly acknowledged, and Arendt begins by highlighting the special role of the exploit in the Greek model of the city. Though not a demigod, the Homeric *heros* certainly shows his own distinctiveness; but this is not an exclusive trait, since any free man could do the same. The space of appearance of the polis is such that it invites everyone to demonstrate an original courage that is an agreement to act and to speak, to leave the shelter of the personal in order to be exposed to others and, with them, to be prepared to risk revelation. This is the first political condition of "revelation": to show *who* I am, not *what* I am. Then, in the agonistic test of competition, the "*who* I am" is measured against others and, in rivalry, manifests its excellence. Excellence is not assessed by the motivations or the results of the action any more than it is by victory; it is measured solely by its great-

2. Translator's note: In French, *histoire* means both "history" and "story," a double meaning that underlies the present essay.

ness (*megethos*) (cf. *Poetics* 1450b, 225, cited in Arendt 1958a, p. 205, n. 33). This is, in short, a question of political evaluation, since it is within the network of human relations that the extraordinary, that which eludes commonality, will be defined, "that which is great and shining": *ta megala kai lampra*, according to Democritus (1958a, p. 206).

We note that the *actor* himself, the actor alone, no matter how heroic his exploit, does not constitute the marvelous action. Action is marvelous only if it becomes memorable. Where is memory to be found? It is the *spectators* who bring the story/history to completion, and they do so by virtue of the *thought* that comes after the *act*, and this is accomplished via *recollection*, without which there is, quite simply, nothing to be told. It is not the actors but the spectators, if they are capable of thought and recollection, who make the *polis* a creative organization of memory and/or of history, histories, stories.

Here we are right at the heart of Arendt's thought: in order for true history to become a narrated story, two inseparable conditions are necessary. First there is the existence of an *inter-est*, in and through which are subsequently formed *memory* and *first-hand account*. The fate of the narrative depends on an intermediate space in which there arises the resolutive logic of memorization as detachment from lived experience ex post facto. Only on

these conditions can the "fact" be revealed in the form of a "sharable thought" through the verbalization of a "plot."

Arendt returns to this dimension of the depth of human existence that is the *memory* underlying narrative when she condemns the crisis of modern culture for being in danger of forgetting. Noting the discrepancy between lived history and narrated history/story, Arendt does not view the essence of narration as the fabrication of a coherence intrinsic to the narrative, that is, as the art of storytelling. She is not unaware of this "formal" or "formalist" aspect of Aristotelian theory, for beauty calls for grandeur (*megethos*) as well as for unity of parts (*taxis*) (*Poetics* 1450b, 34f, cited in 1958a, p. 205, n. 33). But she quickly passes over the technical construction of the narrative, staying close to the *Nichomachean Ethics*. In her opinion, what matters most of all in the first-hand narrative is to recognize the moment of the achievement and to identify the agent of the history/story (see Stevens 1985, p. 103). The art of narrative lies in its ability to condense the action down to an exemplary period of time, to take it out of the continuous flux, and to reveal a *who*. It is Achilles, and the exploit is a brief one: this, in substance, is what a fine narration says. The very brevity of the account takes on the value of a revelation, for the manifestation of the *who* works in oracular fashion; as Heraclitus says, oracles "neither reveal nor hide in words, but give manifest signs" (cited in 1958a, p. 182).

The sign is condensed, incomplete, fragmentary: it launches the infinite action of interpretation.

There remains, nevertheless, the immanent risk of speech, which hardens or reifies the fluidity of signs and can at any moment freeze the *energeia* of this action and its narrative (*muthos*) in the finitude of a character, even when it does not freeze it in the idea that the story is "produced" by one or another "author." History does in fact owe its existence to men, but, in the view of Arendt following Plato, it is not "made" by them.[3] By focusing too much on the artifice of plot coherence, we forget that the main purpose of a plot is revelation (disclosure).[4] This has two aspects, the beginning as prescribed by each action, and speech insofar as it delivers a bio-graphy ex post facto.

Such a narrative, formulated in the network of human relations and designed for political *inter-est*, is fundamentally inserted into the action and can manifest this essential logic only by becoming itself an action: by exhibiting itself and acting as a "drama," as "theater," by "staging itself." Thus only the muthos remains energeia. For it to remain a revelation and not be immobilized in

3. It is in this sense that she interprets Plato's concept of "god" as symbolizing the fact that true histories/stories, in contrast to those we invent, have no author. Cf. 1958a, p. 185.

4. To be read in counterpoint to the Heideggerian [dévoilement] (*Erschlossenheit, Unverborgenheit*).

reification, it must be acted out. In contrast to static *mimesis*, Arendt calls for theatrical body language as the modus operandi of optimal narration.

From the archaic era to Catholic liturgy, this *enacted narrative*—also called *living speech*—has haunted the project of a political space made of sharable singularities. But it is to Hannah Arendt that we owe its rehabilitation as a political aim at the heart of the modern crisis of culture:

> The specific revelatory quality of action and speech, the implicit manifestation of the agent and speaker, is so indissolubly tied to the living flux of acting and speaking that it can be represented and "reified" only through a kind of repetition, the imitation or *mimesis* that, according to Aristotle, prevails in all arts but is actually appropriate only to the *drama*, whose very name (from the Greek verb *dran*, "to act") indicates that playacting actually is an imitation of action. [1958a, p. 187]

Action, seeing, recollecting, completing the recollection through the narrative: this seems to be the royal road of the revelation of the *who*, constituting, for Arendt, a veritable politics of narration.

This gaze of the narrator that seems to be essential for Arendt rereading Aristotle, and that may be called "theatrical" or "political," is not to be confused with the mute amazement of the philosopher facing the unnamable that, in the last analysis, is death. Neither the

bios theoretikos of pure thought nor the solitary revelation of pure poetry, it is the contemplation of the spoken actions of the city. In an often discussed but very obscure passage of Aristotle (*Nichomachean Ethics* 1177b, 31), Arendt discerns a communal space made up of political gazes that are somehow pre- or post-theoretical, a space that admires neither man as such, nor the mortal, but the ability of narrated action to immortalize the living. As she observes:

> The famous passage in Aristotle, 'Considering human affairs, one must not . . . consider man as he is and not consider what is mortal in mortal things, but think about them [only] to the extent that they have the possibility of immortalizing' occurs very properly in his political writings. For the *polis* was for the Greeks, as the *res publica* was for the Romans, first of all their guarantee against the futility of individual life, the space protected against this futility and reserved for the relative permanence, if not immortality, of mortals. [1958a, p. 56]

"One" is immortalized by becoming a *who* acting in the political space, in this way alone giving rise to a memorable narrative.

Why should speech recounting action have this privilege? First of all because it is in action, as capacity for *beginning*, that the human condition of individuation in actualized. The living flux of acting and speaking is manifested in mimesis—which for Aristotle, as Arendt

emphasizes, is not the imitation of an isolated character but an "imitation of action"—through the "plot." Whereas for Plato mimesis lets itself be trapped like a slave of appearances, and *The Sophist* rejects the "plot" or the *muthos* as childish (cf. 242C), Aristotle examines tragedy and finds a *muthos praxeôs* of an entirely different sort. Here the characters are not reified "as such," since the chorus, "which does not imitate," offers a commentary that answers *hubris* (overweening pride) with *phronesis* (sagacity). Moreover, "the composition or writing" of the play carries out an imitation that is realized only when it is represented, thus enacted, by the theater. These are actions that bring to language the movement of life and of public wisdom. As Aristotle writes:

> Tragedy is an imitation, not of human beings as such, but of an action, an existence (*bios*), of an *eudaimonia*, and its aim is a certain action, not a quality. Dramatic heroes have certain qualities in virtue of their character (*ethos*), but it is in virtue of their *praxis* that they are *eudaimoneis* or the reverse. They do not act in order to represent their characters; they receive this from the action itself. Thus the course of action and the plot are the aim of tragedy, and the aim is what is most important. [*Poetics* 50a, 15]

As we have seen, the prototype of this revelation through spoken action is *drama*, meaning "action." Arendt sums up her implicit Aristotle in this way: "This is also why

the theater is the political art par excellence; only there is the political sphere of human life transposed into art. By the same token, it is the only art whose sole subject man in his relationship to others" (1958a, p. 188).

This conception challenges the vision of a revelatory power of poetic speech that Arendt found in Heidegger (1941). Nevertheless, what Arendt is undertaking is not a naive return to Aristotle in order to restore his hypothetical original purity. As a reader of Nietzsche and Heidegger, attentive to their successive dismantling of metaphysics, Arendt comes back to phronesis and to narrated action only as an echo of Nietzsche's and Heidegger's prior investigations of action, its freedom, and its pragmatic impasses. She does so in an attempt to establish, after the passing of her predecessors and for her own part, some small islands of sharable world.

Solitary and withdrawn, the ecstatic *Dichtung* of the philosopher shows Being providing shelter for its Nothingness by means of a solitary decision (*Entscheidung*, *Entschlossenheit*) that recovers what is already there and anticipates the future in the wink of an eye (*Augenblick*). In contrast, Arendt insists that action is never possible in isolation. Only the sovereign is isolated, but the innovative actor is not necessarily a sovereign. Active and passive at the same time, the hero is a pioneer who takes initiatives and always moves among others. New, infinite, and unforeseen, action individualizes in the midst of plurality and, conversely, allows plurality to ensure

eudaimonia, that "blessing," or rather that "well being," that accompanies each person throughout life but is visible only to others. Thanks to myth and drama, tragedy and comedy, within the space of the polis, the hero is the one who becomes exemplary in gathering his life together in the lightning flash of a single act. Action and life thus depend on the narrator, who bears witness to the passion of showing himself by measuring himself against others. While the Socratic school opposed politics and action, returning to prepolitical activities, Aristotle—whom Arendt prefers here—advocates, as she puts it, the "sharing of words and deeds," which amounts to multiplying "the chances for everybody to distinguish himself, to show in deed and word who he was in his unique distinctiveness" (1958a, p. 197). And Arendt goes on to suggest that the political narrative was, in the Age of Pericles, the only way to constitute an "organized memory" as remedy against the futility of action and language.

We must remember, in connection with Arendt's revival of the *Nichomachean Ethics* and the *Poetics*, that it was a preliminary reading of Aristotle that had led Heidegger to his 1924 course on the *Sophist*, which Hannah attended. It has often been noted that reading Aristotle enabled Heidegger to oppose to the primacy of awareness in Husserl the primacy of practical existence, and thereby to establish existential analytics (the first part of fundamental ontology). It has been less often

noted[5] that this Heideggerian reading produces metamorphoses, hardenings, and obliterations of certain essential features of the thought of Aristotle. Thus Heidegger seems to take into account the Aristotelian distinction between *poiesis* and *praxis* (fabrication and action). The difference he establishes between *Umwelt* and *Welt* can be read as an echo of the Aristotelian separation: on the one side, the public environment, the impersonality of "one," preoccupation, anticipatory circumspection: *Wozu* (in view of what?); on the other side, what belongs to *Dasein*, the self, care, resolution, *Worumwillen* (in view of itself, or of nothing). Whereas the world of discovering peculiar to poiesis is the *techné* (or know-how) recalled by the *Herstellen* (production, fabrication) animated by a specific vision or *praktische Umsicht*, praxis, in contrast, has no end other than itself. This is also the case with *Dasein*: *das Dasein existiert umwillen seiner*. However, for Aristotle clairvoyance adjusted to praxis is a *phronesis* (discernment, prudence, or critical perspicacity). This is the very point at which Heidegger's modification lies: the missing phronesis is replaced by sophia, in the sense of vision directed toward Being, not toward the network of human relations.

5. The exception is Taminiaux 1992, who recalls in this context the observations of Gadamer, "Erinnerungen an Heideggers Anfange," *Dilthey Jahrbuch* 4 (1986-1987: 23).

And indeed, for Aristotle debating with Plato, sophia cannot be applied to the fragility of human affairs: these cannot be circumscribed by a stable knowledge and thus require an ability, simultaneously intellectual, affective, and moral, that belongs to everyone and not to specialists. It is developed in the plural deliberation intrinsic to that space of appearing that is the polis. Even as he emphasizes the preeminence of the contemplative life, for it alone bears witness to "some divine element present in us" (*Nichomachean Ethics* 1177b, 27), Aristotle distinguishes *sophia*, theoretical knowledge, from the prudence indispensable to "human matters and matters that admit deliberation" (1141b, 10); *phronesis* has as its aim not only universals but particulars, "for it is of the order of action" and is "the knowledge of what is most individual, which is the object not of science but of perception" (1142a, 27–28).[6] Isn't this the same *phronesis*, discerning perspicacity, that Arendt examines through the "esthetic judgment" of Kant, which, joining the German philosopher here, she would make the basis of a political philosophy at the end of her life?

Phronein, to think reliably, refers "in a way that is indissolubly intellectual, affective, and moral, to sound

6. Aristotle makes it equally clear that the perception in question does not concern sense objects as such but is the perception "by means of which we perceive that a given mathematical figure is a triangle."

thought, correct and appropriate judgment" (Aubenque 1963). A knowledge that is limited and aware of its limits,[7] proper to man in contrast to the *noesis* of the gods, phronesis is especially evident in tragedy. For wisdom ascertains that, as catastrophe, tragedy occurs when the protagonists simplify conflicts (cf. Nussbaum 1986) and hence exaggerate them, whereas it would be prudent, on the contrary, to observe the *mesotes* or measure inherent in *phronesis* and to forbid anyone to set himself up in a position of mastery and to impose a systematic point of view. In this sense, tragic representation is indispensable to a communal life, to a *bios politikos* in which speech stages conflicts—with the aim of resolving them in public and in equality.

Arendt invokes the tragedians when she wants to show that conflict is irreducible, especially between the "thinking self" and the "real self," *bios theoretikos* and *bios politikos*, and to show that it must be maintained as such without false resolutions or special annulments. Thus Richard III, the Shakespearean monarch, shows evidence of a conscience, of a capacity for critical testing, only *after* the crime, like Socrates, who, though a fervent admirer of public life, finds the other who puts him to the test only in returning home in solitude (1971–1978, pp. 189–191). But although Socrates had to refuse all public obligations so as to devote himself solely to his role of provocative thinker, he ran the risk of destroying the *doxa* and would then be akin to an Oedipus, "abandoned without any *doxa*, the word being taken in its full range of meanings: opinion, splendor, reputation, and a world unto oneself" (Arendt 1954, p. 90). In the same sense, Arendt investigates *Oedipus at Colonus* and explains Sophocles's twofold message: on the one hand, his tragic flaw deprives the hero of the "world" and lets him meditate on non-being, on the "not-to-have-been-born" as well as on the risk of returning there; on the other hand, there arise from the mouth of Theseus words that help one to bear the burden of life: "It was the *polis*, the space of man's free deeds and living words, which could endow life with splendor" (1963, p. 285). "For what appears to *all*, this we call Being," writes Aristotle (*Nichomachean Ethics* 10, 1172b, 36, in the translation of Arendt 1958a, p. 199; emphasis added). Following him, Arendt concludes that the space of *appearance* is potentially a political space of plural action and interlocution.

Conversely, for Heidegger the resolution of *Dasein* is private, situated above public opinion, far away from other people's understanding and from the indulgence proper to phronesis. *Gewissen* (conscience) is an intimate knowledge beyond anxiety and the common space, a knowledge by means of which *Dasein* in its potential for being belongs only to itself. In suppressing plurality, *Dasein* centers on the encounter of the solitary person

7. We find an echo of this restrictive *phronesis* of Aristotle in Arendt's notion of the respectful *truth* of borders in politics.

with himself in a "resolute assumption of being for death" that is crowned by *Gewissen*. Henceforth it may become that focus of unique intelligibility and foundation for the *science* of Being that is metaphysics. This scientificity flows from the removal of the plurality internal to Aristotelian phronesis and the promotion of Platonic thought as the sole authentic experience of action or praxis.

Indeed, up to the period of his Rectorate, Heidegger makes use of Plato's *Republic*. Although he is not wrong to point out that Aristotle's Being tends to tip over into being, and hence that Aristotelian ontology becomes confused with a theology, although he is right to warn against an ontology of the world in the sense of *phusis*, of presence and constancy, in order to rehabilitate instead the whole of temporality—based not on phusis but on *Dasein*—nevertheless, in so doing, he does not neglect the conflictuality and plurality of praxis in Aristotle or his distinctive discursive modalities of myth, history, and tragedy. The result is not just a solipsistic unification of action in thought alone, but also a transposition of this solipsism of sophia that, henceforth, will take the place of phronesis even in the public domain. Thus Heidegger will no longer view the public domain itself as a provisional plurality, always to be adjusted, but as a unanimous and mystical passion: that of the people.

Furthermore, as soon as we identify the thought of Being with praxis, we are led to a coercive, "scientific" involvement and to an action of voluntarist management

of the people. The absolute neglect of plurality, measure, and the provisional that characterizes such a radicalization necessarily makes it a tyrannical thought and, at the extreme, a dictatorial action.[8] Even after the *Kehre*, and having drawn the philosophical, if not political, consequences of his errors, including the renunciation of metaphysical "science," Heidegger keeps right on comparing action with thought insofar as the latter "initially corresponds" to language, and, faithful to a certain Platonism though he had "dismantled" it in his *Nietzsche*, he persists in his indifference to Aristotelian plurality. Arendt, however, emphasizes throughout her philosophical and political works a contrast between, on the one hand, the power of the Platonic Ideas and of their tyrannical latency that is inevitably realized when the thinker applies them by acting like a politician, and, on the other hand, the opening of the authority that Aristotle, that other philosopher of modes of life (*bioi*), was the first to theorize: an authority no longer based on the notion of domination but on that of a nature composed of differences. From this point on, we must keep in mind that the discourse proper to this *other* authority that Arendt is seeking to restore, beyond modern secularism, is, quite simply, narrative.

8. Cf. Taminiaux 1992 on the continuity between the solipsistic thought of *Dasein* and Heidegger's political involvement in the matter of the Rectorate.

This rapid return to Aristotle via Heidegger was necessary in order to appreciate the debate that Arendt is implicitly carrying on with her former professor at Marburg, often without naming him, a debate that we may describe as "ironic" in the Platonic sense of a *dialogue* and a *displacement*, in no sense as a Voltairian mockery, a devaluation, or a caricature. Arendt might have said of Heidegger what she often says of Plato, citing Cicero, namely that she would rather go astray with Plato than see correctly with his opponents. Nevertheless, her attachment to thought and to Plato persists in the importance she accords to the *theoria* that enables men to free themselves from the cycle of birth and death and, by joining up with praxis, to escape from the futility of everyday affairs and approach the divine. Arendt's task was, without abandoning this conquest of thought or of the *bios theoretikos*, or disparaging the progress made by Heidegger's oeuvre, to point out its fallacies and its speciousness, and especially, drawing on Aristotle, to reestablish the plurality of action and of the discursive modalities of its distribution.

Above all, her meditation on action and narrative has enabled us to understand how crucial the Homeric universe is to her outline of a conception of the life of language as *muthos*/fable, consecrating the excellence of a hero like Achilles (cf. 1958a, pp. 193–194), and as drama highlighting the energy of speech. This universe also inspires her extended treatment of metaphor (cf. 1971–

1978, pp. 98–128) that leads her to affirm in substance that philosophical concepts first of all, and ultimately all human language, are a return of the spirit to the sensory world: metaphor provides the "abstract," imageless thought with an intuition drawn from the world of appearances; it thereby annuls the retreat from the world of appearances that is the precondition for mental activity (cf. p. 103), offering "common sense" to concepts through the mediation of "the example." Taking as her authority the apocryphal Plato of the *Seventh Letter* (which Heidegger had discussed in his course on *The Sophist*), and even more so the Aristotle of the *Poetics*, Arendt ascribes to metaphor the privilege of transforming thought into phenomenon, reconciling it with perception and common sense. This is not without its dangers, but thanks to it the phenomenal world enters thought without being prompted by the needs of the body, since the language of thought is itself essentially metaphorical. And metaphor joins the flux of surprising and innovative births: "The sheer naming of things, the creation of words, is the human way of *appropriating* and, as it were, disalienating the world in which, after all, each of us is born as a newcomer and a stranger" (p. 100).

Because it is always already caught up in language that is metaphorical, sensory, and sharable in a plural world, the life of the spirit is not only a *thaumazein*, an ineffable amazement, unspeakable (*arrheton*) according to Plato, or wordless (*aneu logou*) according to Aristotle.

Quite the contrary: the only metaphor that is exactly appropriate for the life of the spirit that has been dis-alienated in this way is none other than . . . *the sensation of being alive.* And Arendt cites the well-known passage from Aristotle's *Metaphysics*: "The activity of thinking (*energeia* that has its end in itself) is life" (1971–1978, p. 123). Arendt's rereading of Aristotle is accompanied by frequent references to Saint Augustine in order to formulate an indissociable conjunction between act *and* word, one that, above and beyond poetic speech, is the supreme "revelation" of the "unique individuality" that makes human plurality a paradoxical plurality of "unique beings": "With word and deed we insert ourselves into the human world, and this insertion is like a second birth, in which we confirm and take upon ourselves the naked fact of our original physical appearance" (1958a, pp. 176–177). From this point on the gravity of Heidegger's being-for-death, which purifies the ascesis of the self in the unveiling of language, is transformed by Arendt into a sequence, not so much desolate as luminous, of *ephemeral strangers* who disappear only when dislodged by the surprising births of newcomers.

We are now in a better position to understand why it is historical narrative (personal confession in Saint Augustine, memoir of human plurality in Thucydides) that, associating "act-and-word," receives its patents of nobility from Arendt: narrative as memoir of the action that is itself a birth and an ever-renewing strangeness, whose

ontological possibility is given in the initial fact of our birth. In contrast, *Being and Time* (Heidegger 1929) declares Thucydides superficial and refers only once to a late myth, the fable of Cura (by Caïus Julius Hyginus, written in Rome in the time of Augustus and transmitted by Herder to Goethe, for whom it was an inspiration for the second part of *Faust*). Having determined that not only words, but also, and especially, grammar are unequal to the task of capturing "being" in its "Being," Heidegger (1941) is of the opinion that only complexity of concepts and firmness of expression can remedy the situation. The philosopher finds these in the "ontological" passages of Plato and Aristotle, which he compares to the narrative passages of Thucydides to the clear detriment of the latter. Arendt will observe that, after the *Kehre*, the thinker no longer insists on the tension between philosophy and poetry but that he points at something that he says nowhere else: enigma. In her terminology, are we dealing with a drama-enigma, a narrative-enigma?

In any case, it is clear that, in contrast to her master, Arendt draws on the "famous words of Pericles in the Funeral Oration" reported by Thucydides, to praise the "theater" and the "testimony" forged by the polis to the glory of the hero via the memorable narrative, in such a way that:

> those who forced every sea and land to become the scene of their daring . . . will need neither Homer nor anyone

> else who knows how to turn words to praise them. . . . [M]en's life together in the form of the *polis* seemed to assure that the most futile of human activities, action and speech, and the least tangible and most ephemeral of man-made "products," the *deeds and stories* which are their outcome, would become imperishable. [1958a, pp. 197–198, emphasis added]

We can therefore understand the implicit dialogue that Arendt is pursuing with the Heideggerian equation of thought, action, and language (cf. Heidegger 1950). If thought is a *sophia*, Arendt says in effect, political action accompanies it and modifies it into a *phronesis* that shares in the plurality of living people. *It is through narrative, and not in language in itself, which nonetheless remains the way and the passage, that essentially political thought is realized.* Through that recounted action that is a narrative, man corresponds to life or belongs to life, in that human life is inevitably a political life. Narrative is the initial dimension in which man lives, of a *bios* (and not of a *zoé*), a political life and/or action recounted to others. The initial correspondence man/life is narrative, and narrative is action most immediately shared and, in this sense, most initially political. Finally, and because of narrative, the acknowledged "initial" itself is dispersed into strangenesses in the *infinite* of narrations.

Recounting the Twentieth Century

More concretely, and from among twentieth-century writers, Arendt chooses novelists who, bear witness in their fictions to historical action, the hidden meaning of which they reveal to their contemporaries. Poets often cited in her texts (her friends Randall Jarrell and Robert Lowell, as well as Rilke, Yeats, Emily Dickenson, W. H. Auden, Mandelstam, Valéry, and René Char) are there not because of their linguistic virtuosity but because of the wisdom of their dazzling accounts. Neither the narratological prowess of some of these nor the stylistic singularity of others draws the attention of Arendt the theorist, who is more interested in "narrathemes," brief narrative sequences that condense or metaphorize the personal testimony of a historical experience.

Read with patience and passion, Marcel Proust depicts, through Swann, Charlus, and the Guermantes, a portrait of the inherently anti-Semitic philosemitism found in French salons before and after the Dreyfus affair. Using citation as an art form, Arendt excerpts from *Remembrance of Things Past* one of those "double expositions" that Proust is fond of, one that specifies the assimilated Jew—but also other "clans," if not the whole of French society—and makes it forever famous: "The question is not, as for Hamlet, to be or not to be, but to belong or not to belong" (cited in Arendt 1951, p. 84).

Arendt's interpretation shows how the secularization of "Judaism" into "Jewishness" signifies an abandonment of identity (or "being") in favor of "belonging" (or "being one of them") and how it entails baneful consequences, up to and including the Shoah, for the fate of European Jews in the twentieth century: "Jewish origin, without religious and political connotations, became everywhere a psychological quality [that] could be considered only in the categories of virtue or vice" (1951, p. 83).

Kafka—a huge photo of whom adorned the apartment of Arendt and Blücher at 95 Morningside Drive in New York City—makes his presence felt with a parable, "He," that describes "the time sensation of jthe thinking ego," "a battleground where the forces of past and future clash with each other." Arendt notes "the extreme parsimony of Kafka's language," comparing it first to an allegory of Nietzsche about the moment (*Augenblick*), represented by the Stoa beneath which two roads intersect, then to the interpretation offered by Heidegger: the moment is given not to a spectator's *sight* but to the one "who *himself* is the now" (Arendt 1971–1978, pp. 202–204). Arendt's reading is constructed as a veritable literary mosaic interlacing the narratives of Kafka, Nietzsche, Heidegger, . . . and Arendt herself. The philosopher does not only observe; she too becomes the "battlefield" of thoughts and of the history of her century in its language.

In a 1944 study of Kafka (in Arendt 1978), Arendt was pleased, at the outset, about what she found to be the

absence of style in this author, the absence of love for words as such. She clearly detests experimentation and mannerism, but this does not prevent her from making two observations whose pertinence stands out in this rather schematic study of Kafka's writing. She states that the wickedness of the world in which Kafka's heroes find themselves caught consists precisely in exposing its divinization, its adequacy, its divine necessity: is the wicked person, then, divine? But above all, and in closer affinity with the literary approach, she does not interpret the abstractness of Kafka's characters as being the mere reflection of a bureaucratic universe in which the world functions like a mechanism that the hero seeks to destroy. According to Arendt, Kafka does not present realistic characters—familiar from the bourgeois novel—but rather models: it is not their reality that interests the writer but their truth, this being the result much more of a process of thought than of a sensory experience. More of a thinker than a realistic novelist, because he thinks what he feels, Kafka traces schemas of thought where we would expect to find characters.

In the life of Stefan Zweig, as in the life of Rahel, Arendt the political scientist examines the drama of the assimilated Jew who nonetheless hopes to distinguish himself by becoming a celebrity in Viennese society, before, to his great humiliation, he finds himself rejected there. He then encounters the reality of the Jewish people, but, being incapable of political engage-

ment, this deportee from paradise, as he calls himself, can only devote himself to the calm despair of suicide. An irrefutable demonstration that shame and honor are political concepts.

Hermann Broch for the earthly absoluteness and the abstract musical composition characteristic of his style; Walter Benjamin for his misfortune and his gift for thinking poetically with paradoxes that lead him to suicide; and Isak Dinesen, alias Karen Blixen, one of the rare women—with Nathalie Sarraute and Rosa Luxemburg—who find favor with Arendt (1968) in these "dark times," complete her pantheon of contemporary narrators.

Isak Dinesen, as it happens, hides under a masculine name; she is the woman author Karen Blixen, whose life is not without its similarities to that of her commentator (we think of the boyish photo of Arendt in the '50s). The daughter of an emancipated mother, unlike Martha a suffragette—but didn't she know Rosa Luxemburg?—and of a father who died too early (Karen was ten at the time, while Hannah was seven when Paul Arendt died), the novelist married a syphilitic man (like Hannah's father) and experienced in her own body the painful effects of this illness (there is nothing corresponding in Hannah here). Karen/Tania, called Titania, finds that the light of public life is inappropriate for a woman; she hates the trap of writing and especially the trap of taking herself seriously; like Hannah, she loves to laugh to

the point of adopting as her pseudonym not only the man's name, Isak, but a name that means "laugh" in Hebrew. The analogies between the two women become a twinship when Arendt recalls that it is the grand passion (as with Rahel? With Hannah?) for the unclassifiable and impossible Denys Finch-Hatton that determined Titania's life, her wish to tell stories and then to write them: she could build her life only after she had lost everything in order to be able to recount everything. The clever Arendt discovers, however, that what her Sheherezade named Titania is in love with, if we are to believe Shakespeare, is only . . . A donkey's head! Let the reader be warned against pushing too far the comparison between the two women. But the claim of twinship is justified when Arendt emphasizes an essential thought of Isak Dinesen's, a thought that could be her own, namely that lack of imagination prevents people from living fully. And Hannah notes that if it is true, as Titania-Isak's philosophy suggests, that no life is worth thinking about unless its story can be told, it follows that life could be, even should be, lived as a story. The epigraph of the chapter "Action" in *The Human Condition* is taken from Dinesen: "All sorrows can be borne if you put them into a story or tell a story about them" (1958a, p. 175). From Rahel to Titania we have come full circle, and Hannah already knows that her own life, from now on, will be as much a true history as a recounted story.

Blixen-Dinesen's lover was one of those men who did not accept the world: extremists, whether conservative or revolutionary, like the thinker and the criminal, are alike in the nonacceptance of the world, Arendt explains; the reader thinks of her master in philosophy, the former Nazi and solitary poet. Although as a nonconformist storyteller she neither accepts nor rejects political life, she is content to enact it by speaking of it. But his active narration is full of traps! And they are equally fascinating to our philosopher, who throws herself into the voluble restoration of Isak Dinesen's stories in the form of her ample conclusion to her study of the novelist. But she is neither Sheherezade nor the literary critic, only a political vigilance taking an interest in . . . Louis-Ferdinand Céline. Well before everyone else.

Indeed, Arendt was one of his first commentators,[9] for Céline, in her view, illustrates the compromise of the élite with the masses. Ideological imagination was necessary to complete the rational anti-Semitism of the French, she writes in 1951, citing the anti-Semitic pamphlets of sinister memory.[10] She deepens the analysis and

9. Céline's correspondence with the American professor Milton Hindus dates from July–August 1948, a time when Arendt was preparing what would be her 1951 study of anti-Semitism (reprinted in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*).

10. See "On Anti-Semitism" in Arendt 1951. Recall that Céline returned to France on July 1, 1951. Gallimard published his work, with the exception of the pamphlets, in 1952.

completes it by suggesting that the formalism of the artistic élite, the avant-garde such as the Bauhaus group, expressed a cult of technique and anonymity. This élite scorned the human grandeur of which Robespierre spoke and were ready to destroy civilization along with respectability. To the wish to unmask hypocrisy that was irresistible among the élite was added the aversion to the philosemitism of the liberals: with this there was to be created a fictive world common to the rootless masses and due to the lack of a sense of reality on the part of the élite. This is a perfunctory interpretation, no doubt, but a relevant one, on the level of human affairs.

Kipling and the legend of origins, Lawrence of Arabia and his English alter ego, Barrès, Maurras and others, with Péguy as a frequently evoked counterpoint complete this narrative universe of reference that definitively sets forth the true "origin" of the *The Origins of Totalitarianism*.

Nathalie Sarraute is the only contemporary author to whom Arendt devotes a study (1964). Seduced by a narration that breaks with the canons of the classical novel in order to fracture the smooth, hard surface of the characters and focus on a "psychological vivisection," Arendt admits that she prefers the tropisms of inner life as described by the novelist to its turmoil as revealed on the psychoanalyst's couch. She delights in the cruelty and the irony with which Sarraute explores the catastrophic interiority of the self-centered ego, each word becom-

ing a weapon, when it is not a commonplace or cliché, while the family and society disintegrate, sinking into the inanity of the "they," the most insignificant of which are none other than . . . so-called intellectuals! Once again, Arendt's analysis seizes on the narrative, circumventing its technique in favor of a revelation of social mechanisms, and, here, of the psychosocial comedy. The "moment of truth" in Sarraute, in which the clash of two sub-conversations produces a metamorphosis—that is, the fleeting perception of an unbearable revolt—seems to her to be of a dramatic quality unique in contemporary literature. However, although this "age of suspicion" amuses her a great deal, Arendt is careful not to espouse its radical disenchantment; she prefers to keep the "communal world" and "natural kinship" despite their falseness as revealed in the acerbic accounts of the anti-novelist Sarraute. Arendt notes Sarraute's sarcastic comments on the subject of "taste," supposedly the basis of the social bond, but prefers to end on an optimistic, Kantian note: against the false "they," there is nonetheless a possible "we," the worthy community of the reader and the author, so fragile and yet so strong. . . .

Finally, Arendt (1968) focuses on Brecht, whose melancholy genius she esteems even as she warns that we must not pin our hopes on the native irresponsibility of poets (or of philosophers?), who are good at *thinking* about, but incapable of *judging*, anything that is of political relevance. What she calls the chronic misconduct

of poets and artists is, however, sanctioned within the sphere of their own activity, and public opinion does not need to make too much of it. Although they deserve our aid and our pardon, they "can sin so gravely that they must bear the entire weight of their guilt and their responsibility. The most crushing of these burdens, one from which Brecht suffers dramatically, is nothing other than the death of talent itself.

We may reproach Arendt for not having been able to grasp that the poetic language of a narrator—Proust, for example—is in a much better position to conjoin the thinking self and the self that appears and goes about in the world, in order to translate the *nunc stans* and breathe life into it as time recaptured, than is a philosophical concept or a mystical vision (cf. 1971–1978, p. 206). And we may be dismayed by Arendt's (1978) sociologism à la Lukáks that is a bit too quick to declare, in connection with Kafka, that any style, by virtue of the magic peculiar to it, is an escape with regard to truth, or that the complex fate of the classical novel simply corresponds to the slow decline of the citizen, in the sense of the French Revolution and of Kant, or that, confronted by a world ruled by secret powers, Kafka wanted nothing other than to be a fellow citizen, a member of the community. Poor dear Kafka, who is presumed to be frightening to the point of occasioning cabalistic interpretations, if not a satanic theology, while all he dreamed of was becoming a fellow citizen!

We may regret that Arendt does not appreciate the intrapsychic, but also historical, need for *rebellion* that led the avant-garde of this century to an unprecedented reevaluation of the structures of narrative, of the word, and of the self—close not only to melancholy and to desolation, as she says, but also to psychosis. We may regret that she does not appreciate that these borderline states, proper to the individual as well as to the mob, found in Céline, for example, their most symptomatic account, if not the most prudent or lucid. Art, and especially the art of narrative, has a history that repeats neither what was at issue in the past nor the solutions arrived at back then, a history that, today, competes with a clinical protocol even more than with a moral judgment. Our task is to reveal the causes and the fate of this history, not to stigmatize it.

But this is not Arendt's concern. She is seeking the best solution for the "fragility of human affairs," and in this political context narrative art, for her, is subordinate to just action, on which it is or is not able to shed light. It is even consumed by it: no esthetic privilege, no excellence of the Work can make us forget the Aristotelian ideal of *hou heneka*, the aim of the beautiful and good life.

Artists, and especially modern artists, seem to her to be the quintessence of the *homo faber*, that extremely mediocre variant of humanity according to Arendt, and they push to the extreme the modern tendency to commercialization and consumerism of contemporary works. Thus we see how, for Arendt, a major work can only be a non-work, an unwritten work, one that has not gone through the trouble to "reify" itself into a "product." Socrates devoted himself to the infinite exploration of true judgment within a perpetual interrogation of himself and of others, without ignoring a polis in which diverse opinions and lives contended with each other. Socrates, the anti-Plato, the gadfly who provokes, the midwife who delivers, the stingray who paralyzes, but who, for Arendt (1954), cannot be considered to have established the contrast between truth and opinion, the most anti-Socratic conclusion that Plato drew from the trial of Socrates. But far from having been a benefactor of the city, though he thought that virtue can be taught (cf. Arendt 1971–1978, p. 171), Socrates leaves to Arendt the political scientist the example of a thought in movement, a *bios theoretikos* whose permanent questioning must continue to disturb "public affairs" themselves: "the meaning of what Socrates is doing is to be found in *activity itself*. Or, in other words: thinking and truly being in life are two identicial things, which means that thought must always start over from zero" (p. 179, emphasis added).

Through the *life of narrative* envisaged as a quest for sharable meaning, Arendt is not, therefore, looking for a total and totalizing work. But neither is she eagerly calling for the creation of a political space that would

be in itself a "work of art," a "collective masterpiece." Envisaging the essence of politics as a welcoming phenomenality, a place of pure appearance freed from the schema of domination, seems to be an estheticization that does not correspond to Arendt's thought.[11] The estheticizing reification of the political that can be detected in National Socialism reveals not the apolitical essence of politics, as has been said, but rather its death. For Arendt, if political life is inseparable from its narration, which makes its conflicts apparent to everyone (*dokei moi*), this is so only to the extent that political life resists its one estheticization, conceives of itself as an "activity" (*praxis*) irreducible to its "product" (*poiesis*), and lets itself be shared by the irreducible plurality of living people. In other words, art is not necessarily the essence of the national-estheticism that, in turn, is the essence of politics in the West. Although it is true that a certain cult of poetry and myth, deploying the genius of the national utterance, inevitably leads to national-estheticism, Arendt "dismantles" this argument. She demonstrates, through her attention to narrative and the novel, how narration can take part in another politics, that of open memory, renewed and shared, that she calls a *life* of "*who*." That the narrator (Céline or Brecht) may

11. Cf. the argument of Lacoue-Labarthe 1987: the total work of art as an achievement of politics.

be mistaken or see correctly is another issue, one that leaves intact the structural potentiality of narration as a dehiscent and infinite political action, open to the discerning perspicacity of the *inter-est*.

Thus, though Arendt was an avid reader of poetry throughout her life,[12] it is always narrative that mobilizes her through its plot tying together the action that is ultimately political. We recall that Hannah Arendt wrote poetry herself, especially during the difficult periods of her youth, in the ordeal of romantic passion and the depressive state that ensued. This poetic experience was no doubt partly a support for her, partly an imprisonment in the very "desolation" that she condemns and that she tries to overcome both in criticizing the solipsistic writings of Rahel Varnhagen and, later, in her irony at the expense of the "melancholy" proper to the "philosophical tribe." Nevertheless, her adherence to narrative is in no way to be understood as a denial of poetic, utterance, the stylistic or prosodic turns of which she does not, to be sure, investigate, but which she sees as intrinsic to narrative speech: for how could one make

12. Symptomatically, the only text that she wrote in collaboration was a study signed with her first husband, Günther Stern Auders, on Rilke's *Duino Elegies* (Arendt and Auders 1930), that emphasizes the perdition of the divine, the self-destruction of the mistress, and the emptiness on which elegiac poetry is based.

a crass distinction between poetry and narration when the prototypical utterance of the exploit is, for Arendt, none other than that of Homer?

Thus, it seems to me, she should not subscribe to Adorno's well-known comment that to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric,[13] and this quite independently of her personal aversion to this philosopher.[14] On the contrary, for Arendt it is what we call the imagination, including poetic deployment in a narration, that is alone able to *think* horror. Moreover, it seems that, like Primo Levi, she was unable to claim the position opposite to Adorno's, according to which only poetry is equal to the task of describing the hell of imprisonment.[15] This cry betrays too much of the writer's own tragic desolation, and his irremediable disenchantment with human plurality that led him to suicide, to allow Arendt, herself subject to melancholia and struggling against its temptation, to counter with a possible transformation of *hubris* and lethal obsession into the *phronesis* of a narrated action, continually being reborn and strange, and for that very reason resurrectional.

Finally, if *narrative*—myth, tragedy, or history—were to have a chance to avoid both the traps of professional philosophers' wisdom and the utilitarianism of the manufacturers of art objects, this would be solely to the extent that it was able to maintain the tension between *bios theoretikos* and *bios politikos*, without taking refuge in rar-

13. Cf. Adorno 1963; this comment was put in perspective by Adorno himself, especially in *Negative Dialectics* (1966).

14. Arendt had no respect for the Marxists of the Frankfurt School and was particularly dismissive of Adorno: a reader "dissatisfied" with the thesis of her first husband, Günther Stern, on music, then a "friend" distrustful, if not hostile, toward Walter Benjamin, whom he considered a bad Marxist. Cf. Young-Bruehl 1982, pp. 101 and 217. Well after *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951) and *The Human Condition* (1958a), in which she explains her views on narration, Arendt discovered in a Frankfurt student journal, in 1964, a polemic with Adorno, revealing that the very man who declared poetry impossible after Nazism had really and truly written a 1934 apologia for songs the words of which were taken from a collection dedicated to Hitler. Then Adorno said he was "sorry" and defended himself by accusing . . . Heidegger, letting it be understood that, in declaring poetry henceforth impossible, he had in mind the apologia for poetry made by Heidegger himself. Arendt was outraged at Adorno and his "vain attempt to align himself with the Nazis of 1933": "He had hoped that being Italian on his mother's side (Adorno versus Wiesengrund) would help him through" (letter to Jaspers, July 4, 1966, in Arendt and Jaspers 1926–1969, p. 644). Later (1968) she implicitly returns to Adorno in coming to Heidegger's defense and proposing that in fact Heidegger quickly realized this error and subsequently took many more risks than was customary in the German university.

15. "In 1945-1946, it seemed to me that poetry was better able than prose to express what was weighing on me internally. . . . After Auschwitz, one can no longer write poetry except about Auschwitz" (Primo Levi, interview in *Corriere della Sera*, October 28, 1984, cited in Anassimov 1996, p. 54).

efied speculation, without complacently acquiescing in the banality of the life process, and also not reducing the one to the other. Where have all the gadfly-midwife-stingray narratives gone? Perhaps they are nothing other than . . . Arendt's experiment itself: the plurality and paradoxes of an action that has never stopped questioning itself.

Thus it is to narrative itself, and not to some sort of comprehension, analysis, or rationalization that Arendt entrusts the possibility of thinking the horror of the Shoah. The only reflection possible on Hell is the "terrified imagination" of those who were able to recount the memory of Auschwitz. Far from any irrationalism, it is the enlarged rationality of narrative, beyond the limits of ratiocinating reason, that Arendt the theoretician defends.

"Ever since childhood, I have never doubted that God exists," she admits to one of her friends, Alfred Kazin, who recommended the publication of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* by Harcourt Brace (Kazin 1978, p. 199). Yet, when all is said and done, this insistence on *narrated action* and *active narration* reveals a rare atheism, without nihilism, that Arendt subtly advances, with a nod to Aristotle and his valorization of *logos-phronesis*, the terrain of human *praxis*, beyond the *nous* that is the pure retreat of the gods. "*Logos*, in contrast to *nous*, is not divine" (cf. 1971–1978).[16] It is surely to this non-

16. To this elliptical remark of Arendt's we may add Aristotle's particular conception of God, which differs from both that of Plato and that of the Stoics. Thus Aristotle's fundamental intuition is that of an incommensurable *separation* or distance between God and man. In addition, though the Aristotelian sage is autarchic, he nonetheless has friends, whereas "God is his own good unto himself"; "for us the good implies a relation to the other" (cf. *Ethics to Eudemos* 6, 12, 1245 608–619). Cf. also Aubenque 1963, p. 81. Arendt, for her part, recalls the celebrated formula of Saint Augustine: "*Socialis est vita sanctorum*" ("even the life of saints is a social one"); cf. 1968, p. 73.

divine, the living speech that displays the life of the spirit in political life, that Hannah Arendt devotes herself.

Heidegger's concern is an entirely different one. While the "official" version of his philosophy in 1938 states: "With Being, one has nothing," the *Contributions to Philosophy* (written between 1936 and 1938 and not intended for publication) confess: "Let us risk the immediate word: Being is the trembling of Godizing."[17] Still close to the master, the pupil keeps her distance.

And the woman? With or without Isak-Titania Dinesen-Blixen? Another mythic narrative, selected from Arendt's long list, tells the well-known story of Orpheus and Eurydice: the man of imagination, musician-poet-thinker, cannot snatch from Hell his dead mistress, for, once he has arrived in the land of the living and turns back to her, she disappears, fades away. Arendt analyzes:

17. "Wagen wir das unmittelbare Wort: Das Seyn ist die Erzitterung des Götterns (des Vorklangs der Götterentscheidung über ihren Gott)" (1936–1938, p. 239).

to think, but also to create "the imaginary characters of a novel," it is necessary to *desensorialize*. The creative imagination manipulates the elements of the visible world, but attains them only after having desensorialized and volatilized them—in short, killed them—like the sensible-visible body of Eurydice (1971–1978).

Does Arendt-Orpheus vaporize Hannah-Eurydice? Reading this commentary, one does not have the sense that our author identifies with the sacrificed Eurydice, nor that she regrets the "productive imagination" of Orpheus. Perhaps because the only way to save "sensory elements," beginning with the feminine, is to make Eurydice into an Orpheus, able to relate the *story of desensorialization*. Only in this way, on account of this narration, does the story of desensorialization nevertheless become . . . *sensible* to all the participants in the action. To accomplish this eminently political act, one would have to be able to be on both sides, possessing, to be sure, a good measure of contemplative wisdom, but also, and above all, political phronesis.

Thus Eurydice, the sensory, and the feminine are not volatilized under the pen of our political narrator. But they return, less as "concepts" than as frequent *metaphors* that organize her thought, that are its strong points, its crucial junctures: "origin," "condition," and "birth" bear, in Arendt's writings, the trace of a tension between "contemplative life" and "active life," but also of this

sensorialization-desensorialization that makes a woman a thinker of genius.

Since, however, no label is adequate for Arendt's energy and her ceaselessly deconstructing uneasiness, the term "genius" is even less suitable for her. She has already taken exception to it: unknown to the ancients, invented by the Renaissance, the phenomenon of the genius is a supreme justification of *homo faber*. Unable to disappear entirely into his fabrications that efface the "who," modern man is in quest of that which can transcend the craft and the object; and, lo and behold, he goes on to reify this transcendence itself by manufacturing "the genius": (cf. 1958a) [T]he idolatry of the genius involves the same degradation of the human person as all the grand principles of commercial society." Exit the "genius"!

Nietzsche had called for a philosophy of a life lived fully: "I do not allow men who are well grown to philosophize on life"; "One must want *to live* the great problems in the body and in the mind" (cf. III–XII, 1884, IX, 1885, and VI, 1886 in Nietzsche 1967). Hannah Arendt is, in her own way, perhaps the only philosopher of the twentieth century who realizes this philosophy of life as a specifically political philosophy, lived by her "fine growth" as woman and Jew. Her work as a politician is the proof of this, as is that meditation on narrated life, or on the narrative indispensable to life: simultaneously

its condition and its double, because (Arendt, along with Aristotle, is convinced of this), there is no life except political life, and because (Arendt, along with Augustine, is convinced of this), there is no life (*bios*) except in and through narrative rebirth.

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2 The Meaning of Equality

The French Senate's adoption, at long last, of the governmental proposal on male–female equality, and its acceptance on second reading by the National Assembly, run counter to the fears expressed by the champions of universalism. This seems to be a good time to take another look at the presuppositions behind those fears, and to offer as a contrast another vision of the symbolic pact that will henceforth serve as a basis for our society, since equality now appears virtually in Article 3 of the Constitution, pending the definitive vote of the Congress at Versailles.

Power and Politics

Nowadays we equate "power" and "politics," so much so that when men or women of *power* speak out, many people decode this as the expression of a *political* thought. Let us consider, on the contrary, that politics is the experience of a debate in which free individuals come forth and measure themselves against one another in their plurality, so as better to think about the public interest. And in fact this is the inherited ideal of the Greek city, dear to Hannah Arendt, taken up once again in France today with discussions on equality (and on

Europe): let us understand politics, then, as living interrogation and polemic, life of the mind remote from all archaism, investigation that can shed light on other peoples as well.

Women and men of power—to be distinguished from those who would like to make politics their life—have set themselves in opposition to equality. Whatever their personal talent may have been, their road to power was surely made smoother by the support of a family, a husband, a lover, or a clan, so that (unless they have been too quick to forget) they were not cruelly exposed to the ostracism of a political battle whose harshness is applied with special virulence precisely to the female sex. These women or men hoped that the "good will" of political parties, prompted by some encouraging measures, would be enough to change such negative discrimination. But don't we see, behind their optimistic vision, ambitions and privileges that are harder to admit?

Metaphysics of the Universal

This divergence is coupled with a discord of a more metaphysical kind. No time was lost in mocking the typically French, if not Parisian, style of the debate: it hardly matters whether or not the universal is gendered, it was said; no one cares about that apart from the Sixth Arrondissement and a few purists of republican Jacobinism. The question is more serious, since it touches on what is fundamental about the Republic, in the sense in which republican universalism is, in fact, the *foundation* of public jurisdiction as well as public morality. Removed, ever since the Revolution, from religious authority, freed from divine right, and having managed to inscribe in its laws the separation of church and state, the Republic has no foundation other than that of the universality of the citizen. That is to say that Universality is our God; it is what guarantees each citizen—regardless of sex, origin, faith, and so forth—equal access to the law, to all laws. Tampering with this universality amounts to tampering with what is sacred about the Republic: this is a fundamental question, the same as the question of the relation of women to the foundational, that is, to the sacred.

Now, we must not forget that the universalist principle—a sacred principle whose generosity has proven itself, though not without revealing its limits—descends in a straight line from the One, the unity of Intellect and Being that, beginning with Plato's metaphysics and passing through the autarchy of late Hellenism, constituted the foundation of Roman citizenship. Two thousand years of politics have been inspired by it, though it is not possible to enumerate here its multiple declensions, more or less felicitous, that form the basis of religious or partisan institutions. The founders of the Republic, among other descendants of the Universal,

achieved the boldest translation, the one best adapted to history in progress, by modifying it in the form of a universal citizenship. The sacred, thus established in political legislation, consecrated democracy and made the French Republic one of the most egalitarian regimes in the world, along with the one that resulted from the American Revolution.

It quickly became clear that this sacredness excluded strangers: the prosperity of nation-states over the course of two centuries, with a dynamism still vital today, allows us at the present time to ask only cautiously and sparingly about the citizenship of migrants and other "undocumented" people. The metaphysical universal, like its republican variant, also excluded women; is it necessary to recall the numerous studies on the discrimination against women in post-Revolutionary society, especially in left-wing parties and syndicates? The regression with regard to the spirit of the Enlightenment is due not only to a mistrust of women as, allegedly, willing dupes of the Church, but also to deeper philosophical and sexist prejudices. There has also been criticism of the Western, European, limitations of this universalism on the grounds that it ignores other cultures.

But it is metaphysics itself, underlying universalism, that is made this way: the body, and with it sex, gives way, or rather is assimilated, to the One: Unity of Intellect and Being caught up in the quest for the True and the Beautiful. The cult of the One celebrates unity of

thought as invisible activity, able to master the "universe" as well as the human beings "unified," globalized, by it; and it is expressed, in monotheism, as the cult of a single God. Whether it is explicitly One paternal God or One abstract principle, the universal is a sacrificer, in the sense that every mental representation (sign, idea, thought) abandons, loses, or sacrifices matter, the thing, or the object to which the representation refers. This is why the philosophers of antiquity could think of this universalizing One as turned toward death, "death-colored": in the Indo-European languages the sacred is a unifying "sacrifice" (from the Latin *sacer*) that separates, interdicts, and pacifies the social contract. A second type of sacredness, however, is suggested in the same societies by a term that means "overflowing life" and "growth" (from the Avestan *spenta*) and refers to fertility and the power of the spirit. Rites of phallic veiling and unveiling in the Mediterranean mysteries, and finally the celebration of paternal power in the monotheistic religions, complete for our civilization the panoply of universalist metaphysics. And even when a Chinese tradition like Taoism recognizes two universals, the *yin* and the *yang*, the feminine and the masculine, the rational administration of subjects and affairs under the aegis of authority necessitates, with Confucius, recourse to a certain dominating and hierarchical universalism.

Development and technical changes in social bonds were required in order for this founding universal to be

inflected toward plurality. And also so that, in the wake of the problematic and risky dismantling of metaphysics, the inscription of sexual difference in the universal could finally make its appearance as a most decisive gesture: not as a rejection but as a recasting.

It is precisely here that there arose the feminine aspiration to equality within republican universalism. As speaking and thinking beings, women take part in this sacrificial universality, this "being for death" on the metaphysical level, and they take part in the citizenship that is equally constraining and protective for all on the level of human affairs. Nevertheless, and insofar as political life is neither contemplation nor domination, women as potential, and increasingly real, agents of this plural life demand to be recognized in their difference.

And indeed, a political life is not established solely on the basis of submission to equality, however salvific it may be. A political *life* that is not political *power* can be established, without repudiating the universal principle, by including recognition of different agents. "God created them male and female," says the Bible. Jesus, the figure par excellence of the man of action, insists on the conjunction "and," the sign of difference: this innovator, according to the Christians, needs different beings in order for the action he is inaugurating, religious and political, to be oriented through debate toward freedom. Saint Paul, in contrast a man of salvation, privileges the alternative meaning "or" to designate the faithful saved

in the universality of the faith. It is only from this initial difference between the two sexes, and despite the later dogmatisms that were so often repressive, that the singularity of each individual, as well as his or her respect, was proclaimed by Christianity and by human rights in the secular mutation of Christendom. A *singularity* that remains, today more than ever, beyond *equality* and, with it, the goal of the advanced democracies, that is, those based on consent in the negotiated handling of conflicts.

As soon as the One is incarnated, and metaphysics timidly attempts to show concern for humanity that is alive because it is plural, metaphysics moves toward the recognition of differences, of which sexual difference is the foremost and irreducible to the others because it is the foundation of the inevitably political life of our species. That this difference is *also* natural in no way reduces it to biology: social factors and the particular relations of the two sexes to Meaning (which are their relations to the Universal) structure the female "gender" on the basis of the female "genital" and the male "gender" on the basis of the male "genital."[1] A review of the elementary structures of kinship from so-called savage societies to our own is all that is needed to see that it is the recog-

1. Translator's note: *le sexe* means both "genital organ" and "sex," so that the ambiguity of the relationship between "gender" and "sex" is in play here.

nition of sexual difference that constructs and specifies human culture, which gives it its meaning.

Is the female difference pure biology, or at best a subtle sensitivity, but without significant impact on the thinking and the behavior of women? The opponents of equality seem to have presupposed this, calling upon . . . Freud. And yet, in contrast, the founder of psychoanalysis constantly affirmed the symbolic distinctions accompanying biological destiny, perhaps sometimes yielding to a misogyny that discredits women, but without ever underestimating their difference! Does psychic difference, then, have no influence on thought and citizenship? To be continued. Wasn't it urgent to grant to half of humanity the means to fulfill themselves, primarily in politics, so that the other domains might thereby be transformed even more effectively than they are within their own logic? In the hypothesis of a symbolic, professional, or political identity of women with men, the universalist principle will be considerably enlarged by taking into account this half of humankind that has hitherto been set aside.

This is so even if it is feared that the dominance of technology will confirm the metaphysical tendency to uniform standardization resulting from universality, and that women, good daughters and good pupils, will enter the political space only to administer the power of the city and of business as well as, and sometimes even better than, but not differently from, men. This is not the only

hypothesis in this case, and nothing prevents women politicians, in the future, from being something other than their fathers' brilliant daughters whom we have seen, in the last decades, governing states as though they were men, "real" ones.

As for the *difference* of women—difference of sexuality, of bisexuality, of thought, of relation to meaning and to political power—it is unjust to assert that it is a new claim. After Simone de Beauvoir, the French feminist movement since 1968 has clearly expressed these positions and, whatever its errors or excesses, it has left its stamp on the battles of women on the planet through its psychoanalytic and political affirmation of this difference.

New Motherhood

Motherhood itself, through the voice of some women if not through that of the movement as a whole, has also been claimed, since that time, as a free fulfillment of each woman and an essential contribution to civilization. Religions and the various fundamentalisms have so brutally assigned women to reproduction alone, and, in counterpoint, libertarian movements have been so fiercely opposed to this "repression," that today—against all evidence—it seems difficult to speak of motherhood without being accused of normativism. Yet it is precisely

in this experience that woman's specific relation to meaning and to the other is achieved, refined, and differentiated: to an other who is the child, neither the object of erotic desire nor the object of physiological need, but another subject. The beginning of that otherness, that enigmatic love of the different, to which we are invited by the formula: "Love thy neighbor as thyself." If the precept seems unfulfillable at this point, could that be because it translates (in addition to exceptional mystical love) the optimal—but so difficult—bond of the mother to her child and vice versa? It is not impossible that in strengthening this bond, in becoming aware of its risks and its depth, women will transfer it from private intimacy or esthetics, to which tradition has confined it, and adapt their speech in the civic sphere to its measure. This would not be their least contribution to a politics that remains to be constructed, as a regime not of authority and domination but of harmonization of differences—which is precisely the goal of modern democracies.

For obvious economic reasons, those women who, up to now, have devoted themselves to women's liberation, and especially to the discussion of equality, are often childless, or else they share masculine identifications in such a way that motherhood seems oppressive, inappropriate, or at least of secondary importance to them. In contrast, when the supporters of equality put the valorization of the maternal calling front and center, they

promise, in the long run, a political destiny for the large majority of women and mothers who would wish for one, thereby threatening in imagination the masculinized militants who control "their" private domain of women's liberation. But let it not be said that the changing of the Constitution will be of no help to the basic housewife in becoming a political woman. On the contrary, the law, and in particular the highest law of the Republic, has a symbolic and educational value the effects of which are major because they entail a cascade of concrete measures; as the source of public debate more than any other legal disposition, it works deep changes in people's minds.

Finally, since equality applies to so-called ordinary women, to mothers of families, it inaugurates new thinking about the human race. Are we destined to "artificial" or "assisted" reproduction, or to "cloning" in "families" that are more and more "modern" and "reconstituted"? Perhaps, but then this is another humanity that emerges, quite different from the current *Homo sapiens* with its sexual differences, its prohibitions, and its codes of meaning and morality, unless women continue to give birth to children with men, but while being recognized "as equals" by the latter and hence capable of participating fully in the construction of the meaning of the political space to which they destine their offspring.

The mastery of procreation has not rendered women superfluous, nor has it made them identical to men as has apparently been believed or feared. Paradoxically,

in freeing themselves from natural accidents, women have become decision-makers both about reproduction and about human fate on all the levels of their professional competence. On this account their importance in social and political life now and in the future goes far beyond the value they may have had in matrilineal societies, and, without any relation to a new type of matriarchy, this importance entails a necessary symbolic and political recognition. What is at issue is no more and no less than the future of the human race.

We see that sexual difference in this sense cannot be confused with the identitarian demands of various groups constituted by biology, history, or behavior. If by chance such a threat were to exist, the lawmaker could easily prevent it by means of a restrictive clause reserving positive discrimination to women, excepting every other social, religious, or political category—which they are not. The truth is that we have no "values," on the eve of the third millennium, other than that of life; that we expect politics to go beyond the administration to which it has condemned itself so that it may open up the meanings of human lives; and that, this being the goal of the recasting of the republican pact, its universality be realized for two.

What equality ultimately reflects, then, is a humanity given back to its constitutive and increasingly sovereign duality. A humanity that has not lost the sense of the sacred—neither the sense of sacrifice nor that of

procreation—but one that explicitly joins women in equal measure to the sacred and as a result modifies the bases of the social contract by inviting men, in exchange, to regain for themselves a new equilibrium in a universality that has been twofold for a long time but without admitting it.

The shifting meaning of "female" and "male," along with their concrete realizations, can only be extended and promoted in this way: psychoanalysis, ahead of other approaches to the human in its knowledge of psychic sexuality, will also find here the occasion to counter the relative disrepute in which it is currently held.

As for France, which for two centuries has taken the initiative in dealing with metaphysics in the political arena, it has the privilege—by inscribing equality in its Constitution—of formulating for the entire world this awareness that is tantamount to a change in civilization.

3 Europe Divided: Politics, Ethics, Religion*

*This paper was originally presented as an address to the Rencontres Internationales de Genève.

Constructed by economic choices with the help of a common juridical space that reinforces them, Europe is slowly advancing toward a monetary and political union. In this context, the issue of expansion to include the countries to the East—countries emerging from a different political-economic system (and, implicitly, the issue of opening membership to the countries of the South, especially the Maghreb)—poses for the European Union a set of questions concerning *European cultural identity* that the title of this conference sums up well: "they" and "we."

When I was invited to reflect before this audience on my thoughts about Europe and the new rifts within it, it therefore occurred to me that my personal history (I was born in Bulgaria and have been teaching and writing for over thirty years in France), and also my psychoanalytic training, had led to my being seen as a creature of the crossroads, between "them" and "us," belonging ultimately neither to "them" nor to "us," but perhaps to both groups. And that this cultural mix might well be the feature—indeed, the quality—on account of which I was destined to address you, this evening, as specialists in the European Union.

At the risk of seeming anachronistic, instead of focusing on the *economic passions* that magnetize the contem-

porary debate—does liberalism favor the development of democracy, and, conversely, does democracy stimulate the growth of liberalism?—my reflection will turn toward the *cultural memory* of the components of European Identity. The question that concerns me and that, alas, leaves the dynamic German executives and the golden boys of Moscow cold, is this: What is the meaning of this European dynamic? Which human beings set it going? Which human beings benefit or suffer as a result of it? In short, with what goal, for what civilization, are all these efforts at production and communication being made?

Broadly sketching the divisions of the European Union that is in process of construction, we find that they set the advocates of an expanded liberalism against the advocates of a *statism*, in all its varieties, that is to be maintained at whatever cost; to this we may add *economic backwardness* and the *deficiencies in public morality* of the countries that have just left totalitarianism. This quick economic-political analysis, which could be refined and developed, must not lose sight of the crucial point: the effort to construct the European Union is more than that; it is a global civilizing effort.

This is so because the coordination of European differences (taking all domains together)—or its failure—will prefigure the constitution of still larger groupings, in which more marked economic, cultural, and religious differences will have to be reconciled in order to take part

in the dynamics of *globalization of ways of life* that follows from the dynamics of production, commerce, and the media in which the greater part of humanity is now engaged.

On the threshold of the third millennium, we Europeans are encountering a major challenge involving the values of civilization, values that, for better or worse, we have succeeded in establishing and that will or will not be transmitted to the societies that come after us. For the economic-political differences refer not only to visions of society but, more precisely and in the last resort for me as a psychoanalyst, to very different conceptions of the *human person* or *subject*. Is it certain that the model of society that privileges economic performance and technological innovation in the way that globalization handles them is always most favorable to the human person, as seemed to be the case in the era of the Industrial Revolution? If, imposed in their present form, the criteria of the marketplace and consumption end up completely encompassing the dynamics of subjectivity, do they not risk the destruction of all those who take part in another socioeconomic system? And, beyond this, do they not, ultimately, risk their own self-destruction and the destruction of all civilization?

Seeing Europe as part of the stakes of civilization will lead us to envisage the differing conceptions of the human person and of subjectivity that are asserted and contested in this European space. From this point of

view, the history of philosophy and religion will motivate my psychoanalytically inspired reflections. A central value, *freedom*, will guide my account.

I shall try to retrace the various conceptions of the subject on the basis of the role they accord to freedom, although, as we all know, the idea—and the reality—of this "freedom" have given rise to many abuses, misinterpretations, and crimes. ("How many crimes we commit in your name!" exclaimed Mme. Roland on the scaffold.) So much so that the human sciences of the twentieth century, coming from structuralism or cognitivism, ignore it, and some currents of philosophy and history, enamored of positivism, mistrust it. . . .

We cannot help noting, however, that it is right in the philosophical and moral tradition of Europe, as well as in its political and social reality, that the notion and the experience of freedom have reached a level of awareness and a magnitude that have led, in the extension of the Age of Enlightenment, to a definition of *freedom* coextensive with the *self*: to an equating of the speaking subject with freedom, especially in the work of Kant. It is in the frame of reference constituted by this European tradition—philosophy, religion, and experience of democracy—that I shall inscribe my talk today, since it is to this European tradition of *the idea and the practice of subjective freedom* that humanity is indebted, and since, I am convinced, we must not feel constrained in reestablishing them if Europe is to be *meaningful* and not just *useful*.

In this identification of the subject with freedom, an identification that crystallized at the intersection of Greek, Jewish, and Christian experience before being formulated by Kant, resides the essence and the most precious advantages of European civilization.

I shall speak of the different European paradigms of free subjectivity, suggesting that social, economic, and political divergence is based on varying conceptions of freedom. I shall try to show that what I (1993) call "the new maladies of the soul" threaten the free subject as it has been constructed by Europe with such brio. For this freedom has its downside, its failures, its difficulties. In the face of this threat, the Orthodox experience of subjectivity and freedom might, even given its own downside, complete, stimulate, and enrich Western experience; and, in exchange, the Orthodox conception might benefit from the gains of the West.

Autocommencement: A Productive Cause or a "Freedom" that Gives Itself?

The year 1793 is a symbolic date that I shall keep in mind, because it accentuates the contrasts among the different experiences of freedom in Europe.

The Reign of Terror bloodies the freedom just proclaimed by the French Revolution, in 1789, with the principles of the republican trilogy: Liberty, Equality,

Fraternity. For the first time in the world, a libertarian demand, radicalizing the English *habeas corpus* (1679; strengthened by the Bill of Rights in 1689), guarantees the rights of man as the highest obligation of the social contract. But at the very moment when freedom is being affirmed, its enemies are being murdered in its name. Freedom, finally sovereign, acknowledges its limits and its impasses in a bloodbath.

About a decade earlier, in 1781, Kant had published his *Critique of Pure Reason*, which contains the clearest meditation on the libertarian essence of the human self, defined as a free soul endowed with autonomous will vis-à-vis external constraints and the dullness of sense perception, a meditation that he will complete in *The Critique of Practical Reason*, published in 1789.

The Terror of 1793 does not, however, stop the spread of freedom and its critical aspects despite its growing pains. A vast movement of national liberation sets the Old Continent ablaze, but it is not until nearly another hundred years have passed that the Balkans, largely Orthodox, will finally cast off Ottoman rule in the second half of the nineteenth century.

In this same year, 1793, the Hesychastic tradition,[1] which advocates the intimate union of spirituality and

1. From the Greek *hesychia*, "the silence and peace of the union with God."

knowledge, returns to Russia around the monk Païssi Velitchkovski (1722–1794). This tradition, known since the eleventh century, had spread extensively during the fourteenth, inspired by the works of Gregory Palamas (ca. 1296–1359). Velitchkovski's translation into Russian of the *Philocalia* (a Greek compilation of texts on the prayer of the heart, established by the monk Nicodemus the Hagiorite) gave it new impetus. A certain *freedom* of the believer is declared there, one that is only a *silence of the ego*, a displacement of the intellect and rational reason toward the heart, understood as the pole of an *unrepresentable infinity* and the source of an intuition of an *ineffable* divinity.

Kant and understanding on the one side, and the *Philocalia* on the other: do we have here a figure of the abyss between "us" and "them"? Or is this instead a possibility for a dialogue between two opposite but complementary poles of freedom?

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Without dwelling too much on the meanders of the Kantian proof, I do have to explain it more precisely. For, earlier on, freedom could be defined negatively, that is, as man's independence over against nature and God. But for the first time, with Kant, a positive definition of the freedom of man is advanced: freedom is an absolute autoactivity, a spontaneity and a power of man to determine himself on his own.

From the Platonic dialogue to Augustine's questioning, which specifies the ego as a putting in question (*se querere, questio mihi factus sum*), the Western valorization of questioning culminates in the Kantian affirmation of a spontaneous, sovereign, and in this sense liberatory understanding—though one that is not, for all that, without limits and traps.

Let us pause, if you will permit me, at this Kantian freedom, a "cosmological" freedom on the whole, since it is the power of Reason to begin by itself that is posited. This power of auto-commencement on the part of universal Reason can be interpreted as a splendid valorization of the reasoning "self," simultaneously initiating and autonomous. To be sure, this "self" is itself generated by a *Cause* from which everything begins; man is dependent on this *transcendental cause* that goes beyond him. Nevertheless, although human freedom is "caused" by an externality on which it depends, it spreads out and can become a "practical freedom" as long as it remains independent of sense perception.

Kant's conception is a nodal point in the thinking of Freedom, one whose genealogy goes back fundamentally to Saint Paul and Saint Augustine, then to Luther and Protestantism. This freedom, produced by a causality, in this case, God, could just as well be produced by a causality of natural and economic forces. Thus Max Weber, in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904–1905), demonstrated the inversion of tran-

scendence in the production of social goods.[2] A causality governs freedom, and freedom adapts to it, even as it achieves its own flourishing, by dominating all sensuality through understanding that is, ultimately, moral.

This is the optimal model of productive and moralistic freedom. Even if it is transgressed or flouted—or simply ignored—it nonetheless governs liberal democracy. Its injunction amounts to this: adapt yourself to a cause (which, nowadays, is no longer either God or a transcendence, though these are more present than they are said to be, but is economic causality); adapt yourself to the economy; adapt yourself to the dollar—and you will be free . . . in that causality. Thus freedom means the ability to produce causes and effects, and I am hardly simplifying when I say that freedom amounts to freedom of production, to the mastery of production. And so freedom is the power to produce—to produce objects of desire and consumption.

From "cause" to "effect," the reign of Technology gives rise to "virtual" effects and necessarily becomes the reign of appearance, pretense, and spectacle, which turn out to be the structural impasses of this "productive" freedom.

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2. The Calvinist, elected by God, seeks to prove through the success of his social activities that he is truly among the elect. Anxious on behalf of his salvation, he applies rigorous principles to his business, and the resulting accumulation of wealth is considered to be the will of God.

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From 1930 on, even as he was compromising himself in the dismal affair of his Rectorate of Freiburg during the Nazi period, the philosopher Martin Heidegger perceived and denounced the danger that Europe and the world were incurring by subordinating themselves to productivism and to technical reason, dominant values around which Europe and the world were organizing themselves more definitively than ever before. In his 1930 course at Freiburg on human freedom (cf. Heidegger 1982), countering the notion of a freedom confused with productive cause, Heidegger defended another conception of freedom: he equated freedom with *the essence of philosophy*. Thus he set out to demonstrate that for a long line of philosophers, from the Greeks to Hegel, freedom had not been thought of as subordinate to a cause but placed at the beginning. In the beginning was freedom, that is to say, freedom is in Being insofar as Being "presents," not because it is the "cause of," and all causality is subsequent to this "presence/presentification" of Being.

Without going into all the subtleties of Heidegger's reasoning, let us say only that this *subordination of causality to freedom*—a causality, let us remember, that is ultimately practical, pragmatic, economic, scientific, but fundamentally "divine"—also has its radical anthropological and social consequences in the political and moral context of Europe and, more generally, in the process

of globalization that affects humanity. Greek philosophy (Parmenides, but also Plato, both read by Heidegger) says in substance that there is a freedom prior to any cause, for which Being *presents itself, gives itself, surrenders itself, frees itself* in understanding and dialogue, whereas the causality of *givens* is constructed scientifically only afterwards. In contrast to the constraints stipulated by causes, be they divine, social, or technological, freedom *is*: so state not only the libertine and the Enlightenment atheist, but also the poet and the revolutionary of the rights of man. They take the liberty of beginning for themselves the independence of each "self," each singularity, each erotism, each opinion, each thought.

This reversal, whose underlying Greco-French filiation I have just been tracing, privileges the Freedom of appearing as opposed to the Causality of producing and culminates in the affirmation of the independence of man with regard to external causes, the cause of Providence, but also that of Technique, to use Heidegger's terminology.

In this spirit we can inscribe a certain Catholic libertarian trend that takes popular, antiauthoritarian, and libertine forms. It was able to transmit this value of the essential freedom of understanding—stemming from Greek philosophy and present in Stoic and rhetorical Latinity—to the heart of a martyrological, charitable, and antiestablishment Christianity despite and in opposition to the more or less inquisitorial centralization of

the ecclesiastical institution. Indeed, martyrology had never departed from an affirmation of understanding within faith, nor had charitable activity forbidden itself a vigorous critical attitude. Moreover, the focus of spirituality in the self, the responsibility and the insubordination of the believer, could take the form of a subtle dissidence that went as far as the believer's gaining his independence vis-à-vis the highest cause, God: did not Meister Eckhart demand that God release him, leave him free of God?

Finally, in this lineage of libertarian affirmation, European culture produced the thought of a social tie that claims the possibility of freeing itself from this very tie. This new idea, namely that it is not the social community but the individual capable of autocommencement who is the ultimate horizon of free Being, can be discerned in Rousseau's *Social Contract*; for him, the *socius*, far from being salvation, is inherently alienating, and it is against the *socius* that the inherently free naturalness of the free individual can be won—so that he can undertake new ties.

This Enlightenment ideal of freedom proper to secular spirituality declares, as a principle, the primacy of human freedom as the source of secondary social, political, and technological causes that must be subordinate to it. Let us grant ourselves the freedom to extrapolate. Thus, when today the French Republic, within the European Union, through the voice of a Socialist government, calls for greater solidarity against the "always-more of liberalism," it does so not—or not only—under the pressure of a regressive and protectionist statism, as has been said. It does so more fundamentally, and beyond political circumstances, out of fidelity to the very spirit of republican institutions. This soliditarian demand expresses the values of individual freedom and respect for the human person and the subject, all subjects, including the most disadvantaged among them. And it affirms the conviction that it is possible, counter to various "causes"—which means, counter to technological pressures—to satisfy progressively the libertarian priorities of singular subjects: first and foremost, their right to work, to social protection (health insurance, retirement, and unemployment benefits), to sexual choice, to political choice, to freedom of religion, and the like.

This voluntarism declared in favor of individual liberties, liberties that, in their specificities, are much more "narrow," sometimes much more annoying, than the corporatist claims so often decried, is the source of a new social pact.

While an adaptation on the part of democracies to technological pressures made the Protestant countries highly efficient in the golden age of industrialization, the primacy of freedom over technological cause—not only the freedom to produce but the freedom to think and live—provides a new dynamic nowadays for the Catholic countries like France, Italy, Spain, and Poland. The

second post-industrial phase of modern capitalism is in the process of bringing to the fore a social model that—in contrast to the dominant Anglo-Saxon model of all-out production and financial profit—privileges the dignity of the person and the art of living with inalienable singularities. The French demands tend to adjust what must be called the transcendence of Technology or even of the Group in favor of individual satisfaction, personal or subjective freedom. The unrealistic drifting that such an attitude can entail must obviously be noted, as must the need to modulate that attitude by a balanced awareness of external constraints.

Nevertheless, whether they are focused more strongly on *productivity* or instead on the defense of the *freedoms*, the rights and duties of men, these two libertarian tendencies animate both the moral tradition stemming from Protestantism and, though in a different way, the Catholic tradition, and these two trends are complementary. And it is their mutual balancing that constructs the European personality, with its Catholic and Protestant components, though their diversity constantly sets them against one another, often violently, and without any achievable synthesis at the present time.

* * *

Psychoanalysis explores the microcosm of subjective liberty, of spontaneous auto-activity, of that power to begin a state by oneself; in a word it explores the condi-

tions for the flourishing or the failure of free, independent, and creative subjectivity. At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, Freud conceptualized what the intuition of Sophocles had been able to configure in his tragedy *Oedipus the King* of 320 B.C.: the economy underlying subjectivity is a *crossroads* between the loving desire for the mother and the wish to kill the father. Tragic indeed, the subject is free only because he is a subject animated by this twofold forbidden wish for incest and parricide. It is only in this way that he wants to know and constitutes objects of knowledge—in other words, the oedipal subject is the subject of philosophy and the subject of science. Clinical practice confirms that the resolution of the oedipal conflict is the condition for the child's access to language and thought, that it allows affective autonomy, and certainly that it sets in motion all the other developments of morality, competitiveness, and creativity.

If these are indeed the basic structural conditions for the advent of the optimal model of free subjectivity, variously declined by the civilizations and their histories, clinical experience is not alone in revealing how greatly, today, in the European domain itself, *this oedipal model is in grave crisis.* The changes affecting family life, the entrance of women into the workforce, the increasing divorce rate, the erasure or even the collapse of paternal authority, the modern economic crisis, and the reign of the image are among the essential factors, well known

by all, contributing to the thwarting of the oedipal configuration and to the various types of alienation that I (1993) have called "the new maladies of the soul."

The ability to judge disintegrates—disappears, actually, as Hannah Arendt, a great reader of Kant, observed in connection with the "banal" compromise with Nazism on the part of many Germans—since individuals allow the judgment of a leader or the consensus of a group to be imposed on them instead of "judging for themselves." Over and above the ability to judge, psychic life as a whole is affected: the "interior forum" that establishes itself as sovereign in self-determination, in the power to initiate on one's own a state or an action, is threatened; likewise, the independence of will with regard to sensuality and drive pressures anchored in biology is also gravely deficient.

How does the malaise of failing oedipal subjectivity manifest itself? Through the serious difficulty—or even impossibility—of representing feelings-sensations-drives-passions and the conflicts that give rise to them. At best, if one can put it that way, individuals make use of collective schemas, borrowed from the media—television, for example—that, when they do not exacerbate people's dramas in some ill-timed fashion, lull them to sleep or robotize them. Clinical practice shows that many of us are in the process of losing the capacity to elaborate an inner life and communicate it, whether through a free activity or a creative one.

The free subject has become a mirage, and we receive on our analytic couches patients afflicted with "false selves" (Winnicott), "borderline" personalities (Kernberg), or "as-if" personalities (Helene Deutsch). From weeping fits to episodes of mutism, these persons go under, sometimes to the point of suicide, in the overabundance of affects that the refusal or the impossibility of verbal communication keeps from other forms of elaboration and metabolism. Psychosomatic illnesses, addictions, acting out, vandalism, and various forms of cynicism express this shipwreck of a subjectivity incapable of autonomy and independence, because it is fundamentally incapable of representation and thought. "But isn't this instead the fiendish exercise of a freedom pushed to its extreme?" some might ask, misled by the excesses and the offenses of these manifestations, excesses sometimes rationalized by antiauthoritarian and libertarian ideologies. No, since beneath many forms of antiauthoritarian anarchism sometimes claimed by subjects in the grip of these states of social and subjective malaise, there is often hidden an unfitness for exercising the freedom of the self, the psyche being fragmented under the pressure of the drive on the one hand, and the destruction of the social framework on the other.

What answers are there to this identitarian and collective crisis? Few, if the truth be told. With its ugliness, its minimalism, its destructiveness, perhaps modern art, which explicitly invokes psychosis, constitutes

the sole variety of libertarian effort that tries to provide a lucid accompaniment for this destruction of Western subjectivity. Ever since the bankruptcy of providential ideologies, political extremisms have ended up in terrorist barbarism, if not in psychosis. As for returning to earlier solutions, in the guise of religious nostalgia, this will provide only a temporary answer if the behaviors stemming from religious traditions are imposed as dogmas instead of being rethought and modified in the light of the modern crisis.

This is to say that the "we" is made up of fragments and crises that recent appeals to love and compassion attempt to console (recall the crowds collected, not so long ago, around Pope John Paul II in Paris, or, in London, those in tears at the time of the death of Princess Diana). The "we" is damaged, crises fracture it; interior rifts crack apparently stable communities and also Western European subjects, well rooted though they may be in their soil, their history, and their identitarian programs.

What Remains of the Orthodox Faith?

But other, deeper, disparities traverse our Europe, when we consider the cultural contribution of the Slavic world of the Orthodox tradition.

First of all, what remains of the Orthodox faith?

According to the data in a recent investigation conducted by the Center for Sociological Studies of the Academy of Sciences in Russia (Garadja 1996), the level of confidence in the Orthodox Church, which was 57 percent in 1992–1993, fell to 33 percent in 1995. In addition to this drop there is the fact that many of the respondents who identified themselves as "believers" defined themselves as "just plain Christian" and not as "Orthodox," or they defined themselves as "anonymous Orthodox," that is, as having no need for a ritual practice within the Church. This phenomenon can be explained as much by the habits that formed during the time of Communism as by the lack of appeal of the Church after the fall of the Berlin Wall. It is not just by way of curiosity that, in this same context, we find mention of the very important popularity index among the believers in the Patriarch of Moscow, Alexis II: 3.87 (Sakharov gives 4.23), with Pope John Paul II nevertheless receiving an index very close to this, 3.56 according to the data of 1990. If an increase in the number of believers is attested—which the polls explain as a wish to conform to the standard of living of the Western countries, in which, it is thought, democracy and faith go together—this "new" religiosity is not accompanied by a real deepening of religious teachings (44 percent of believers say that they have read the Gospels and only 35 percent the Bible [cf. Byzov and Filatov 1993, p. 34]), nor by regular church attendance. Likewise, in Bulgaria

this time, the war between the two Patriarchs—one associated with the former Communists, the other with the democrats—has not inspired the faithful to a religious life centered on the values of the Church and perhaps even dissuades them from a private religiosity that would tend toward sects and toward various Eastern spiritualities.

However, a number of observers whose opinion I share (cf. Huntington 1996) note that, despite this apparent disaffection, religious traditions remain alive and well. They influence—in a way that is subterranean, unconscious—the way of life, the customs, the mentalities, and the decisive attitudes of subjects in the political and economic organization of their society. For, when the dogmas of Communism imposed by violence give way, the routines of behavior, as it were "spontaneities" programmed by familial traditions, immediately fall back into place.

Recently I gave the title "Bulgaria, my Suffering" (this volume) to a text that I devoted to the cultural situation of Bulgaria after the fall of the Berlin Wall. In brief, this suffering is due to my impression of the profound disarray of Orthodox Slavic peoples who are *liberated* but nonetheless not *free*. To avoid misunderstanding, I explain that I do not believe in the existence of a global "popular psychology," since I believe strongly in the uniqueness of individuals, nor do I ascribe to religion the force of the sole determinant of behavior, just as I am

not unaware of how uncertain its role is in these regions steeped in folklore and paganism, and how little interest the younger generations have in it. This having been said, it is nonetheless the case that, among other factors in socialization, the conception of the individual offered by religion—fashioned by History and fashioning it in turn—leaves its imprint on everyone and, unbeknownst to us, influences our psyches and our behavior. The peoples whom we hope to integrate into this expanded Europe throw at one another their specific and underlying conceptions of the individual, in the form of conflicts that (at worst) appear as wars of religion or (at best!) as inertias, insurmountable incompatibilities.

I shall try to tell you how I see the riches and limitations of subjectivity as it has been fashioned by Orthodoxy. And to ask myself about its ability—or lack thereof—to confront the moral crisis.

Let us return to the publication of the *Philocalia* by Païssi Velitchkovski in 1793. A prayer from the heart, this "freeing" from the sensory, emancipated as it is from objectivation and intellection, is at the opposite pole from the "freedom" of autoactive understanding determined, according to Kant, as the cause of sense impressions brought under control. Throughout the nineteenth century the *Philocalia* guided the religious practice of many Russians, monks and laypeople alike, and influenced the spiritual renaissance of that period. The philocalic movement found its highest form of expression in the emer-

gence of a line of ascetics called *startsy*, "the Old Ones," stemming for the most part from the hermitage at Optino in the Kaluga region. The character Zossima in *The Brothers Karamazov* is a sublime example of these men of God, available, perceiving in each person his absolute mystery, capable of infinite compassion, giving of themselves, and living immersed in the evils of the century and in individual sufferings. Optino influenced Slavophile intellectuals such as Khomiakov and Vladimir Soloviev, who found there the idea of "universal communion" (*sobornost*), and it also influenced writers and thinkers of the secular intelligentsia, whether Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy (those "great pneumatologists," as Berdyaev called them), Leontiev, or Rozanov, and many others who refer to it in their inspiration or their writings.

This intense moment of Orthodox spirituality, in contrast to the libertarian progress of the West, enables us—in what amounts to a history of the time, one for which Russian literature gives us evidence known worldwide—to measure the gulf that separates the two conceptions of the subject and its freedom that I described above. In contrast to the freely willed clarity of understanding, to its emphasis on questioning and critique, which extends to the point of putting in question not only the godhead but the social bond itself, we have the exaltation of an ineffable religious inwardness and of the ecclesiastical community in which it flourishes. This mysterious and fervent enthusiasm, this rush of intermingling that can be called "mysticism," will be transferred to the *nihilist* movement, the *atheistic* and also *Communist* trends, in such a way that these apparently liberatory and critical ideologies become de facto religious ideologies, in the sense that they are based on the affective, not critical, adherence of the subjects who subscribe to them.

The putting into question of the cause (divine or social), atheism or the cynical challenging of the social tie (think of Voltaire's irony or the sober passion of Diderot), seems structurally impossible in Orthodoxy. For, as Dostoyevsky has Makarios, the young man's father-substitute, say in *The Adolescent*, man cannot live without genuflecting; he cannot bear to do so and no one could do so: if he turns away from God, he will kneel before a wooden idol, or a gold one, or an imaginary one. In *On the Way*, Chekhov goes further, saying in the voice of one of his characters that Russian life is an interrupted series of bursts of faith; if the Russian does not believe in God, all this means is that he believes in something else. This character, a militant atheist, also says that in his entire life there has not been a single hour in which he did not believe. He transfers this attitude of belonging all the way to science:

> nothing upsets you or grips the human mind so much as the beginnings of a science. Right from the first five lessons you feel yourself urged on by wings of hope, you

> already think of yourself as being the master of truth. I too gave myself passionately to the sciences, body and soul, as to a beloved woman. I was their slave [*rab*] and, outside of this, I would recognize no other sun. [cited in Nivat 1988, pp. 415–426]

"How, then do you explain the cynicism of Communist or mafiosi atheists?" you will retort. I shall answer like Chekhov: they *believe in* their cynicism, they believe in their unbelief, they cling to it violently. Those who do not, retreat into their painful intimacy or are passionately glued to their humiliation and give up competition. They sulk, and this resignation is, for me, another source of what I have called "Bulgaria, my suffering."

Immersed in these excesses of either passivity or cynicism, the philocalic "soul" seems overcome by the difficulties of returning to the universe of competitiveness, undergoing the destruction of moral values, the anomie of the world of the marketplace, and the passivity of show-business society. Nevertheless, the remnants of what Solzhenitsyn calls *pafos stihii*, religious pathos, can be seen in the indifference to everything "public"—the public sector inheriting the discreditation of the cult of the "collective" imposed by Communism—and this indifference enables and fosters all sorts of practices of corruption and extortion.

And yet, and yet . . . this passionate and fusional subjectivity also seems to me to offer a counterweight to the

exhaustion of Western freedom in pretense and the spectacular. But before I return to its fruitful latency, I first want to emphasize its differences with regard to the libertarian dynamics of the subject that have emerged from Western Christendom.

First of all, let us briefly mention Orthodoxy's well-known tendency to *political instrumentalization*, even before the Great Schism of 1054, a tendency found in the various national Churches: Russian, Greek, Bulgarian, Serbian, and so forth. By instrumentalization I understand the ecclesiastical dependence on political power that often degenerated into retreat when it didn't degenerate into total submission. This instrumentalization is rooted in the Byzantine principle whereby the Patriarch holds his territory from a *secular* act of law determined by political circumstances (whereas Rome, in contrast, claims a *divine* right), to the point where the *Basileus*, the Byzantine Emperor, is involved in the affairs of the Church and selects the Patriarch; in return the Church cooperates in bringing about social stability and the archaism of religion. "For a Christian, there is no Church without an Emperor": this saying of Patriarch Anthony (1391–1397) has had great resonance in connection with the political allegiances, indeed subordinations, of Orthodox Churches in the twentieth century. The interaction culminates in the identification of the Church with the Nation, an identification that gave rise to the young Slavic states in the Middle Ages (I am thinking of Boris,

the Bulgarian Khan from 852–859; of Simeon I, the Bulgarian *Basileus* in 913; and of the invention of the Cyrillic alphabet) and ended in *a strange osmosis between faith and nationalism.* It is easy to overlook the reductive and explosive effects of this amalgamation when assessing the "liberatory role" of the Orthodox Church against the Turkish occupation in the Balkans during the nineteenth century. On the other hand, and with no excuse, all the dangerous latent potentials of integrationism contained in this osmosis between faith and nationalism are plainly seen in the Yugoslavian drama of today.

Next, from my perspective as a psychoanalyst, I shall define the dynamics of the subject constituted in the Orthodox Trinity and the consequences of these dynamics for the role of feelings, drives, and images with regard to the objects of desire and of thought. There are three focal points in this approach: the *Per Filium* of the Trinity, *hesychasm*, and the *icon*.

Per Filium

God is threefold in Orthodoxy, but not in the same way as in Catholicism: the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *through* the Son for the Orthodox (*per filium*); the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *and* from the Son for the Catholics (*filioque*). While this "and" puts Father and Son on an equal footing and prefigures the autonomy

and independence of the person (that of the Son, as well as that of the believer, which opens the way to Western individualism and personalism), the Orthodox "through" suggests a delicious but deadly annihilation of the Son and of the believer.

The Father's omnipotent authority is inalienable: *arkhé anarkhos*, the Father is divinity-origin. The Son is his servant and assistant who, by means of this servitude—"through"—nonetheless raises and deifies himself. Subordinate and godlike at the same time, the Son (and with him the believer) is caught in an exquisite logic of submission and exaltation that offers him the joys and sorrows intrinsic to the master–slave dialectic and, on a more personal level, to male homosexuality.

This configuration accords a predominant place to the Father, subordinating the Son to a Father Pantokrator, forever separate and separating. Man is called on not to "free himself" from God, but to "unite freely" with Him and thereby "*to transmit divine life to his nature and to the universe of which he constitutes the hypostasis* (that is, he surpasses it and includes it in his personal existence)" (Clément 1995, p. 35).

What are the consequences of this Father–Son relation for the Oedipus?

A wish for union alternates with the suffering of separation, both forever unfulfilled. There results an unprecedented exploration of the pleasure in pain, which amounts to an erotization of masochism and of the de-

pressive position. Unable to become either the equal of the Father nor of a kind with Him, the Son tends either to identify with the Father as an aggressor, austere and inaccessible—hence the fascination in which he is held by a power that is fierce, fatal, without recourse—or to become effeminate.[3] Withdrawn into the feminine position of passivation, the son-subject takes shelter under the protective intimacy of the *pokrov*, the "veil," in a tenderness of renunciation and retreat. Denying in this way the Father's severity and inaccessibility, this loving abnegation plunges with delight into the beatification and exaltation of the Father, which the Son can neither oppose not disobey—something that, in contrast, the Jewish protagonists of the Biblical revolt allowed themselves to do, as rebels against and interpreters of a God who was equally severe!

Vassili Rozanov, for whom Orthodoxy is a mysticism of "contact" and "light touch," relishes the comparison of the sublinguistic, suboedipal, and supersensory adoration of the Orthodox faith to an intimacy "as intangible as a brioche in a bakery." This sensual intimacy repeats and denies the separation from the absolute Other who is the Father, the "cutoff" from God (the biblical *Bereshit*). I shall return to this emphasis on subverbal sensuality in *hesychasm*.

3. Besançon (1996) emphasizes these features of psychology in Russian Christianity.

Let us proceed with our psychoanalytic reflection. The son of the *Per Filium* is invited, not to oedipal rebellion, but to occupy the place of the daughter, to be the admiring wife of the Father that he/she will never be. One of the consequences of this absorption of the feminine by the Son may be observed in the *rarity of female sainthood in Orthodoxy*. Let us nevertheless cite one ancient exception in the Orthodox calendar: Juliana of Nazarevskoye (my patron saint!), who died in 1604. Neither a virgin nor a martyr, she was a helpful mother who distributed to beggars "sweet" bread that she made out of treebark and orache. More recently, canonized in 1988, was Xenia of Petersburg (eighteenth century), who did charitable work disguised as her dead husband, whose clothes she wore, saying that she herself had died and that it was he who was alive in the female body that people saw, or thought they saw. In short, since the place of the woman is taken by the subject-man, who aspires to union with the Father, all a woman can do is to be that man. Which, parenthetically, offers some explanation for the fabulous courage and legendary endurance of many generations of peasant women and female Slavic intellectuals, who were sort of "hard-core feminists" before the fact. With the exception of Barbara—who lived in 306 at Heliopolis in Phoenicia, a healer in the reign of Maximilian, whose relics were transferred to Constantinople, then to Kiev—women Orthodox saints are the wives of princes (Olga; Euphrosyne of Polock;

Anna Kasinskaya, wife of St. Michael, Prince of Tver; Euphrosyne of Suzdal; Euphrosyne of Moscow, wife of Dmitri Donskoy).

When not absorbed into the adoration-feminization of the Son, the revolt can appear only as *destruction*, since the incommensurable divine authority cannot be discussed, criticized, or negotiated. Destructive pathos (the *pafos stihii* mentioned above) seems to me to be another consequence of this unrepresentable Father–Son encounter. The negativity of judgment analyzed by Kant is submerged by the rageful, totally destructive affect of nihilism, which overthrows the old norm in order to set up a contrary value, itself equally beyond discussion and criticism. Dostoyevsky describes the specific alchemy of this co-presence of negative violence and adoration that sweeps away the limits of understanding as the need to go beyond the boundary, the need for negation in the man who is perhaps the least given to negation and the most piously docile. In the notebooks of *The Possessed* he pertinently observes of Kirilov (a character strongly based on the starets Tihon, whose secular name was Kirilov): "From the gorilla to the annihilation of God, and from the annihilation of God to the gorilla." Similarly, Chekhov describes this violence without transition, this negation without dialectic: *"It is because I did not believe like a German doctor of philosophy, no fussing, and I did not withdraw to the desert, but each of these new times broke me in two, tore up my body"* (cited in Nivat 1988, emphasis added).

This subjectivity, promoted by the *Per Filium* configuration, would correspond to an incomplete Oedipus (but how many Oedipus complexes are truly resolved, regardless of cultural tradition?) that maintains the son in a fusional dyad instead of emphasizing the oedipal triangulation he achieves insofar as he is a speaking being. In optimal development, the oedipal revolt leads the son to an *identification* with the father, one that is neither a *separation* nor an *osmosis*. This identification is elaborated in the erotic experience of castration by virtue of language. It sets up a Superego in the subject, more or less toned down, the source of morality, action, freedom. Needless to say, we are taking for granted here the schema of the resolution of the oedipal conflict understood by the cultural doxa, without going into the dramas and failures of the Superego.

Morality, action, freedom: these are character traits and features of the social bond that the Russian Catholics of the nineteenth century—like Gagarin, Pečerin, but also Chaadaev who, though praising Catholicism, did not convert to it—will search for and find in the West. For without an explicit insistence on the oedipal triangulation that leads to the autonomous "self," without its highlighting in doctrine or education, the Orthodox subject tends to remain in a logic of communion based on the dual relationship. The Superego acquired under these conditions remains external, tyrannical, or superficial.

The bisexuality resulting from this fusional and sensual dyad enriches the sensitivity of the Orthodox man, but it is accompanied by a repression of castration anxiety—in favor of death anxiety. "I do not desire my mother; which may lead to sexual punishment. Now, I am the woman; hence I wish to die for the father"—this would be the syllogism of such a subjective configuration. On the other hand, in the classical or normative Oedipus, castration anxiety constructs the *subject of desire*: "I am not killed by the father but punished for my desire for the other sex, which amounts to recognizing my desire, stimulating it even while forbidding it." Many contemporary psychoanalysts, especially Guy Rosolato, stress this vital and liberatory aspect of castration anxiety in relation to catastrophic depressive or psychotic anxiety; they therefore emphasize the fact that castration anxiety specifies the tie to the other as the other sex. The heterosexual tie is erotized and becomes explicitly an arena of prowess, of transgressions, of provocation of the father and all authority. Don Juan is the brilliant archetype of this atheist, libertine subject who, despite the risks he runs, defies the Commandant.

On the other hand, the repression of castration anxiety makes possible the expression of more archaic psychic layers, those of preoedipal *masochism* and *depression*. Constituted in the narcissistic depressive manner, that kind of subjectivity exalts passion, lament, and

death, with accents that could be called almost Romantic. From the eleventh century on, the *strastoterptsy* practiced absolute obedience to the ways of Providence and accepted violent death. *Metanoia*, the process of "profound transformation," spiritual change," or "repentance" specific to Orthodox spirituality, is undoubtedly the primary expression of this descent into the "memory of death." And one can legitimately compare metanoia to certain depressive aspects of existentialist experience, especially to the sense of the absurd that imbues Sartre's *Nausea* (cf. Clément 1995, p. 110). "Keep your spirit in hell and do not despair," said the starets Sylvanus of Athos in 1938.

Such masochistic excesses can only fascinate the contemporary Western subject, when the seduction of erotism, which has been banalized and commercialized, is collapsing in an increasingly permissive society, promoting the resurgence of areas of the psyche that were too quickly and too poorly covered over by the Oedipus. And we may note the return of what the Greeks called *kakon*, evil, or in other words the catastrophic and especially the depressive dimension of the psyche prior to oedipal elaboration and liberation. It hollows out a gap, strictly speaking unnamable, in "our" modern psyche.

Indeed, depression turns out to be one of the major symptoms of these "new maladies of the soul" that cannot be treated with the classical therapeutics of oedipal desire but require a special kind of attention and

interpretation. In this new context, "their" excesses of depressivity and "their" personal experience reflect in explicit fashion, crude and cruel, "our" own malaise.

Hesychasm

The counterpart of this incompletion of the Oedipus in the Orthodox psyche is the development of mysticism. The archaic layers of the psyche animate the mysticism that does not *represent* them—if by "representation" we mean words and images—but *welcomes* them in the preverbal register of "sense experience" and thereby brings a calming consolation personally and socially.

Russian theologians have placed great emphasis on the humanistic qualities of Orthodoxy. Through the intermediation of the Trinity and the "collaborative" role of the Son a "God-humanity," a "God-universe" is celebrated (Soloviev). Fedorov drew very concrete conclusions from this, stating that "the Trinity is our social program." But we must not be too quick to rejoice in this humanization of the divine. For, when all is said and done, what does the unknowableness of the Father lead to? To a *theology of experience* and not of knowledge, since the subject-believer is invited to a personal communion and an ontological participation that hold back from enlightenment. For this communion is not a "knowing," in the sense that knowledge is offered,

presented, given, and in this way alone given and presented freely. In parting company with philosophical dialogue and wisdom, affective participation in divinity withdraws from the *eidos* and hence from thought itself: God is neither this nor that, neither affirmation nor negation, not even "God" according to Gregory Palamas. Absorbed in the unrepresentable, Orthodox faith has a glorious and inaccessible divinity looming over the universe and, at the same time, evacuates God from human reality. United with man but unthinkable by him, God is not dead, but he implodes in man. Symmetrically, by participating in this way man is a microtheos and a microcosm, but equally inconceptualizable and unfathomable.

"*Concepts create idols of God; only a sudden emotion can sense something*," states Gregory of Nyssa. The glorification of the Father is experienced without concept and without negation, in an "access of emotion," an intuitive revelation that contrasts with Augustinian interrogation, which extends into Catholicism and Protestantism the questioning of ancient philosophy. "The elaboration of negation is only an intellection of what seems different from God. But those who have been placed in that light praise him by using the image of total renunciation: mystical union with the light that teaches them that this light is superessentially transcendent to everything," Gregory of Palamas says elsewhere. Thus there is no theology, since prayer *is* theology.

The arrogance of this mystical subtraction of God from "representation" and from "the knowledge of everything" runs the risk of distancing him from human affairs. God is somewhere else, not there where we are, speak, represent, work, produce. Doesn't this separate ineffability lead slyly, insidiously, perniciously, to nihilism? "God is dead, all is permitted," proclaims the Dostoyevskian nihilist. We may wonder whether the structure of nihilism is not secretly inherent in Orthodox mysticism. And whether it is because God is unrepresentable and incontestable, that all is permitted in the order of representation?

This affective participation in divinity that remains outside of language involves the mystery—essential in Orthodoxy—of Mary. She offers an almost infinite sensory freedom to the believer, as long as he identifies with the position of ineffable flesh of the mother of Christ. The *maniakos eros*, as Maxim the Confessor calls it, the mad love that God bestows, along with Mary's *fiat*, do not resolve the tragedy of freedom but rather constitute it. The unknowability of the *Deus absconditus* makes the Orthodox man united with him a *homo absconditus*—indefinable, impossible to conceptualize.

Yet this mystery brings forth endless delights: the cult of *silence*, spiritual excellence being silent and contemplative; of tenderness (*katanyxis*) that does not judge but welcomes; of the unification of awareness and the heart that occurs in the *love of beauty* (*philocalia*). The

evidence of the living divine, like an ocean of light, is *gentleness*, and it is vouchsafed not to reason but to the heart or to feeling: the "feeling everything in God" of Isaac of Syria becomes a cult of the "feeling of God" that rejects *words* and departs from the logical path of Catholic and Protestant theology. *Apophasis* is the apex of this *negative theology* that denies any conceptual delimitation of God: neither value, nor concept, nor representation, God is the inaccessible one who participates and is participated in, the bottomless mystery, the unobjectivizable.

Some have interpreted this primacy of sensitivity over reason or ratiocination in Orthodoxy as fidelity to Jewish spirituality. But this is instead an Eastern graft, a sensory paganism that comes to lodge in the separateness of the Jewish God and to fulfill it "tenderly." Neither in the Biblical separation that incites revolts and interpretations, nor in the Greek dialectic of *philosophia*, Orthodoxy has coiled itself in the slow blossoming of Being toward the Logos. But without adopting the Freedom of this association, it holds back and stresses the sensual difficulties of its advent. In psychoanalytic terms, one might say that Orthodox experience valorizes the preoedipal, narcissistic, depressive stages of personality; in linguistic terms, that it favors the "semiotic" preverbal more than the verbal "symbolic" of signs, syntax, and logical argumentation (Kristeva 1975, Chapter 1).

Quite often—too often—this mystical approach has been accused of excluding the subject from History and from the competitiveness of free subjects. On the other hand, I would like to emphasize that this same logic, beyond its handicaps, also has the advantage of rehabilitating the thick sensory texture that the "false selves," the "as-if personalities" are too quick to spare themselves. With the "new maladies of the soul" Orthodox anthropology contrasts the overabundance of the soul; and if the affective flooding represents a brake in the race for performance, the vitality of that "soul" can also be a source and a support for regaining an authentic and complex psychic life. Didn't Heidegger himself (1989), in contemplation in an Orthodox monastery at Kaysariani, become aware of the unique presence of a *truth* that does not deny the difficulty of the blossoming forth of Being? A *truth* that would still remain perceptible within the rush toward that factitious independence in which a technical civilization producing "goods" takes pleasure?

In the literature of Orthodox countries we find these sensory palettes that restore the depressive or elational tonalities of the soul open to sense perception. The *literature of hell*, in which the writers of late Communism and present-day post-Communism excel—let us cite Solzhenitsyn and Chalamov as the best known—is a literature neither of freedom nor of esthetic refinement, but a literature of the sensory, I would say of *hesychasm*. Neither stylists nor philosophers, Solzhenitsyn and

Chalamov set about to convey a temporality of *metanoia*, of the descent to hell. Without ellipses, but as in a direct report, they use banal anecdotes to narrate the excesses of horror, the acute feelings of suffering and deprivation, all the painful experience of a Plutonian world saturated with Evil, in a language that is dry, clear, drab, but full. Like the god Pluto returning to the earth's surface, the writer invents a sensory writing of postmodern contagion and communicability, whether in the fullness of joy or in that of suffering and misfortune.

In contrast, "our" literature prefers to exit from hell, especially since History, which was more favorable to us, ultimately facilitates this escape. But for those among "us" who are in hell nonetheless, psychologically and socially—and they are many!—this Plutonian–Slavic literature conveys a major existential dimension that the freely formalist or complacently hedonistic exploits of Western literature are slow to approach.

The experience of *hesychasm* thus reveals *a contrario* the traps of our freedom when the latter is reduced to merely the atomization of solitary egoisms, often in distress, of subjectless masks stuck in the competition that alienates them. When freedom is confused with the search for the best causes producing the best effects, it actually ends up as robotization. The "free" subject—or rather the robot—then realizes that he needs . . . *dependence*. Well, *hesychasm* removes the guilt from this need for dependence. The person who draws inspiration from

it is not a performing subject, nor even a self, but an avowed adherence, a *subornost*, a communion.

We may wonder whether creating bonds among free individuals is still a possible goal for modern man. To achieve it, we would perhaps have to rehabilitate those deep, passive, and sensory layers of interpersonal communion, of *subornost* (Soloviev) and recognize the "integral, superindividual, and communal character" of the person, according to Trubetskoy, as suggested by Orthodox psychology as interpreted by Florensky, Berdyaev, and Bulgakov.

To balance freedom with bonds would amount to balancing understanding with the sensory. "They" have been attending for a longer time than "we" have to these "superessential" states, as Gregory of Nyssa called them; to these states before essence?—that are the sensory, prelinguistic states that we are so sorely lacking. In contrast, "*hesychastic* morality" holds out other snares for modern men, cut off as it is from the sphere of production, from objectivity, from the social. It is easy to understand how the "public sphere" can become a matter of indifference to this intimist sensibility: one finds oneself neglecting what is external, the public outside; one slips into depression, into social withdrawal. Or else the public sphere is overinvested, but without free examination, without moralization, becoming nothing more than a manic or mafioso domain of the settling of accounts; and we are back with the *pafos stihii*.

Icon versus Image

A final aporia leads me to contrast icon and image. The fixity of the iconic canon pales beside the figurative flourishing of Catholicism, which extends from the Renaissance up to modern deconstruction. Byzantium, however, carries out an initial revolution in the modern fate of the spectacle with the triumph of the "iconodules" over the "iconoclasts." Thanks to the theory of the patriarch Nicephorus at the end of the ninth century (cf. Mondzain 1996), the image made by the hand of man is justified: it is an *economy* of the divine presence. By "economy" we are to understand its bestowal, its evolving progress, its advent, but also its management, its ruse, its dialectic. This negotiation of the image between invisible and visible does not definitively dissociate Being from appearance, but the image *inscribes* it rather than manifesting it: the icon is a *graphein*, a sensible trace, not a spectacle.

On the other hand, the Latin conception of *figura*, in the sense of a "prophecy in act" as Auerbach has defined it, turns out to be a more fruitful and freer means for the growth of representation. The figure goes back to the real events of a history (Jewish, but also Greek) and interprets them as promises of an open meaning to come, an option that will dominate the entire destiny of Western representation: Eve prefigured Mary, Moses Christ, the Synagogue the Church, and so forth. In this dynamic, what had already been acquired in the form of Greek and

Latin figuration would become personalized, face and psychology choosing as the privileged site of their accomplishment precisely the universe of images.[4]

Today we are experiencing the disappearance of this freedom of representation in the pretense of generalized spectacle. When a modern painter (I am thinking of Lucio Fontana) rediscovers the relevance of a gesture that inscribes instead of representing or figuring, he is implicitly rediscovering the iconic-Byzantine and Russian economy, that of Nicephorus and Andrey Rublev. And he is inviting us to a participation in the visible that is not limited to the gaze alone but engages our entire affectivity. The icon's oscillation between visible and invisible is thus unconsciously sought.

Yet I would not go so far as to say that the people of formerly Communist Orthodox countries watch television as though it were icons! Nor even that they are ready to seek the underlying meaning that—like a mystical truth—makes its way beneath appearances that are by definition deceptive.

I am simply saying that there exists a way to make ourselves free, to make them free, in a world in which our freedom is in crisis: that is to go back to the source of the cultural memory that animates us—and that animates them just as much, though they are consciously unaware of it. To rework the approaches implicit in their religion, so as to undo the snares of passivation, but also in order to draw from it the antidotes against our world that is too sure of its freedoms and now always aware of its failures. Depressivity, surly narcissism, the nonperformative sensibility, and the incapacity for critical reason also involve a positive side, and this is the value placed on dependence, participation, and the bond; it is the invisible mystery scotomized by the economy of the image. Those are "freedoms" in quotation marks because they are gestating and retreating from our achievement and our performances, the bitter taste of which should urge us to reflect, in turn, on our own impasses. And to seek new versions of freedom.

4. This development of representation from the *icon* to the *figure* was set forth in the exhibit "Capital Visions" at the Louvre; cf. the text of the catalogue by Kristeva 1998.

Encounters?

In the face of this spiritual contribution of the Orthodox world and the differences that impede communication with the other Europe, most of the clear minds of these countries are attempting to join forces with the social and economic history of their peoples as well as with trends in Western thought.

Catholicism?

Nihilism?

Communism?

The conversions to Catholicism, rare but intense, especially in the nineteenth century, led to a challenging of Orthodoxy, and some predicted that, without this change of course, Russia would head straight for revolution.[5] In another way, the nihilism of the 1860s was a social and political reaction to czarism and social archaisms, but also and more profoundly a rejection of Orthodox spirituality, although, as I have said, it seemed to take up on the secular level, with its own means of passionate investment and destructive pleasure, the passions of *hesychasm* and *metanoia*. Finally a third path: in Geneva, in the beginning of the twentieth century, Lenin reads Hegel and writes *Materialism and Imperiocriticism* and *Notebooks on Dialectics* before assuming leadership of the October Revolution.

Nowadays some of "them" are adapting brilliantly, or perversely, to the market economy. Catholicism, nihilism, Hegelian-Marxist philosophy, pragmatism of the new world order? Whatever the nature of the engagement, they do not fill a gap; they move in a different mental structure, either, on the one hand, through abandoning their origins by choosing Catholicism or becoming involved without morality in the market economy, or, on the other, through transposing their origins, which confers this religious aspect on contemporary philosophical, atheistic, or materialistic options.

5. Thus we see Gargarin's warnings against the nationalism of the Orthodox Church which, through its Byzantinism, paved the way for Communism: "Catholicism or revolution, that is the terrible dilemma that the statesmen of Russia do not yet seem to see," he wrote in 1856 (p. 51). Cf. Dmitrieva 1995, pp. 311–336).

We lack an anthropology of national and, more broadly, religious psychology. If one existed, it could, beyond the indispensable economic reconstruction, prepare a civilization. This anthropology should undertake a reevaluation of both the advantages and the difficulties of Orthodoxy with regard to the necessities of technology and freedom. Let us note in this connection the phenomenon of *Eurasianism*.

The Eurasianism of the 1920s[6]—which can be interpreted as a reaction to the Revolution and at the same time as a return to the Hellenistic spirit of Florovsky, extolling Russia as the union (*splav*) of East and West in ecclesiastical reasoning—reemerged in 1990–1991 and seems to be an attempt to rethink both Orthodoxy and a centaur-Russia with its Mongol and Byzantine heritage. Thus it is stated that Russians are not better than Europeans but different, that, even apart from the Turks, Russia is Eurasian, that its identity is to be on the border (*graničnost*), as Kozinov claims. This Eurasianist current has seen two versions in recent years. One is interna-

6. For its birth and development see Trubetskoy, Suvčinski, and Savicky.

tionalist and defends the argument that Russia is a hybrid, a hyphen between Europe and Asia: an observation that is often made by certain journalists and political scientists in the journal *Naš Sopvremennik* but repudiated by the nationalists of the same publication. On the other hand, in the columns of Dugin's journal *Elements* we find the other, nationalistic-patriotic version of Eurasianism, advocating instead an identitarian, indeed isolationist, strengthening. On both sides, however, instead of thinking about the identitarian catastrophe, the problem is evaded and absorbed into a new messianism. The universalist syndrome is spreading out once again: Eurasia is experienced as a variant of "Moscow, the third Rome," gathered into a restricted space, nostalgic for the All (cf. Désert and Paillard 1994).

Is Russia at the point of having to begin its history over again? This was Fontaine's (1997) worried question in view of the "ferocity" of the new Russian capitalism and the ensuing social and moral crisis. He adds:

> Lacking a "central power" that is working hard to assert itself, must we not expect to see taking root a feudalism, based as much on regional identity as on economic power, until the day when one lord, stronger than the others and having subdued them, will once more raise, at least figuratively, the imperial crown that has already reappeared on the pediments of public buildings?

This is a radical point of view. It has the merit of not evading the radicality of the crisis. My analysis could perhaps supplement this radical vision. "A" god cannot save us, as Heidegger hoped. But it would be historically just if we were to begin to federate the diverse currents of Christianity that, for the most part, share spirituality in Europe. Then, starting with this federation, difficult but essential to constitute, there would have to be undertaken a moral and subjective reconstruction of the formerly Communist Orthodox countries. Only then, on the basis of this revised and renewed tradition, could a true secular and critical labor of education and philosophical questioning become possible, inviting freer inquiries later on. But a democratic administration and economy cannot be created without rebuilding a free subjectivity. The two tasks, political and spiritual, are parallel.

"They" and "we." If we are to construct a civilization that is not solely one of production and commercial trade, we must redefine what we understand by "freedom." The freedom that we have to reconstruct together should be an autocommencement, to be sure, but with the other, and this not in order to produce the best causes for the best effects, but to share the power of beginning oneself anew with the other. The freedom of desire that is the desire for objects, knowledge, and production, joined with the freedom to withdraw into

intimacy and mystical participation, are the two indissociable variants of European freedom. Because they have been separated, each of the two parts of this schism is vulnerable to impasses: the unbridled pursuit of objects of desire, even false ones; the stupidity of the media; the robotization of production; atomization; social insecurity; and the "new maladies of the soul" on the one side, and the immobilization in painful narcissism; the hellish complacency outside of time; social amoralism; and pauperization on the other. Is a revision possible?

Psychoanalysis tries to bring about this synthesis microscopically, clinically, by working on catastrophic desire and anxieties, the Oedipus and narcissism, the erotic and the morbid. The war of the Churches, whose echoes reach us after rather unsuccessful, and quite media-conscious, attempts at ecumenical encounters, does not augur well for a reconciliation in the near future. Without a counterforce, the "new world order" of the accumulation of capital goods, covered over by the society of the spectacle, may reduce Orthodox populations to the ranks of the most deprived, the least prepared for the universal risks of moral and psychic decline to which the modern practice of freedom in any case exposes man wherever he may be.

It seems urgent to go beyond these schisms by re-evaluating the treasures on both sides and detecting

their impasses. The transmutation of religious memory, like the transmutation of metals dear to the alchemists, must spare no one, neither "them" nor "us."

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4 Bulgaria, my Suffering

For Lydia Uldry-Nacheva

Which Language?

I have not lost my mother tongue. It comes back to me, with greater and greater difficulty, I confess, in dreams; or when I hear my mother talking, and after twenty-four hours of immersion in that water that had been so distant since that time, I surprise myself by swimming quite comfortably; or again when I am forced to speak an alien language—Russian or English, for example—and, at a loss for words and grammar, I cling to that old life buoy that suddenly becomes available to me through the original source that, after all, is not so soundly asleep. And so it isn't French that comes to my aid when I get into trouble in an artificial code, nor when I'm tired and can't remember my addition and multiplication tables, but rather Bulgarian, to show me that I haven't forgotten the beginnings.

And yet Bulgarian is already an almost dead language for me. That is to say, a part of me was slowly extinguished as I learned French with the Dominicans, then at the Alliance, then at the university; and, finally, exile cadaverized this old body and substituted another for it—at first fragile and artificial, then more and more indispensable, and now the only one that is alive, the French one. I am almost ready to believe in the myth of

the resurrection when I examine that bifid state of my mind and my body. I have not mourned the childhood language in the sense that a "completed" mourning would be a detachment, a scar, indeed a forgetting. But above this hidden crypt, on this stagnant reservoir that is disintegrating, I have built a new residence in which I dwell and that dwells in me, and in which there unfolds what one might call, not without affectation obviously, the true life of the spirit and the flesh.

I shiver with this pearly mist that barely grazes the marshes of the Atlantic and absorbs in a Cantonese silk the cries of seagulls and the lazy siesta of the mallards. I dream of a springtime in which all automobiles will be perfumed and the poor horses will eat flowers: Apollinaire. From this vagueness that is my immersion in Being, that no speech can sum up from the outset, that the term "joy" trivializes while "ecstasy" embalms it, I hold onto a calmness punctuated with French words. At the frontiers of my senses an imperceptible trembling searches for the French language; at the same time, and in the opposite direction, somewhere above a clear accumulation of this flux, an entire battery of French readings and conversations sends down a luminous web that gets chosen by what is heartfelt in order to give an existence to my calmness. An alchemy of naming, in which I am alone with French. Naming Being makes me be: body and soul, I live in French.

And yet, when the plot thickens, that is, every time Being comes back to me like a story—that of the pearly mist or the mallard ducks, and of course that of a dream, a passion, or a murder—a surge that is not made up of words but has a music all its own imposes an awkward syntax on me, and these unfathomable metaphors that have nothing to do with French politeness and obviousness infiltrate my calmness with a Byzantine unease. I depart from French taste. French taste is an act of politeness among people who share the same rhetoric—the same accumulation of images and phrases, the same battery of readings and conversations—in a stable society. It's no use my trying to come back to life in French; for almost fifty years now my French taste has not always been able to resist the jolts of an early music coiled around a memory that is still vigilant. From these connected vessels there emerges a strange language, a stranger to itself, neither from here nor from there, a monstrous intimacy. Like the characters in Proust's refound time, whose long years of voluntary and involuntary memories are embodied in immense spaces, I am a monster of the crossroads.

At the intersection of two languages, and of at least two lengths of time, I mold an idiom that seeks what is obvious so as to hollow out pathetic allusions there and, under the smooth guise of these French words polished like the stone of a holy-water font, to uncover the dark

gilt of Orthodox icons. Giant or dwarf, the monster who struggles out of them takes pleasure in never being content with itself, at the same time as it exasperates the natives—those of the country of origin as well as those of the receiving country.

When this anxiety—which is in fact a pocket of air, a breathing hole, an amphetamine—quiets down in order to justify itself before others, I could explain to you how those men and women of the borderlands, those unclassifiable ones, those cosmopolitans among whom I include myself, represent on the one hand the pulsation of the modern world surviving its famous lost values, thanks to or despite the flood of immigration and hybridization, and on the other hand, and as a result, embody that new positivity that is forming contrary to national conformisms and internationalist nihilisms. More precisely, if we take account of history as it is told in newspapers, there are two solutions for facing up to, and perhaps even putting an end to, Sarajevo and Chechnya: on one side, encourage the flourishing of national languages and cultures (I shall come back to this), but, on the other side, favor those species that, while on the way to proliferation, are still rare, protect those hybrid monsters that we are, migrant writers who risk what we know neither here nor there; and why should we do so, I ask you? Well, so as to generate new beings of language and blood, rooted in no language or blood, diplomats of the dictionary, genetic negotiators, wandering Jews of Being

who challenge authentic, and hence military, citizens of all kinds in favor of a nomadic humanity that is no longer willing to sit quietly.

And the suffering in this fine program? I was expecting the question, and my answer is only half prepared. There is matricide in giving up the language of one's birth, and if I have suffered from losing that Thracian beehive, the honey of my dreams, it is not without the pleasure of revenge, surely, but especially without pride in accomplishing what was the initial project of the bees of my native country. To fly higher than their parents: higher, more swiftly, more strongly. It is not for nothing that we are the heirs of the Greeks; our children will have Russian, English, French, the world for their own. A fate that is always painful, exile is the only way remaining to us, since Rabelais and the fall of the Berlin Wall, to find the bottle. And it is never found except in the seeking that knows it is seeking, or in exile exiled from its exile's certainty, its exile's insolence. In this endless mourning, in which language and the body revive in the heartbeat of a grafted French, I examine the still warm corpse of my maternal memory. Not involuntary, nor unconscious, but what I say is "maternal," because at the outer edge of words set to music and of unnamable urges, in the neighborhood of the senses and the biology that my imagination has the good fortune to bring to existence in French—suffering comes back to me, Bulgaria, my suffering.

It isn't I. It is my maternal memory, this warm corpse that can still speak—a body in my body—that vibrates in unison with the infrasounds and informations, the suppressed loves and blatant conflicts, the Gregorian music and commercial slogans, childhood tenderness and mafia brutality, wretched political, economic, ideological stupidities, and with you people who are confused or grossly ambitious, profiteers and idlers, driven speculators, individualists without shame or plan, you, history's unclaimed baggage who try to catch hold of history again without much idea of how to go about it, you, Bulgarians, invisible, undesirable, a white patch on brightness, dark Balkans pierced by the incuriosity of the West that I belong to. Your compliments are reproaches, your gratitude seems like a demand, your hopes get underway in a state of depression and nod off to sleep before they can even be formulated, your songs weep, your laughter anticipates misfortune, you are dissatisfied, you are unwilling to join in; and although you got up too early you arrive too late in a world that is too old but is constantly rejuvenating itself and doesn't like latecomers. You believe for some unknown reason, for no reason, that everything is coming to you; you want everything as long as you can doze through it, or laze about, or hedge, maneuver, cheat, and sometimes work yourselves to death; but, my God, why kill yourselves? You hurt me, my fellows, my brothers. Bulgaria, my suffering.

Lapses of Taste

Let us look at matters from the other direction. I put myself in your place and I am fully aware of the arrogance of this pretention. Yet it is those who have remained below who bear the onus of the real, that is, the impossible, as everyone knows. When all is said and done, the task isn't very different from mine, but in the opposite direction. Onto the original idiom (which immediately implies thoughts and lives), one has to graft words (which immediately implies thoughts and lives) from which one has been separated by an iron curtain for fifty years; by a stammering democracy for more than a century; by an oppositional nationalism with no content other than its resistance to Islam; and by a religion that, since the Middle Ages, had been faithful to its middle age.

I would not like to be in your place, and I would not debate with those who would accuse me of having fled precisely this difficulty.

They began by translating Shakespeare and Dostoyevsky, then got to Faulkner, Beckett, Nathalie Sarraute, Barthes, Foucault, a bit of Kristeva. It became clear that there were not enough words, and so they stuffed into this poor language of sensitive peasants and naive thinkers a whole arsenal of tasteless and rootless loanwords. As syntax became more cumbersome without thought becoming more flexible, they thought it was a good idea

to transfer this Esperanto for university-educated polyglots into the columns of "liberal," "cultivated," and "open" journals. How could one do otherwise, when everything is good only when it "opens up"! So here we are before this puzzle in which the press excels after the Wall: on the one hand, the insults of louts who, in the language of louts, call other louts who are just as bad, louts, but without the piquant insolence of the surrealists; on the other hand, foreign words, barely modified by a suffix, that impress the parvenu when he sees them in Cyrillic but—I give up here[1]—inspire pity in the stateless person that I am and migraine in the so-called half-cultivated public. On the one side, the tide of rather scatological drives (O Sade, O Rabelais, a little style, please!); on the other, the Précieuses (O Diafoirus, O Molière, let's be misanthropic!). On both sides—a lack of taste. That is the threat. Does it seem minor to you? Let's not be so quick.

The French of the eighteenth century talked a lot about taste. By this they understood "the pleasures of the soul," as we *think* of them and especially as we *feel* them. The Encyclopedia even offers famous entries on taste signed by Voltaire and Montesquieu, who reflect on the *universal* rules presiding at its formation (based on the universality of human nature and on a shared

1. Translator's note: *Je donne ma langue aux chats*, literally, I give my tongue/language to the cats.

history), as well as on the legitimacy of individual *deviations*. It could not be otherwise, since taste is a rhetoric of recognition: it is necessary that *I* recognize myself, *you* recognize yourself, and *we* recognize each other, either under an authority (Church or monarchy, preferably both), or in an élite assumed to translate its essence here below (the court of Versailles), or in an individual value that, as the daughter of Christianity, is displayed in extreme spirituality, or the glow of passion (universal reason and intelligible sensualities). Taste is the rhetoric of this recognition through which the ego, centered around authority, the clan, or the individual hypostasis, finds in the other a language just like its own. Taste asserts the ego's difference from the other if, and only if, this difference is reconciled—and I taste harmony like a flavor—within the authority, the clan, the individual henceforth sharing the same language.

Taste is polite because it is addressed to its own: to those who share the same authority, the same clan, the same individual values. The Bruyères, Sévigné, and Saint-Simon had no need to define it, since taste went without saying. The Encyclopedists undermining the landmarks of the Ancien Régime were concerned to think about the possibility of a new taste that would not ignore the freedom or even the aberration of passion; these pre-revolutionaries were among the most civilized people that the West has known. Shortly before our time, Proust began to lose his footing at the foundation of the

baptistry of Saint Mark and right up to the courtyard of the Guermantes, and he became the explorer of lapses of taste, laughing at them to the profit of the only authority that still seemed to him to be able to guarantee taste, namely literature.

We are not yet there, when barbarity is collapsing and the mafia competes with free enterprise. No authority, no community, no individual. Lacking these three guideposts, the intellectual, who is in the end a creator of language, is inevitably exposed to lapses in taste. And no one has enough faith in literature, as did Proust, to make fun of it and turn the page. No one, or very few.

I want to stress this apparently minor point. I could have wept over the exorbitant prices of the black market, the pathetic retirement of old people, the garbage and flies in Sofia, once so clean, or over the implosion of "socialists" into "liberals" and vice versa, which makes everything unclear and every decision impossible. I prefer to stay with taste. Let us begin with the little things that give rise to big ones.

I'm not sure, not at all sure, that in your place I would have been able to seek out an authority, a community, a person, and hence a taste. But I would have tried to avoid the words that do not emanate from the authority of a group or the charisma of a person who is polite enough to get recognized by others concerned with the same politeness. Without this politeness, words remain alien neologisms stuck in dead sand, snobbish nonsense, sonorous inanities. If they lack politeness, they are offensive. These lapses of taste reveal the barbaric state of a society.

Please, no! Dare to invent words, but not without the ideas that you lack; cut the long sentences with foreign syntax for which you don't have the thought; change the rhythm; don't drone through the old elementary stuff, but also don't ape the tricks of those who, unlike you, come from a boudoir and a baroque of which you have no idea. Don't stick to the other—he is as unbearable as you are, and as changeable as you. One more effort to have confidence in yourself: no graft can take hold on a depressed body.

In principle, I am not even at war with neologisms, if they are the result of an attempt to think anew, if communities of men and women have ripened them in a concern for singularity in the memory of their language and in the discussions that forge their concepts. I do not see these communities, I do not see these singularities, I do not see this memory of language, I do not see these discussions. This is my suffering. Perhaps it is only a matter of blindness, since distance deprives me of information. This would be the lesser evil, and I ask your pardon. But if my suffering is justified, these lapses in taste would be only the final sign of the abject surrender of a people (and of so many others) to the new world order that wants to see only a single head—no, a single computer.

When Did God Die in the Balkans?

You suffer from chaos, from vandalism, from violence. You suffer from the lack of authority. You suffer from corruption, the absence of initiative, the sloppiness that redoubles an unprecedented brutality on the individual level, the arrogance of the mafia and the scams of the newly rich.

The West finds it hard to imagine your suffering, your humiliation. I don't dare to tell you that I share them, since—I grant you—it is so easy to do so from afar. Let's say that I suffer before the difficulty of a huge task, one that is incumbent on all of us, both over here and over there, in the coming years, the task of thinking "why?" Why this bankruptcy in the guise of a regained freedom? Before finding ways to get out of it.

It's no use telling you that I have no answer. Nor will I repeat what you already know about the responsibility of Communism or the failings of democracy in the young Bulgarian state that, since the liberation from the Turks in 1875, has experienced the repercussions of European diplomacy and the two world wars. On a more intimate scale, to which this reflection on language invites me, I think of *mentalities*. And I find, with so many others, that the moral crisis of the former Communist bloc looks more disconsolate, with fewer short-term perspectives and perhaps a more barbaric appearance, in

the countries of *Orthodox* faith. Serbian neo-Fascism is the acme of this disaster. And I wonder.

I don't think that there is a global "popular psychology," because I believe in the singularity of individuals. Nor do I ascribe to religion the power of a unique determinant of behavior. I also know how inessential the bond of faith is in those Balkan areas steeped in folklore and paganism, especially among current generations. It is nevertheless the case that, *among other factors*, the religious conception of the individual—fashioned by history and fashioning it in turn—leaves its mark on us without our awareness. And it modulates a major part of the psyche, which the peoples of this Europe that we hope to unite throw at one another in the form of those conflicts that, at worst, appear as wars of religion or, at best, as inertias, insurmountable incompatibilities.

I was fortunate enough, thanks to my father, to know and experience the strength of resistance that slumbers in the Orthodox faith. I love its sensuality, its mystery, that seclusion that makes us feel, in the celebration of the liturgy, the sorrows and joys of another world. It imbues us with the feeling—which is not a rational certainty—that we are not of this world. An impression, certainly, and illusory, but so happy, so liberating, so creative of good fortune! And so I shall not make a value judgment or laud the "excellences" of one branch of Christianity as opposed to the "inadequacies" of any

other. I shall try to tell you how I see the advances and the limitations of the person fashioned by Orthodoxy. And to ask myself about its ability—or lack thereof—to confront the moral crisis.

In "Europe Divided: Politics, Ethics, Religion" (this volume) I discussed the role of instrumentalization and the *Per Filium*. Because of this exalted and exalting subordination of the Son, faith descends from the suprasensory world in which Platonism located God and becomes a *human* and *social* program. Russian theologians did not hesitate to emphasize the humanistic "advantages" of Orthodoxy: through this Trinity and the *collaborative* role of the Son, Orthodoxy celebrates a "humanity-God" or a "universe-God" (Soloviev) and goes as far as to say that "the Trinity is our social program" (Fedorov).

But let us not be too quick to rejoice in this humanization of the divine in Orthopraxis. Isn't reducing the highest value (God) to human value the final trap of nihilism, if it is true that the order of human values is corruptible and pervertible? The trap of this *instrumentalization of the divine in the human* lies in the abasement, the devaluing, indeed the annulment of the ideal itself: of God himself (God is neither this nor that, neither affirmation nor negation, not even "god" according to Gregory of Palamas); of spiritual authority (apart from its institutional form); but also of *eidos* itself, of idea, representation, thought. Orthodoxy is, from the outset, a negative theology: the absence of God is naturalized

there into the cult of an unknowable God; God is not dead but he implodes in the Orthodox man—an inaccessible microtheos and microcosm.

I am taking a risk in pointing out, above and beyond the obvious benefits of this religious experience, the *most solid form of nihilism* known to Western culture. The implicit tenet of Orthodox faith would be "I am God, who is not God," the diametrical opposite of the Cartesian "I think, therefore I am," the possibility of which it cancels. "I am God, who is not God": the conjoining of the absolute and the nothing. Will to total power, and total poverty. This configuration can call in question Western ontotheology; it might perhaps under certain historical and philosophical conditions oppose it as a wholesome counterweight, and we understand how Heidegger let himself be seduced by Orthodox monks. And yet Orthodoxy does not impoverish ontotheology but circumvents it and immobilizes its actors.

On the one hand, caught in the grip between *instrumentalization* and *mysticism*, Orthodoxy provides the paranoid and masochistic satisfactions that Dostoyevsky revealed in his nihilists, especially in Raskolnikov. "The motionless movement of love" (as Maxim the Confessor calls it) of the Orthodox Trinity can encounter history only through acting out: individual terrorism ruptures the contemplation in which our "microtheos" delights, while state terrorism makes up for a lack of verbalization, education, and competition.

On the other hand, the trinitarian symbiosis makes Nietzsche's pronouncement that "God is dead" impossible in Orthodoxy. How can he be dead, since "I" am *he* and *he* is reduced to nothing in "me"? "God is dead" is undoubtedly a madman's project, certainly a risky and perhaps impossible act, but it engages the West, and brutally so ever since the nineteenth century, insidiously since its Greek, biblical, and Evangelical origins. The phrase is addressed to the Ideal, to the possibility that men can have Values, but it implies the Catholic and Protestant past of Europe. With the autonomous Subject as a lever, a *transvaluation of values* is envisaged by the philosophers who examine this crisis, from Nietzsche to Heidegger. *Not the annulment of values.*

Protestantism was a response to a historical stage of this crisis in the sixteenth century, but it was based on Western rationalism and saw in *predestination* an anxiety that pushes Protestant man in the direction of asceticism, methodical work, professional success, and scientific research. All these signs of election promoted the rise of capitalism. The Protestant ethic, even in its Puritan impasses, was a culmination of individual autonomy, and it often presupposes a repudiation of trinitarian mysticism. It is an improvement on the encouragement toward the Ideal (or toward God), in no way its murder. The secular, Masonic, or esoteric imitations of Protestantism depend on the preservation of Value and detest its relativization.

Nietzsche's rebellion takes another path entirely; it wants to exhaust the sources of the Ideal and its substructure of will, desire, and strength, so as to make visible other configurations of Being and of man. The "superman," it does not need to be repeated, is a "subversion" of man, a "re-volt" opening up the archeology of his essence, and in no way a "public lout."

Nothing qualifies Orthodox man—instrumentalized and mystical—to measure himself against these two figures of modernity. He lacks the ascetic autonomy, the diligent sobriety, the virtuous reading of the Protestant seeking salvation in Scripture and in the city (the spirit of enterprise). He lacks the philosophical distance from the Nietzschean madman who dissociates himself from God and, for more than three centuries, has been refining the figures of the *ego cogito* so that, thus armed, he can envisage other relations to the original Being, to knowledge, and to pleasure.

We Orthodox are the heirs of a triumphant nihilism. It is delicious, but it leaves us helpless in contemporary history when it isn't transforming us into "public louts." For two thousand years values have imploded in us, and we bewail and rejoice in this immanentized, annulled, transcendence. We have placed ourselves outside of history, and this is an exorbitant virtue. But history takes place, and today—after the Communist parenthesis that, in one sense was a terrible, costly stroke of bad luck, because it spared us the need to ask ourselves this ques-

tion—history calls us, we are eager for it. But are we really eager for it? As nihilists, we feel cheated. This is the basis of my suffering, and I see no quick way out of it, Bulgaria, my suffering.

Don't make me laugh, and don't make me say what I'm not saying. No. It's too late; no use trying to convert you to Catholicism, or even to Protestantism. But let us nevertheless take the measure of this huge fact, namely that in the world of advanced capitalism you want to join up with, God is dead. And let us try neither to steer clear of it nor to take advantage of it. Neither to throw ourselves greedily onto its untenable values, nor to debase them. But to participate in their transvaluation,

We can begin with very simple things. For example, we can begin to read, to decipher texts: the Greeks, the Bible and the Gospels, philosophers, writers. Comment, debate, understand. We can also devote ourselves to ourselves, take care of our autonomy, its desires, its dignity; undergo a psychoanalysis or psychotherapy. Try some religious experiences: the asceticism of the Protestants, the joy of the Catholics, and why not others as well? Return to Orthodoxy, rattle its cage, make its communitarian demands more concrete and more effective. Rediscover the meaning of values, speak them, transform them, leave them open, keep on renewing them. . . . This will take a long time, a very long time, Bulgaria, my suffering.

My attention has been called to a well-known text by Thomas Mann, the journal of the exile that he was during the Nazi years; it bears the title "Germany, my Suffering." The writer sees the tragedy of his country from the inside and from the outside, and although he condemns the shame of Hitlerism, he is equally aware of the insidious complicity of the majority of Germans with those who are ready to name their "brother Hitler." The barbaric violence of the Third Reich has nothing to do with the collapse of politics and morality in the former Communist empire, a collapse that Western democracies shaken by the "affairs" are not really ignorant of, even if the extent of the crisis there is way beyond our ken. Thus there is no direct link between Thomas Mann's journal and my personal notes, unless it is this outside-and-inside position and this disquiet in the face of an upheaval whose misdeeds reach us with full force but whose consequences cannot be foreseen today.