APPRAISAL

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For Peace.

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EDITORIAL

With this issue we come to the end of our fourth volume. After eight years of publication, we must now reluctantly increase subscriptions because of the rising costs of printing and postage. Subscriptions for the e-mail version cannot escape, because they too must carry the relatively heavy overhead of the printed copies supplied to the seven Privileged Libraries, those sent for indexing, and those exchanged with other journals. The first we cannot escape and the second and third help to disseminate awareness of A*ppraisal* and the ways of thinking that we are trying to foster.

If we can obtain more subscriptions, we can both spread the cost of the overheads and further our aim. To that end with this issue I am sending out leaflets, or PDF versions of them, for you to give to persons who may be interested in *Appraisal* and to libraries. A colleague generously paid for sample issues to be sent to the philosophy departments of British universities, but we may have more success if those of you with connections to academic institutions could please personally recommend *Appraisal* to them—we now offer them a cheaper version on CD as well as the printed one.

The editorial policy of *Appraisal* has always been to publish articles broadly convergent with the philosophy of Michael Polanyi as well as articles upon him and developing his own distinctive themes. In this issue we have four of the former and one of the latter.

Alan Ford engages, like Polanyi, in cultural criticism and studies the deleterious effects of Narcissism and Aestheticism. Likewise Giorgio Baruchello considers the cult of cruelty with particualar reference to de Sade and Neitzsche. Coincidentally with his offering that paper for our Annual Conference, we received one on the same theme from Dr Wendy Hamblet. She and Giorgio Baruchello are now working together on further exploration of why mankind, and especially today, can be so cruel, a very important theme but one hardly considered by philosophers (but see Polanyi's 'Why did we destroy Europe?' reprinted in SEP), which itself, would merit a study. We hope to publish the fruits of their joint efforts and invite others to join in—it is some time since we had any discussions of previously published articles. Konstantin Khrutski expounds the personalist aspects of his Russian Cosmist philosophy. Finally Phil Mullins sets out Polanyi's attitudes towards and uses of Teilhard de Chardin, while Aurel Kolnai is again featured in the book reviews.

It is with deep sadness that we report the deaths of Dru Scott (in Februrary, but the news came too late for the March issue) and Robin Hodgkin (in August).

Both were friends of Michael Polanyi, were inspired by him, and did much to promote his work in this country. Dru was the first Chairman (1974-79) of our Convivium Group and Robin was Chairman when the Group was reformed in 1988 until its disbandment in 1994.

The March issue will contain appreciations and studies of their work, which will be simultaneously published on the websites of *Tradition and Discovery* and *Polanyiana.*

Would those wishing to contribute a suitable article please let me have the title and subject as soon as possible. We would like to publish several shorter items rather than one or two longer ones.

One of those best placed to write upon both Dru and Robin would have been Joan Crewdson, another close friend of Michael Polanyi and editor and publisher of *Convivium* between 1979 and 1988, but she is now in a nursing home in Oxford and unable to engage in any sustained work.

NARCISSISM, AESTHETICISM AND ANDY WARHOL

Alan Ford

1 Art, medieval and modern.

Near the end of his book, *The Discarded Image*, C.S. Lewis remarks on the radical difference in attitude that exists between the modern, post-medieval, view of art and that of medieval and earlier times. In the latter it is what the poem is about which deserves fame, not the poet who writes it.

> … in the last resort it is the fame they give—the fame of Aeneas, not of Virgil—that really matters.

We may, he suggests:

> regard a certain humility as the overall characteristic of medieval art [1]

that saw itself as a means to a greater end than itself. This is in stark contrast to an attitude to art that began with such as Michelangelo where it is the artist who achieves fame through the work, *his* genius which shows through it and not the fame or virtue of the content of the work. Since then this attitude has been slowly generalized to all artists, ending in a strange mutation in modernism and postmodernism, where such as Andy Warhol become famous for being who he is, for being Andy Warhol, not really for their art, and where objects become art, not for any intrinsic virtue, but by virtue of being made by artists.

In this context Lewis goes on to make what I consider to be a very perceptive statement, which he does not take further, when he says:

> I take it to be part and parcel of the same great process of Internalisation which has turned genius from an attendant daemon into a quality of mind. Always, century after century, item after item is transferred from the object's side of the account to the subject's. And now, in some extreme forms of Behaviourism, the subject himself is discounted as merely subjective; we only think that we think. Having eaten up everything else, he eats himself up too. And where we 'go from that' is a dark question.[2]

As in this quotation, and following from the remarks above, significance has passed from the public, interpersonal realm, to the self of the artist. Yet Lewis hints at the future of such a solipsistic self, which eats up everything else: it must eat up itself too. This essay will ponder on and try to give an answer to Lewis's 'dark question'.

What is extraordinary about this statement is its *seeming* contradictions: it describes a growing subjectivism ('internalisation'), which ends up in a form of radical 'objectivism', 'some extreme forms of Behaviourism'. Or, when a certain kind of phenomenon is pushed to extremes, (one might say, 'to its logical conclusions'), it reverts or 'flips' into its opposite. I shall argue below that this is a propensity that has increased in postmodernism, which is indeed also the very nature of postmodernism, and which began in a radical form in modernism, and which I shall describe under the name of *'philosophical narcissism'* [3] All this becomes startlingly clear in modernist and postmodernist art theory and practice, since art has always been the reporter on, and the absorber of, the human condition of each particular age, its philosophical mistakes included.

2 Dandyism, aestheticism and determinism.

This phenomenon of strange flips and reversals is hinted at in several places and in many forms in the literature, but it has never been taken further. A particularly lucid example is Carter Ratcliff's essay *Dandyism and Abstraction in a Universe Defined by Newton*[4], where the subjectivist stance of dandyism is seen to make the same kind of logical flip as above. The main body of his essay is about the particular series of resistances in the arts, which begins with Romanticism and has continued ever since, to the cause-and-effect universe of Newtonian physics, which is associated with positivism, materialism, utilitarianism and determinism i.e. objectivism. The dandy, who also arrives with Romanticism, which is a form of subjectivism, is seen as resisting, through his subjectivism, and finding some kind of paradoxical freedom in the process, by reducing existence to a form of purposeless inconsequence, like the 'jokes' of Beau Brumell, who Hazlitt said, 'are of a meaning so attenuated that nothing lives 'twixt them and nonsense: they hover on the very brink of vacancy, and are in their shadowy composition next of kin to nonentities'[5]. (Oscar Wilde might come to mind at this point). This is of a piece with a general urge within modernism, and even more radically within postmodernism, to attack the nature of ordinary language as well as causation, that principle of necessity which underlies 'Newtonian' thought, that kind of thought that seemed to precipitate so many thinking people into seeing existence as a meaningless deterministic flux with no freedom of will possible *within* it. Dandyism, and its associated Fine Art phenomenon of aestheticism, which appeals to the subjectivity of the viewer, is a mode of resistance to this, both reducing ordinary existence to 'vacancy'. It is remarkable that Wittgenstein's attitude to 'the world' in his *Tractatus-Logico-Philosophicus*[6], one of the most influential philosophical theories of the twentieth

century, one which is usually seen as the epitome of hard-headedness and no-nonsense, also follows such a programme of denigration of ordinary existence.

> The sense of the world must lie outside the world. In the world everything happens as it does happen: in it no value exists—and if it did exist, it would have no value. If there is any value that does have value, it must lie outside the whole sphere of what happens and is the case. For all that happens and is the case is accidental…. 6.41.

> And, since 'The world is the totality of facts, not of things', (1.1), and facts are a function of language, then this is also a denigration of language in as much as when one wants to talk about value, i.e. to make ethical and aesthetic statements, one must of necessity talk nonsense, e.g. 6.522-7.

It therefore follows that for Wittgenstein all value lies at the *limits* of the world and language, in a realm that cannot possibly be conceptualised, and is beyond the causal nexus. This is the reason why I shall argue below that *The Tractatus* is a work that sees value on the model of the aesthetic. This seems surprising, even paradoxical, when one remembers that this book was a centrally important text for the Logical Positivists who, in their radically scientistic philosophy, seemed to be those philosophers who were happiest with the universe as described by Newton. They indeed never tired of saying that meaning can be seen only as attaching to deductive and inductive logic. I believe, if they had understood Wittgenstein's mysticism at the end of *The Tractatus,* that they would have been less enthusiastic about the book as a whole.

As is now well known, the philosopher who stands behind the mystical ending of *The Tractatus* is Schopenhauer[7] whose solution to the problems of life is an aesthetic-ascetic detachment from the world, a world that for him is essentially evil and manipulative. It is only by seeing the world of facts and language as void, as mere meaningless phenomena, as did the dandy, that one can find freedom from the illusion that life is meaningful and the facts worthy of pursuit. Desire, which according to this theory, persuades us that life is meaningful, is the 'the will's' way, we might say the life-force's way[8], of getting us to do its bidding; for procreative purposes etc., which always end in suffering. Salvation as the end of suffering is in seeing the world aright, as constituted by illusory desires, and in this glimpse freeing oneself from the causal nexus, which is in fact the nexus not only of existence as we experience it, but of science and the Schopenhauerean will. The aesthetic attitude and detachment from the world is seen by Schopenhauer as a mini version of the ascetic attitude: one can only truly reach salvation via asceticism, a detachment from all that life seems to offer which must always be under the sway of the Will; aesthetic detachment is just a momentary detachment but because it ends suffering for that moment, is ecstatic in its delight. This influence is evident in Wittgenstein's *Notebooks 1914-16*,[9] written in preparation for *The Tractatus*:

> The work of art is the object seen sub specie aeternitatis; and the Good life is the world seen sub specie aeternitatis. This is the Connexion between art and ethics. 7.10.16

but I believe that the logic of this approach shows that it is otherwise: the stance here is fundamentally aesthetic.

In other words, on this view both art and ethics view existence from '*the point of view of eternity'*; but art confines itself to individual objects seen from eternity whilst ethics sees the whole world in this way. Anyone who has been moved by music or who, in the visual arts has been ravished by line and colour alone, will understand the power and accuracy of this description of the aesthetic experience. This is why such as Clive Bell can say, in his *The Aesthetic Hypothesis*, that art is about 'aesthetic emotions', not the 'emotions of life', those emotions which are under the sway of the will, such as greed, lust, fear, ambition etc., and that those people who understand the essential nature of art can win from mere line and colour,

> an emotion more profound and far more sublime than any that can be given by the description of facts and ideas[10].

In aesthetic detachment one is momentarily free from the emotions of life, to look at something for its mere look, for its sake, without thinking of the past, the future or oneself; which are the sources of the emotions of life, based on want or the fear of it; but just to be still, to want nothing other than to just look—from the point of view of eternity. This is a pure gaze, free from hidden, selfish motivation. In this sense it can be also seen as an *ethical* gaze.

Yet it is clear that it is *aesthetic* detachment that is the model in both instances, and ethics is seen as just a generalization of this, an experiencing of everything in this way. It is the aesthetic that is really making the running. Value, including the ethical, is conceived in essentially aesthetic and contemplative terms. The more common understanding of the notion, that the ethical might be concerned with changing the facts for the better, of being politically or ethically *engaged* with the world, is thought to be incoherent, as Wittgenstein argues at length. I believe that this separation of facts from values, going back at least to Hume in this radical form, is a desperate attempt to find a 'place' for value 'in' a world which was indeed seen by many to be conceivable only in terms congruent with the sciences, particularly physics. In short, value as such is seen here under, some might say reduced to, the category of the aesthetic.

Yet the notion of the aesthetic in the writing of Bell, and in many theorists of modernism[11], including *The Tractatus*, is clearly congruent with mysticism; the last sections of the *Tractatus* make this very clear; hence

the insistence on value not being of this world, but of existence being of value only from *the point of view of eternity*, where time and space come to an end; a common description of the mystical state. It is of course time and space that is the necessary substructure of causation, concepts and the world as Newton knew, and as we still tend to know it.

3 Art and science: a conjunction or a confusion?

But this desperation seems to lead this noble endeavour into something like an identity with 'the enemy', a typical end for any projects based on the logical structures of what I have called philosophical narcissism.

This identity with the enemy is hinted at when Ratcliff ends his article by remarking on the work of the French poet Stephane Mallarmé, who can be seen as a dandy in his endeavour to defend himself from the world through his poetry by 'his striving toward emptiness as an attempt to establish an inert void'[12], in his devotion to 'the empty paper defended by its own whiteness' (*Brise Marine, 1887*). But whereas the dandy confines himself to the small scale of the self and keeps the world at bay through detachment from it, Mallarmé's 'empty paper' expands to incorporate the universe! But I would say that Mallarmé's approach differs from the dandy's retreat into aestheticism only in being, so to speak, aestheticism on the attack. As he said 'Everything exists so that it may end up in a book'[13]**.** The problem seems to lie in the other, that part of the world that one is not, and the dandy deals with it by separation whilst Mallarmé's 'whiteness', 'eats up' the world/other. But in Mallarmé's book the self and the other would be transformed out of all recognition: they would not be the self and the world as we know them. Both would be *purified*: the self from all conditioning from the other, and the other from all projections of the unpurified self. In the timeless state of eternity both subjectivity and objectivity are purified; and, as well as being a description of the *spiritual* act of meditation, this is also as description of *science's* approach to finding out the facts: the scientist attempts to put aside his conditioning, his pet theories, (purification of his subjectivity), and to see the world afresh, (purification of the object/world). We can now see that such an approach discovers a place where science and the spiritual have a certain congruence. But this gave modernists much confidence in their cause for here the congruence seems to be to aestheticism's advantage, and many an artist, like Kandinsky, Mondrian, Malevich and even some late modernists like Newman, saw this as giving art a kind of priority over science. This applied a fortiori with such spiritual movements as Theosophy and Anthroposophy. The former saw the whole universe as a series of 'vibrations', and some, those with which science deals, belonged to the material world, whilst others, of a spiritual nature, could be detected only by spiritual adepts. In this way science could be incorporated in the spiritual and at the same being allocated a rather 'low' place[14].

> Nothing would remain its ordinary self. Reduced to Mallarméan nuance, individuals [I would add ' and objects'] would be relieved of all that they prize as their individuality. [I would add 'and what we prize in things their identity'.][15]

What is also being de-conditioned away is identity, both of things and persons, for when we step into eternity all 'becomes as one', selves and objects lose their identity, because the conditioning of language, that which makes distinctions, has come to an end. As Mallarmé said:

> The pure work implies the disappearance of the poet as speaker, who hands over to the words … replacing the lyric afflatus of the poet …' [16]

John Cage also said, when speaking about music, that all he wanted to do was to help sounds be themselves. Yet we shall soon see that without selves we can't have things.

But scientism, and all forms of positivism, also makes the same kind of attack upon identity of both persons and things. Ratcliff at this point offers the modern corporate institution as an example of positivism at work, but it is clear that this applies to the sciences generally, and in the process shows us how the resistance of aestheticism can become confused with and might even collapse into its opposite.

Ordinary institutions effect a similar transformation, reducing the self [I would also add the other] to a cluster of data, the better to snare its various aspects in patterns of cause and effect or supply and demand. If written, Mallarmé's imaginary book would reduce selfhood [I would add 'objecthood'] to a single, transcendent essence, a subtle cog in an infinitely vast play of metaphysical machinery. In their absorptive whiteness, its pages would show us an image of the modern institution in its most abstract, most thoroughly aesthetized form. Like that book, each real institution is dedicated to an ideal—some absolutist notion of truth, efficiency, profit, power.[17]

He then continues:

> The history of modern culture is the record of a struggle between selves and institutions. At its cruellest, this has been a struggle between two varieties of emptiness.[18]

One might object by saying that at least science deals with concepts and art of this kind, aestheticism, attacks the identity of the concept in its attack upon language. This is true, but at the basis of positivism, the philosophy of science that prevailed at the time of the formulation of modernism, and for much of the time of its reign, there was the belief that science must be

reducible to the certainties of the data of the five senses. At this level concepts collapse into sense-data, which are identical to the aesthetic data of aestheticism (or formalism as it tends to be called later). I believe, as I will try to show later, that this continues in a hidden form in certain varieties of postmodernism.

4 Philosophical narcissism: two kinds of emptiness.

This is the nature of philosophical narcissism where two seeming opposites, suddenly and unstably, become confused and indistinguishable.

At this point one must take a closer look at the nature of philosophical narcissism if one is to have an insight into the 'logic' of how and why such conceptual collapses can, and must, take place. In my article, 'The divided self of modernism in the visual arts'[19], I tried to show how philosophical narcissism might be seen to be the cause of the collapse of modernism into postmodernism as modernism's transcendental aims flip into a quasi-materialist opposite. I would now like to explore this phenomenon in a little more detail and to relate it more closely to pathological narcissism whose 'shape' is congruent with philosophical narcissism. However, I need to reiterate that I am not accusing any artists or philosophers et al of being pathological narcissists. My point is a logical one, and I draw upon theories of psychopathology as an aid, by analogy, to create a theory which will help in describing and diagnosing the difficulties in which I believe modernism and postmodernism find themselves.

I have just stated that what dandyism, Mallarmé, and aestheticism are doing, possibly without realizing the implications, is attacking the notion of identity in both its broad forms: as things and persons, or in more abstract language, subjectivity and objectivity. As we have seen, selves and objects become nonentities when viewed from the point of view of eternity, when, as the mystics never tire of telling us, all becomes as one. But what is the nature of this oneness? The mystics invariably tell us it is God, the most transcendental notion imaginable (so much so that we are told that He is in fact unimaginable in thought or concepts of any kind). Yet, if we follow this through, we find there is no way of distinguishing God from mere sense-data. The God of mysticism is seen as a divine *Presence* who is absent from His creation, but is at the limit of it as the eye, although it will never see itself, is present to itself in that there is awareness of sight. This is in fact *The Tractatus* analogy used to illustrate the nature of the subjective limit of language and the world, which also shows that the subject is not part of the world, but a limit of it. (See 5.632-5.6331). The objectivist limit is seen in the nature of the tautology and the contradiction that *show* their necessary truth or falsehood without making any reference to the nature of the objects in the world. For, as we have seen, how the world is is accidental. This particular God is obviously akin to the mystical notion that the divine spark within all of us is identical to the divinity of God, as seen in the doctrine of Hinduism, when the Atman, the divine aspect in each of us, is seen as identical to Brahman, the Godhead itself. In fact the Wittgenstein of the *Notebooks* calls the objectivist limit 'the First Godhead', or 'the world'; and the subjectivist limit 'the Second Godhead', 'my independent I'[20]. But this is a very solipsistic God who, according to the logic of solipsism, outlined in *The Tractatus* itself, flips into radical empiricism, for:

> …solipsism, when its implications are followed out strictly, coincides with pure realism. The self of solipsism shrinks to a point without extension, and there remains the reality co-ordinated with it. 5.64

In mysticism all is one, and this passage shows us why it can be seen as such. How the radical subjectivism of solipsism, since it sees the world as a function of the self, has no means of preventing itself from flipping, without remainder, into the other. And, if God is identified with this pure subjectivism, as the *Tractatus* and certain heretical sects certainly do, then God is indistinguishable from sense-data.

This is a startling example of the dialectic of philosophical narcissism, beginning in the highly transcendental flipping into the merely material. But, as has we have just seen it does not end here, for the dialectic of the destruction of identity continues beyond even the identity of physical objects, for the above equation cuts both ways and, from the viewpoint of philosophical narcissism, there is no way out of this dilemma. For the identity of physical objects, from the viewpoint of 'pure realism' (think of logical positivism), is dissolved into its opposite, a property of consciousness, for realism/materialism in its aim to reduce all subjectivity in objective knowing has to dismiss the notion of 'objects' as still 'above' *immediate* observation, very much in the same way that aestheticism reduces art to the phenomena of line and colour and treats content, that which stands for more than these bare visual data, as irrelevant to art[21]. In this way, objects have to be reduced to sense-data, which are, of course, phenomena of consciousness. But again, the dialectic continues; when we get to this point the oscillation between subjectivity and objectivity becomes confused, one might even say fused, because there is difficulty in distinguishing one from the other, (subjective phenomena from objective phenomena and vice-versa) for we are now, of course, beyond the space-time world where persons and objects are distinguishable. The world has now been homogenized and reduced to phenomena about whose nature we can have no knowledge. (Perhaps this is why some are tempted to see God in this because He too is unknowable). The world has indeed become one, but hardly the transcendental world that mysticism

envisaged. Such a world is, I believe, conjured by Sartre in his novel *Nausea*[22] when the anti-hero is in the municipal park and is precipitated into a vision of the absurd—or the absolute—where he loses his identity, becomes one with the meaningless and horrific phenomena of the garden, where all is reduced to a meaningless viscosity. This is not an attack upon genuine mysticism, but an attack upon narcissism, both philosophical and pathological, both of which offer an unreal escape from the world, identity and responsibility, and both of which exact a very high price.

One could say that Sartre's protagonist is living through the implications of philosophical narcissism, as is his creator by imagining the logical implications of this doctrine through his novel, which are hidden but always implicit in so many moves within modern philosophy. Yet Sartre believes that he has, through this imaginative leap, discovered something about the nature of reality, rather than, as I see it, reduced to absurdity the philosophical mistake that I have been trying to describe. He even has Roquentin, his hero, describing this episode as a profound revelation, a discovery of the true nature of the absolute! But look what he reduces it to.

> But I, a little while ago, experienced the absolute: the absolute or the absurd. [23]

This is confirmed when one discovers that Sartre thinks that existence is indeed absurd. But this is not the view of the average humanist agnostic who simply believes there is no fundamental meaning somehow knit into the universe. This is a vision, created by an author of tremendous artistic talent and at the same time with great philosophical grasp, giving shape to how it would feel if philosophical narcissism were true. I would in fact argue that this vision has several characteristics of pathological narcissism, as it seems at times to teeter on the edge of insanity, but it is still highly coherent as a description of this state. If this description of horrifying alienation in a meaningless universe were an isolated incident in literature, this novel would still be remarkable, but my contention that it represents not only an aberration but a cultural trend is confirmed in that it can be seen as virtually a convention in late modernist art and literature. Christopher Lasch provides striking evidence for my argument in Section IV 'The Minimalist Aesthetic: Art & Literature in an Age of Extremity' in his book *The Minimal Self: Psychic Survival in Troubled Times*[24]. For Lasch, as his earlier book, *The Culture of Narcissism*[25], spells out, a state akin to pathological narcissism is prevalent in western culture. But, although we are told that the old neurotic symptoms are now being replaced in the psychiatrist's consulting room by narcissistic symptoms, he too maintains that this does not make us all narcissists. But it does suggest a *cultural,* I would also add a *philosophical*, malaise.

Lasch does not identify the problem, as I have done elsewhere, with the radical move to subjectivism which begins with Descartes and modern philosophy as such[26]. He looks as a cultural diagnostician at what he sees as grave problems in western culture, particularly in the USA, and, with great insight, compares the symptoms with pathological narcissism. I would like to emphasise, as I have spent some time in doing above, the importance of radical subjectivism in both forms of narcissism and how they both, logically, are related to solipsism and the subsequent collapse into a fragmentary and absurd materialism. At this point one can refer to the original myth of Narcissus and Echo. Narcissus, locked into and able to love only himself, is the solipsist. Echo, who can repeat only what others have said, with no identity of her own, is a personification of the object/other. Since Narcissus will not relate to anything but himself, he loses his identity, because there is no *personal* other to 'mirror' him, to show himself to himself and to show that he is in fact *not* the other. Because of this he confuses himself with the other and becomes part of it, personified by a flower. But again it cuts both ways: if one makes oneself into an object (a 'doormat'), one will also collapse into nonentity and, like Echo, 'disappear' as far as a sense of identity is concerned. Yet Echo's voice continues to repeat what others have said, just like a mechanical recording, not the voice of a being with identity. And it is identity, where selves and objects have existential integrity, which is lost in the phenomenon of narcissism. In philosophical narcissism such identity is impossible for theoretical reasons; in pathological narcissism it is impossible for psychological reasons, but what is suggested here is that identity is based upon relationship and, the other half of the equation, relationship itself must be based on identity. These are necessary items in what John Macmurray calls 'The Form of the Personal', in his *The Self as Agent*[27] but which I cannot pursue here.

I have argued, and Lewis in the passage that began this essay says likewise, that the modern age has been one of increasing subjectivism, until there comes a point when the subject swallows itself. And this is because there is now nothing but itself to relate to, for the reasons already given. This answers Lewis's question as to *why* this happens. Lewis's 'dark question' as to 'where we 'go from that' is answered by pointing to the results of the flip from subjectivism to objectivism, where subject fuses with object only to end in neither, for both collapse into phenomena because identity and relationship are at an end.

Modernist and postmodernist art has followed this route and left behind art works, some of them great, especially in early modernism, as modernism has followed through the implications of subjectivism. But now we have odd ideas as to the nature of art that seem to me to be a result of following out the implications of a stance which is implicitly philosophically narcissistic.

On the subjectivist/solipsistic hand we have the notion that an object is art because an artist says it is, but we are not meant, even allowed, to ask why this should be the case. This is surely solipsistic and narcissistic grandiosity, lacking as it does publicly discussible criteria as to why the object should be considered art. On the other, objectivist hand, we have the isolated, often rather forlorn, object that stands in no relationship to anything else in having been designated 'art' by being placed in that no-objects-land of an art gallery and in this way robbed of all associations to existence as ordinarily known. Duchamp's ready-mades, everyday objects, merely dubbed 'art' and placed in a gallery by the artist out of complete indifference, are the first of these. This 'dubbing' is of course the first aspect mentioned above, where the artist says it's art—because he says so[28]. We even have the very influential Institutional Theory of Art, which is merely a generalisation of this: an object is a work of art if the 'art world' says it is. Yet since the 'art world' promotes the idea that if an artist says it is art, then it is, this does not take us far. This does not take us far because there are no 'marks', no publicly distinguishable criteria that enable us to identify art works. We are told that 'anything can be art', (which is not the same as art can be made from anything, and with which I have no problem), but if so, then nothing can be art. It seems as if the artist, intent on escaping from the deterministic grip of causation and the power of institutions, incorporates the world, like Narcissus, into himself and says what goes. The consequent art works then become mere Echoes to the artist's Narcissus as fewer and fewer art objects can sustain an identity separate from that of their 'creator'. Would Tracy Emin's bed be seen as an art object without its association with her? So too with Duchamp's 'Fountain', (a urinal).

5 Andy Warhol and glut; Robert Morris and being boxed-in.

I would say that Dada and Surrealism are the first straws in the wind of postmodernism in the visual arts because they push the dialectic of philosophical narcissism toward its conclusion. Andy Warhol is one of the first to push this further toward even fuller realisation and is an example of the opposite side of our equation in that he negates the subjectivist/individualist identity of modernist art, seen very clearly in the abstract expressionists of the generation before Warhol. Instead of Jackson Pollock's romantic, metaphysical and subjectivist (and perhaps solipsistic), cry of 'I am Nature!', Warhol says 'I want to be a machine', with all the implications of the negation of subjectivity. His studio was called 'The Factory', where art works were turned out by quasi-mechanical means, often by anyone but Warhol. His book, *'A to B and Back. The Philosophy of Andy Warhol'* was completely written by others.

> Warhol projected an ironic and affectless cool, which let everything be itself

wrote Robert Hughes. (cf. Mallarmé and Cage, cited above, who wanted to let words and sounds be themselves). He

> … seemed barely explicable and therefore infinitely intriguing—a slightly eerie vacuum, which needed to be filled with gossip and speculation.[29]

Hughes contrasts Warhol's repetitions of everything from Coke bottles to Marilyn Monroe with Monet's series paintings of Rouen Cathedral, Hay Stacks and Lily Ponds. Monet's 'repetitions' were done :

> to glorify the eye, to show how it could discern tiny differences, and how these differences added up to a continuous alteration of reality.[30]

He contrasts this art, with its eye toward nature, with the present, dominated by the mass-media:

> Today, we have sameness within glut, and that was what Warhol painted.[31]

'Sameness within glut' might be a paraphrase for what I have called 'phenomena' and Sartre 'viscosity'. Warhol remained the detached dandy, whilst his 'objects' were homogenised, reduced to 'glut', by his autistic stare, which was

> … the same for heroes and heroines as for death and disaster.[32]

Warhol was concerned with images, always left in their fragmentary state and unassimilated, surfaces which where the vehicle for style and celebrity. Any personality which any of his sitters for his portraits might have had is so thoroughly homogenized by his reductions of them to the language of the media, that they all look essentially the same. As Frank Stella, a leading minimalist painter, put it, and in doing so summed up the general attitude of postmodernism: 'What you see is what you see'. But, as Peter Fuller has argued, an art that is concerned solely with surfaces denies both inner experience and the reality of external objects[33]: which has the same form as my argument against philosophical narcissism.

This collapse into nonentity, silence, phenomena—it can go by many names and forms—is depicted very clearly in Robert Morris's work 'Box with the Sound of Its Own Making', that is simply a wooden box, containing a tape playing a recording of the sounds made in the construction of the box. The box was about nothing but itself: which was of no significance, aesthetically or otherwise. As a visual object it has no relevance, but it cleverly depicts an object whose *meaning* is the process of its making, because it was made for no purpose than to depict this process, which

is in fact all that art is: the creation of objects which do not embrace ordinary meanings about the world. This suggests that the meanings one finds in art are in fact 'boxed-in', like the solipsistic self, with no relationship to the 'outside'. Carter Ratcliff has suggested that such works represent 'human images imprisoned in catatonic reductivism'[34], the logical conclusion I would suggest to modernism's theory of the self. Ratcliff continues in terms totally congruent with my arguments when he says that works like this abolish the 'residual distinction between images of self and of not-self' the 'differentiation upon which all subsequent distinctions are modelled', implying the collapse into undifferentiated data, in which 'self-definition has been reduced to the play of self-image', where the self as such is merely a 'function of outward signs which are either beyond one's control or mutable at will'[35]. This seems to describe pathological as much as philosophical narcissism. So, with the collapse of the self and of the other, all that is left is 'art'—and that is what art is about. We are at an infinite distance from the notion of medieval art that C.S. Lewis spoke of at the beginning of this essay.

6 Literature in a culture of paranoia and silence.

We saw that a central motive of modernism was to subvert the power of determinism, especially embodied in the institution, and to find a place for value and for freedom. But I have argued that its own theory subverts these aims. I shall finish by first using further examples from Lasch's *The Minimal Self*, this time from literature, to show evidence for the continuing collapse in another art form, just to hint that this is a culture-wide phenomenon which goes way beyond the visual arts; and finish with a brief description of a slightly different tactic adopted by postmodernism which continues to promote this absurd notion of freedom.

I would like to take Thomas Pynchon as representative of the writers I wish to talk about. Lasch writes that Pynchon's novels,

> like so much recent fiction, dramatize the difficulty of holding the self together in a world without meaning or coherent pattern, in which the search for patterns and connections turns back on itself in tightening solipsistic circles.[36]

Unlike the purely descriptive 'new novel' of Alain Robbé-Grillet, which is in the same vein as minimalism in the visual arts, where what you see is what you see, we have another form of meaninglessness, another flip, where there is in fact too much 'meaning'. We find that Pynchon's protagonists are:

> …each attempting to unravel the secret history of modern times, relying, in the absence of more reliable data, on 'dreams, psychic flashes, omens, cryptographies, drug-epistemologies, all dancing on a ground of terror, contradiction, absurdity'.[37]

Yet despite their frantic and desperate pursuit of meaning it constantly dissolves into nothingness. Their alienation from self is indicated by their propensity to refer to themselves in the third person—as they more and more place themselves on the object side of the equation. But rather than being persons in search of an identity, they tend to have too many identities, just as their world is too full of meaning, just as for the solipsist the world is full of the identities of others which he confuses with himself. But these are just fragments of personalities, mere imitations, images of real personalities, just like those adopted by pathological narcissists, whose ultimate insanity, the most extreme form of narcissism, is paranoia, which is an aberration which sees deep significance in *everything*, and always directed toward themselves[38]. Yet paranoia keeps such characters sane! It gives at least a meaning, albeit a crazy one, to existence, a defence against the horror that is the flip-side of their state: that the universe is totally void of meaning. So, once again, we have on the one side the 'new novel', where no motives, no exploration of subjectivity takes place, where all we have are the external facts described, (think also of minimalist art, where there is no interpretation of, or meaning given to, the art object, all that is depicted are the bare facts of the art object itself: volume, colour, place); and on the other an art of paranoid over-interpretation—which always unravels. Here again is the structure of narcissism.

As I said above, what we have here is an absurd attitude to, or understanding of, or trouble with, the notion of freedom. On the 'objectivist' side the problem of freedom is overcome by abandoning it for an art—or life—of necessity, where one attends only to the facts. This accepts the 'truth' of scientism, as in *The Tractatus* view of the world as facts only, and in minimalist art where art can deal only with the facts of the art object. On the 'subjectivist' side freedom becomes absurdly free, all is possible here: an art object can be interpreted in anyway one wishes and art can be 'whatever the art world wants it to be'. The identity of art, and the identity of the person in the case of the narcissist, loses itself between necessity and possibility and, as we have seen, after oscillating between the two sides, collapses ultimately into nonentity[39].

7 Derrida, Gnosticism and Nietzsche.

My second point before I finish can only be touched upon and should be the subject of another paper. Postmodernism, which thinks it has got the measure of modernism in its attack on the latter's subjectivism and essentialism is, in my view, merely an objectivist reaction to it: the other half of the equation of philosophical narcissism. This may seem not to be the

case when we realise that the polarization between subject and object is overcome in poststructuralism by giving priority to the sign over objective things and priority to the sign over subjective ideas. It seems to bring back language as a mediator between subject and object. One could say that an implication of this is that culture is prior to nature and society is prior to the individual. I believe that in this rephrasing there is an insight that is worth developing. But this is not the case. What we find is in fact a taking of the trends I have been criticizing to their logical conclusion, an embracing of a quasi-materialism, whose motivation can be seen, yet again, as the pursuit of a kind of freedom. It may seem deeply ironical to place materialism, with its associations with determinism, at the service of freedom, but this is a materialism of a very strange kind: that takes full advantage of the 'flip'.

The deterministic aspect—Derrida has even said that his philosophy is a kind of materialism—becomes evident when we realise that the sign is seen here as a *process* of meaning which flows and creates not only meaning but also the notion of persons things and everything else, which have no independence outside this flow.

For Derrida is dealing not with concepts but with signs, and with signs whose signifying appears in mechanical rather than mental form, as a mere motion running through signifiers.[40]

In this way, in a fundamental sense, all writing has no authors—and no ultimate meaning, just a proliferation of meanings. Therefore:

> …language takes on its own kind of energy and creativity, quite distinct from any subjective energy or creativity on the part of individual writers or readers. This is an energy and creativity to which individual writers and readers can only abandon themselves.[41]

Here both social and individual responsibility ends in anarchic and unpredictable 'freedom' of the sign. This seems to be the only freedom available; all the rest, freedom of the individual, freedom of a people etc. is mere illusion. But there is still a villain in the piece, and that is the rigidity of ordinary, re-identifiable, meanings of ordinary, socially governed language. This means that the talk about culture and society having some sort of priority over nature and the individual, mentioned above, comes to nothing because notions of culture and society are part of this rigid, essentially uncreative, not to say illusory, aspect of language. In a real sense this theory is profoundly anti-cultural, if culture is that space where individuals relate in the multiple forms we seem to have invented.

This anarchism of the free sign enables postmodernism, or poststructuralism, to evade the problem that afflicts other deterministic theories: that they reflexively determine themselves out of existence. For example, Marxism says all theories, ideologies, political systems *ad inf* are merely a function of the current economy in which they exist; but when it comes to applying this universal principle to itself it finds that it too must be seen as mere function of the economy, just like capitalism etc., and has no logical priority over other theories and systems which would enable it to claim itself as the truth, which it is of course claiming. However, postmodernists avoid this because it evades the problem of re-identifiability—of identity. It avoids turning its own analysis upon itself by, as we have seen above, invoking the old modernist holy grail, (and in modernism it counted for something), of 'creativity', and the anarchist's rhetoric of freedom from all restraint, in which any form of restraint is dubbed 'fascism'. They can now see themselves as 'being true to the sign':

> And when we are true to the Sign, we find that it subverts the socially controlled system of meaning, and, ultimately, socially controlled systems of every kind.[42]

So, yet again, we find ourselves being whisked from one extreme state, this time a kind of determinism, where the self is dissolved into a quasi-mechanical flow of signifiers, to end up in a state of anarchistic freedom. But what kind of freedom is it that has no place for individuals? And, once again, we end up with mere phenomena, not a world where distinctions can be made and responsibility taken, where not being able to do everything makes it possible to do something, for what better example of phenomena can be found than these 'signifiers' which signify nothing; which are neither mental nor, despite Derrida's talk of being a materialist, material? There seems to be a fundamental misunderstanding of the notion of freedom. But an adequate discussion of the nature of freedom must await a different essay.

In short, we seem to have an essentially contemplative cluster of philosophies that, for this and other reasons that we have gone into, has much in common with the ancient and world-rejecting philosophy of Gnosticism, which constantly tempts mankind in times of spiritual and cultural crisis. Like the Gnostics they denigrate the ordinary world and ordinary language, which deals in concepts (signifieds) that make reference to the world; unlike the currency of 'signifiers', the mere mechanical marks, sounds and other sense-data that such beliefs try to cash in. But such a currency is wildly, impossibly inflated, for it is only fit for a world made void. This creation of voids by attacking ordinary meaning, as we must by now fully expect, also applies to the self in such philosophies: but in two particular ways.

In one variety of Gnosticism, such as Catharism, the self is reduced to its purified essence by having as little relationship to the world as possible, especially in the form of sexual relations. For, as in the case of Schopenhauer, the world is seen as essentially evil, created by the Devil to ensnare us all. The ultimate aim

is to return to the purely spiritual godhead, which is totally alien to this material world, by making its blandishments void. This, once again, is the way of detachment.

The other way of making the self void is, one might say, the way of fusion, in the sense that adepts of this persuasion plunge into congress with the world in the fullest possible way. And this, rather neatly, reflects Gnosticism of a rather Dionysian bent, a seemingly opposite practice to the Cathars, exemplified by the Brethren of the Free Spirit. As Norman Cohn writes in his *The Pursuit of the Millennium*:

> These people could be regarded as remote precursors of Bakunin and of Nietzsche—or rather of that bohemian intelligentsia which during the last half-century has been living from ideas once expressed by Bakunin and Nietzsche in their wilder moments.[43]

He describes the gnosis they adopted as:

> …a quasi-mystical anarchism—an affirmation of freedom so reckless and unqualified that it amounted to a total denial of every kind of restraint and limitation.[44]

The anarchism explicit in certain types of postmodernism, those that see the Marquis de Sade as 'divine', is of this kind. The postmodernists are also, of course, the self-confessed heirs to Nietzsche to whom Cohn refers.

We learn that during their novitiate into the Free Spirit each person, of either sex, would be subject to humiliation and abuse of an extraordinary kind, no doubt to cleanse and prepare them in some way. But when they became adepts they felt that they had become fused, one with, the godhead, not the world. They even stated that they were now superior to God, and one consequence of this was that, since one was God, one could therefore do what one wished. Rape, fornication, stealing, murder etc. were not sins if committed by *them*, if *they* said they were not sins. This has the same form as 'It's art because I/the art world says so'. It also has the same form as the transformations of the alchemist, who *magically* turns base metal/dreadful deeds into pure gold/good acts[45]. One might feel that all this kind of thinking is *merely* magical. One can also see the origins of this in solipsism: the kind that swallows up the other and fuses with it on the solipsist's terms. It is also rank with narcissistic grandiosity.

Whilst there are obvious signs of sadistic elements here, Nietzsche's variation on the theme of fusion seems more masochistic. In Nietzsche's ecstatic hymn to fusion that we hear at the very end of *Thus Spake Zarathustra,* and can therefore take as the 'pay-off', the revelation at the end of this extraordinary book, we find what seems to be Nietzsche's solution to the problems of existence: become a superman by learning not just to accept whatever life throws at you, but to welcome it; to turn sorrow into joy, beyond good and evil and, clearly, beyond identity, time and space. He sings:

> All joy wants the eternity of all things, wants honey, wants lees, wants drunken midnight, wants tombs, wants tomb-tears's comfort, wants gilded evening glow…. What does joy not want? … It wants love, it wants hatred, it is overrich, gives, throws away … it would like to be hated; so rich is joy that it thirsts for woe, for hell, for hatred, for disgrace, for the cripple, for world—this world…! For all joy wants itself, hence it also wants agony. O happiness, O pain! Oh, break, heart!… Joy wants the eternity of all things, wants deep, wants deep eternity.[46]

In harmony with the structure of philosophical narcissism, sadism and masochism can be seen as one process whereby each aspect can flip into the other. And the reason, we are told, for sadomasochism, is that it afflicts those for whom the identity of the other, the world, is too threatening to the identity of the afflicted. In sexual relations this means that the other person must be turned into an object (as in sadism), or one must allow oneself to be turned into an object (as in masochism). What cannot be borne is to be a person in relationship with another, adequate, person, because of devastating feelings of vulnerability and inadequacy: hence the compensating grandiosity. This seems to be the inadequacy at the heart of pathological narcissism. In philosophical narcissism it is a matter of a theoretical inadequacy.

The above states several destinations as to 'where we 'go from that'', and several answers as to the *nature* of C.S. Lewis's 'dark question'. A provisional 'answer' to this dark question as such would be to say, since this radical subjectivism has ended in a philosophical bog, the starting point, the philosophical presuppositions that one accepted for the journey, should be re-examined. As the man said, when asked the way to somewhere: 'Well, to begin with, I wouldn't start from here'.

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Notes:

1. C.S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image*, Cambridge University Press, 1964, p. 213.
2. ibid.. pp. 214-5.
3. I owe this term to Lawrence Cahoone, from his excellent book *The Dilemma of Modernity: Philosophy, Culture & Anti-Culture*, State University of New York Press, 1988, especially Part One, Chapter 4, pp. 67-98. I had had similar thought of my own, formulated in a PhD proposal, several years before reading this very useful book. (See my *Art, Persons and the Avant-Garde: the Philosophical Presuppositions of Modernism in the Visual Arts*, PhD thesis, University of Bristol, 1992).

4. Carter Ratcliff, *Dandyism and Abstraction in a Universe Defined by Newton*, Artforum, December 1988, pp. 82-89.
5. ibid., p. 83.
6. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus-Logico-Philosophicus*, translated by D.F. Pears & B.F. McGuiness, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961.
7. Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will & Representation*, 2 Vols., translated by E.F. Payne, Dover Publications, 1966. Bryan Magee's *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer*, Oxford University Press, 1987, is a useful introduction, see Chapter 8 for Schopenhauer's Theory of Art. For the connection between Wittgenstein and Schopenhauer, see Magee's Appendix 3 *Schopenhauer's Influence on Wittgenstein.*
8. For Schopenhauer the will is absolutely everything, inorganic as well as organic substance. One could even say that it intuits the Law of the Conservation of Energy. He says, in effect, that the power that moves the planets moves the lover, and that mankind is just a more conscious part of this same will. If one wants to know what the will feels like 'from the inside' all one has to do is to pay attention to ones desire—and ones consciousness in general. See Magee's Chapter 7, *The World as Will*.
9. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Notebooks*, 1914-1916, Blackwell, 1961.
10. Clive Bell, *Art*, Chatto & Windus, 1914. Taken from *Modern Art & Modernism*, Ed. Frascina & Harrison, Harper & Row, 1982, p. 74.
11. See *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Art 1890-1985* Ed. Edward Weisberger, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Abbeville Press, 1986, for lots of evidence for this.
12. Ratcliff op. cit. p. 89.
13. Mallarmé, *The Poems*, translated by Keith Brosley, Penguin, 1977, p. 49.
14. See *The Spiritual in Art*, op.. cit. especially Sixten Ringbom's 'Transcending the Visible: The Generation of the Abstract Pioneers', pp. 131-152. See especially the section 'Theosophy As the Connecting Link'.
15. Ratcliff op. cit. p. 89.
16. Mallarmé op. cit. p. 44, my translation.
17. Ratcliff op. cit. p. 89.
18. ibid..
19. Alan Ford, *Appraisal Vol. 4 No. 2, October 2003*
20. See Wittgenstein *Notebooks*, op. cit. p. 74e, 8.7.16, viz. 'There are two godheads: the world and my independent I'. For an illuminating discussion on the relation between ethics, the aesthetic, and the mystical, see Eddy Zemach's 'Wittgenstein's Philosophy of the Mystical', in Copi and Beard, *Essays on Wittgenstein's Tractatus*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961, pp. 359-375.
21. As argued in some detail in Clive Bell's 'Aesthetic Hypothesis', op. cit.
22. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Nausea*, translated by Robert Baldick, Penguin, 1965.
23. ibid., p. 185.
24. Christopher Lasch, *The Minimal Self*, Picador, 1984.
25. Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*, 1979.
26. Alan Ford, *Art, Persons and the Avant-Garde*, op. cit.
27. John Macmurray *The Self as Agent*, Faber & Faber, 1967. See also J. Macmurray, *Persons in Relation*, Faber & Faber, 1961. Also see my article *The Divided Self of Modernism*, in *Appraisal*, op. cit.
28. There is evidence to think that Duchamp is showing the implications of modernist theory and in this way showing its incoherence. But the art world does not seem to see this and continues seeing it as art, rather than a critique of the modernist approach. Duchamp always played the dandy's game and never spelled out just what he was up to. This is, no doubt, what he intended.
29. Robert Hughes, *The Shock of the New: Art & a Century of Change*, Thames & Hudson, p346.
30. Robert Hughes ibid. p. 348.
31. ibid.
32. ibid., p. 351.
33. Christopher Lasch, *The Minimal Self*, op. cit. p. 149.
34. ibid., p. 151.
35. ibid., p. 151-152.
36. ibid., p. 155,
37. ibid.
38. See Alexander Lowen, *Narcissism: Denial of the True Self*, Macmillan, 1985, Chapter I, 'The Spectrum of Narcissism', pp. 1-24.
39. See Kierkegaard's analysis of loss of self between the parameters of possibility and necessity in Soren Kierkegaard, *Sickness Unto Death*, Princeton, 1968.
40. Richard Harland, *Superstructuralism*, Routledge, 1987, p. 140.
41. ibid. pp. 135-136.
42. ibid., p.124.
43. Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, Paladin, pp. 148-149.
44. ibid. p. 148.
45. See the same mode of thinking exemplified by case histories of perversion and fetishism in Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel, *Creativity & Perversion*, Free Association Books, 1985, e.g. Chapter 2 'Three Luciferian Characters', pp. 13-23; and in Bela Grunberger, *New Essays on Narcissism*, Free Association Books, 1989, e.g. Chapter 8 'On Purity' pp. 89-103 and Chapter 11 'On Fetishism' pp. 139-165.
46. Friedrich Nietzsche *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, in *A Portable Nietzsche* translated by Walter Kaufmann, Viking Press, 1954, pp. 435-436.

THE POLITICS OF CRUELTY: AN ESSAY ON DE SADE AND NIETZSCHE

Giorgio Baruchello

1 Introduction[1]

The present paper offers a succinct comparative study of the philosophical considerations on the nature and function of cruelty by the Marquis de Sade and by Friedrich Nietzsche. As such, this paper is meant to serve three main purposes:[2]
(1) It provides an account of the understanding of cruelty in the philosophies of these two thinkers, thus highlighting (although not probing further) a major axiological dimension involved in the moral assessment of cruelty;
(2) It adds to the rather thin body of contemporary studies in philosophy and in the history of ideas dealing with cruelty;[3]
(3) It develops a detailed comparison between their two philosophies, thus deepening the understanding of a striking case of intellectual affinity,[4] which has been recognised by many but studied by few.[5]

2 Cruelty in de Sade's Philosophy

The starting point of de Sade's reflections is the understanding of cruelty as the most ordinary given of human life in the state of nature and, precisely because of this natural ordinariness, as the most valuable one. In the third dialogue of his *Philosophy in the Bedroom*, we read:

> Cruelty is imprinted within the animals… that can read the laws of nature much more energetically than we do; it is more strongly enacted by nature among the savages than it is among civilized men: it would be absurd to establish that it is a kind of depravity.
>
> […] Cruelty is nothing but the human energy that civilization has not yet corrupted: it is therefore a virtue and not a vice.
>
> […] Cruelty, far from being a vice, is the first sentiment that Nature has imprinted within ourselves. The child breaks his toy, bites his nurse's nipple, strangles his bird, long before he has reached the age of reason.[6]

These passages indicate how cruelty is, for de Sade, a fundamental energy (however vaguely defined this concept is) of our species, which initiates and informs human agency in its most basic forms. The same passages also indicate how de Sade takes for self-evident that reason ought not to interfere with this 'first sentiment,' as he claims that tampering with such natural endowment of ours is tantamount to its corruption. Animals and savages, who are closer to this primeval source of self-expression, are thus taken to be exemplars of what a consistent and uncorrupted *filius naturae* would be like. In de Sade's universe, Rousseau's *bon sauvage* turns into a *cruel sauvage*.

De Sade's appreciation for the primeval conditions of life displayed by animals and savages does not imply that no trace of the instinct of cruelty is left in the civilised world. On the contrary, that world would not even exist, were it not for the ongoing exchange of mutual cruelties between 'the mighty' and 'the weak' —'usurpation' being for de Sade the regulative principle of human coexistence:

> When going back to the origin of the right to property, one reaches necessarily usurpation. In this case theft is not punished as it establishes the right to property; but the right itself is originally nothing but a theft itself: as a consequence the law punishes the theft of that which is itself a theft, the weak who tries to regain his due, and the mighty who wants to found or increase his own, taking advantage of that which he has received from nature.[7]

Nature has created human beings unequal, and, for de Sade, it is the most obvious consequence that the more gifted—i.e. 'the mighty'—takes advantage of this situation of disparity in skill and in capacity for self-affirmation. Still, as de Sade admits, it follows from the same principle of 'usurpation' that 'the weak' will try to regain the possessions lost to 'the mighty.' Counter-theft by 'the weak' is the natural response to the initial act of theft by 'the mighty:'

> [T]he mighty has taken possession of everything, hence the defect in nature's balance; the weak defends himself and robs the mighty: here are the crimes that establish the necessary equilibrium of nature… If the mighty seems to be causing disorder by stealing to the one who is beneath him, the weak re-establishes it by stealing to his superiors, and both serve nature.[8]

In the century of the Enlightenment, Cesare Beccaria had already acknowledged the 'cruel and perhaps unnecessary right to property' and its connection with the crime of theft.[9] de Sade seems to be fully aware of this critical recognition of Beccaria, although he gives a very peculiar twist to it. Beccaria was always troubled by this notion on moral and social grounds, and proposed detailed programmes for institutional and legal reform aimed at reducing the likelihood of the most dramatic outcomes related to property and theft, i.e. crime and punishment. Unlike Beccaria, de Sade was ready to accept wholeheartedly this cruel system of 'usurpation' in all of its blunt mercilessness, as it does nothing else but mirroring most candidly the inner logic of nature itself.

For de Sade, the problem is that civilisation can be

hypocritical about this regulating principle of 'usurpation,' insofar as the civilised man denies that cruelty stays at the core of social coexistence. de Sade abhors the fact that the civilised man creates intellectual and institutional façades in order to hide the truth from himself and from his fellows. By doing so, the civilised man does not allow counter-theft to emerge: because of this mechanism of deception and self-deception, the logic of 'usurpation' is prevented from unravelling itself along the path intended by nature. Specifically, in de Sade's understanding, the act of denial, the prevention of counter-theft, and the consequent corruption of nature's cruel *logos* are due to three fictional structures of deception and self-deception that are most typical of human civilisation: morals, laws, and religion. Instead of accepting openly the struggle of 'usurpation,' the civilised man uses cunning and falsity to escape from it. Thus de Sade notes: 'I like listening to these wealthy people, titled people, these magistrates, these priests… I like seeing them preach us virtue. It is very difficult to protect oneself from theft, when one has three times more than it is needed *to live*!'[10] Acting in this manner, not only does the civilised man negate hypocritically the reality of things, i.e. that cruelty is still at work within his 'reformed' and 'humane' institutions, but also does 'the mighty' turn into 'the weak,' for he becomes afraid of being tested, i.e. he does not face bravely the reaction of 'the weak' to his initial action of 'usurpation,' since this action is not recognised as 'usurpation' any longer. Relentlessly, weakness creeps inside the universe of 'the mighty' himself, hence endangering his natural disposition to cruelty, which de Sade regards as quintessential to him: 'You tell us about a chimerical impulse of this nature, which orders us not to do to other what we would not want to be done to us; but this absurd suggestion has come only from men – and weak men. The powerful man shall never try to speak such a language.'[11]

For de Sade, the remedy to this dangerous situation is straightforward:

> Remove your laws, your punishments, your customs, and cruelty will not have dangerous effects any longer… it is inside the civilized domain that it turns into a danger, as those capable of it are almost always absent, either because they lack the force, or because they lack the means to respond to the offences; in the uncivilized domain, instead, if it is imposed over the mighty, then he shall be able to react to it, and if it is imposed over the weak, it will not be else than conceding to the mighty according to the laws of nature, and this will not be inappropriate at all.[12]

De Sade remains faithful to his naturalist axiological dogma, which anticipates much social Darwinism of the 19th century, and claims: 'it is not up to men to establish [order]—it is their order that subverts the natural one.'[13] Nature ought to be left free to run along its course, in order to avoid the impoverishment of human perfection and the worsening of our skills and capabilities: 'Cruelty is in nature; we are all born with a dose of cruelty that is up to education to modify; but education is not in nature, and it is as damaging to the sacred effects of nature as cultivation is to trees… the tree abandoned to the whims of nature is *more beautiful* and produces *better fruits*.'[14]

As we can infer from this last statement, cruelty is, for de Sade, much more than just the rather vaguely defined fundamental energy of our species: it is the energy fostering life itself in all of its manifestations, which de Sade characterises both aesthetically ('trees' being 'more beautiful') and biologically ('trees' producing 'better fruits').[15] Life is going to flourish if it is left in the cruel and holy hands of 'our common mother' nature, namely the hands in which it has always been *ab origine*.[16]

In order to provide a model for the re-naturalised human being to come, de Sade populates his pornographic novels with peculiar heroes and heroines. Propensity to crime, blasphemy, and *immoralia* of all sorts are the essential features of these ideal types, who exemplify the radical reaction against the three pillars of civilised cruelty deplored by de Sade, i.e. morals, laws, and religion. In effect, de Sade states in the third Dialogue of his *Philosophy in the Bedroom* that only 'the pleasures of cruelty' can save us from this triune threat. This statement helps us to understand why de Sade chose violent pornography as the literary vehicle for his ideas. The activation of our felt being by means of representations that are *horribile visu* is, in fact, the first step toward the recovery of our original energy. The steps following the first are even more vivid, since they advance to properly-defined 'sadism:'

> We want to be entertained, it is the goal of all men who free themselves to voluptuousness, and we want to be entertained in the most active ways… It does not matter to know whether our means will be pleasant or unpleasant to the object that we use, that which matters is to activate the complex of our nerves via the most violent shock possible.[17]

De Sade's message could not be clearer: give us horror, give us blood, give us sex, and, in a crescendo of sensorial stimulation, do not worry if somebody gets hurt.[18] Indeed, to those who still wonder 'whether it is charitable to hurt another to enjoy oneself,'[19] de Sade replies by stressing the individualistic character of human existence as such, which, by embracing sadism, abides by nature's own command:

> What do to us the pains produced onto our neighbour? Do we feel them? No, on the contrary… their production crystallizes into a delightful sensation for us. Why should we spare an individual that does not have any connection with us? For which reason should we spare him a pain that is never going to cause us any harm, when it is certain that we are going to derive great pleasure from it? Have we ever felt a single natural impulse suggesting us that we should

> prefer somebody else to ourselves, and is not each of us alone in the world?[20]

De Sade wants the human being to be in harmony with nature's cruel, holy *logos*, for it is inscribed within our own bodies:[21]

> Our constitution, our organs, the flows of the humours, the energy of the animal spirits, here are the physical causes that make us be… Titus or Nero, Messalina or Chantal; one should not be proud for his virtue and contrite for his vice, nor should one accuse nature for having us been born good or evil; she has acted according to her views, her plans and needs: let us surrender to her.[22]

3 Cruelty in Nietzsche's philosophy

In *Ecce Homo*, while commenting on his own *Genealogy of Morals*, Friedrich Nietzsche observes: 'Cruelty is here revealed, for the first time, as one of the oldest and most indispensable elements in the foundation of culture… [and] the psychology of conscience… not as… "the voice of God in man"… [but as] the instinct of cruelty.'[23] As already stated by de Sade, it is also Nietzsche's conviction that this instinct has steered the fate of individuals and societies from the origins of human history, and that, in both direct and indirect ways, it is bound to continue to steer it. Consistently with this insight, Nietzsche speaks in *The Dawn* of 'those vast spans of time characterized by the "morality of mores" which antedate "world history"… [and which] were the real and decisive main history that determined the character of humanity – when… cruelty was a virtue.'[24] Later on, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche will speak of the diverse historical and social settings of human experience, in all of which does cruelty persist in diverse and elaborate forms:

> [T]he Roman in the arena, the Christian in the ecstasies of the Cross, the Spaniards watching burnings or bullfights, the Japanese of today crowding in to the tragedy, the Parisian suburban workman who has a nostalgia for bloody revolutions, the Wagnerienne who, with will suspended, 'experiences' Tristan and Isolde, [are all longing for] the spicy potion of the great Circe 'cruelty.'[25]

> […] [A]lmost everything we call 'higher culture' is based on the spiritualization and intensification of cruelty… the 'wild beast' has not been laid to rest at all, it lives, it flourishes, it has merely become deified… the painful voluptuousness of tragedy is cruelty; that which produces a pleasing effect in so-called tragic pity, indeed everything sublime up to the highest and most refined thrills of metaphysics, derives its sweetness solely from the ingredient of cruelty mixed with it.[26]

Parallel to de Sade's reversed Rousseauianism is Nietzsche's recognition of the fact that civilisation has been tampering with this instinct, hence corrupting human nature, despite its being fuelled by cruelty at a most fundamental level. A first way in which this corruption has occurred is the hypocritical denial of the actual presence of cruelty within the civilised *polis*. Like de Sade, also Nietzsche accuses morals, laws, and religion of being paramount exemplars of collective and individual self-deception, which twist the perception of brute force into that of commendable behaviour: 'Force precedes morality; indeed, for a time morality itself is force, to which others acquiesce to avoid unpleasure. Later it becomes custom, and still later free obedience, and finally almost instinct: then it is coupled with pleasure, like all habitual and natural things, and is now called virtue.'[27]

Moralists, legislators, and priests, then, employ regularly a fraudulent lexicon, which, according to Nietzsche's reconstruction of human history, was not in use in the 'glorious but at the same time terrible and violent world of Homer [when] the individual [could]… treat harshly and cruelly in order to intimidate.'[28] Then, the Tables of the Law were written directly on the flesh of the human being. Today, instead, allegedly 'high' and most abstract justifications make cruelty's face disappear under the categories of ethical imperatives and of legal requirements: '*To do injury intentionally* when it is a matter of our existence or security (preservation of our well-being) is conceded to be moral; the state itself injures from this point of view when it imposes punishment.'[29] Yet, even at the core of the institutionalised morality called 'The Law' cruelty lingers on. By means of another's abasement, humiliation, or destruction, 'the community feels refreshed by cruel deeds… [and] those who are cruel enjoy the supreme titillation of the feeling of power.'[30] Henceforth, cruelty remains negated *de iure*, when it is *de facto* employed—*in iure* itself.

The theoretical split envisaged by Nietzsche between appearance (i.e. 'virtue') and reality (i.e. 'force') reflects the psychological split lurking behind the hypocritical convictions of the modern human being, who believes that he has actually freed himself from the ancient burden of cruelty. For Nietzsche, a false consciousness resides at the core of the moral lexicon of the civilised world, and a kind of schizophrenia characterises the civilised human being. Christianity is, in this sense, a most significant example of the corruption of the animal instincts that has developed along the centuries of world history.[31]

According to Nietzsche's understanding of the Christian faith, it is in this religious context that the figure of the priestly man comes to contradict and defy the figure of the knightly man, i.e. of the hero of the times of Homer. *Ressentiment* prospers in the priestly man's heart, for not only does he dislike that which was formerly considered virtuous and noble, but also because he wants to transform the entire universe *ex novo*, in an attempt to rescue it from its cruel nature—as though that were possible. The priestly man cannot confront openly 'the *sorry* scheme of things'[32] in which he dwells, for this scheme is regulated by a most

Lucretian *logos* of destruction and regeneration. Instead, the priestly man follows the road of deception and self-deception: new, hidden, unnatural, perverted cruelty is thus bound to emerge in the context he creates, whence 'the concept of the "most moral man" of the community comes to contain the virtue of frequent suffering, deprivation, a hard way of life, and of cruel self-mortification.'[33] Rather than aspiring to the natural richness of knightly values, the priestly man sets a new, perverted path to follow, which is disconnected from nature, from mundane reality, and from the true necessities of life, and which is 'deep down… *Emptiness*.'[34] The priestly man, for Nietzsche, explores 'the ways of self-narcotisation,' such as 'intoxication as cruelty in the tragic enjoyment of the destruction of the noblest… resignation to generalizing about oneself, a pathos; mysticism, the voluptuous enjoyment of eternal emptiness.'[35] The priestly man is incapable of looking at 'the *cruel* and *desolate* face of nature,'[36] which constitutes, *au contraire*, the knightly man's supreme awareness.

In effect, the priestly man takes revenge on this awareness. He creates phantoms like 'Heavens' and 'the Real World,'[37] which are tragic parodies of that which he would have liked to enjoy in the only world that is given,[38] had he not been so weak as not to be able to attain it. Consequent to this failure is the fact that a deeply rooted frustration, more than any other emotion, drives the actions of the priestly man, including the outer projection of his inner dissatisfaction, under the guise of an unattainable ideal of other-worldly perfection that mocks the perfection of this world. Thus, the priestly man sacrifices the one and only real world to his discontent-inspired fictions, and generates the conditions for the utmost corruption of human nature.[39]

Nietzsche rejects this ill, self-deluding human type, and exalts the fierce, knightly man of the ancient times, when hypocrisy had not yet flourished, and the instinct of cruelty had not yet been perverted. Nietzsche commends the 'brutal, powerful man… the original founder of a state, who subjects to himself those who are weaker.'[40] Nothing is more enchanting than 'the "boldness" of noble races… their hair-raising cheerfulness and profound joy in all destruction, in all the voluptuousness of victory and cruelty.'[41] They alone were fully 'capable of living… *affirming life*.'[42] They alone lived a life of brutal innocence, unlike the priestly man, who, on the contrary, prefers 'self-narcotisation,' since he wishes 'to forget just how much life and being unjust are one and the same.'[43] They alone could stand the 'sorry scheme of things' characterising the universal *Werden*, whose iron-laws have always been the following: '*begetting, living, and murdering*.'[44]

Like de Sade did before him, so does Nietzsche derive from such a dramatic view of the cosmos the imperative according to which all instincts, however bestial they may look, ought to be endorsed and allowed to produce their natural effects: 'Do I counsel you to slay your instincts? I counsel you the innocence in your instincts.'[45] To resist the instincts implanted by nature within ourselves is to take the road to malaise.[46] Cruelty, when it is not heroically lived *in foro externo*, becomes a devious tyrant *in foro interno*.[47] Moreover, the realisation of the intrinsic bestiality of man should discourage this pursuit, for it is only by resuscitating our fullness of being that life becomes healthy, meaningful, and beautiful: 'Not when the truth is filthy, but when it is shallow, doth the discerning one go unwillingly into its waters.'[48]

In this respect, plain and clear sadism pervades Nietzsche's own admiration of the knightly figure,[49] as he argues that nature itself has designed our bodies to be selfishly cruel: 'As far as our nervous system extends, we protect ourselves from pain; if it extended further, right into our fellow men, we would not do harm to anyone (except in such cases where we do it to ourselves).'[50] Yet, for Nietzsche, this is not the case, because it is only 'by analogy [that] we conclude… that something hurts another, and through our memory and power of imagination we ourselves may feel ill at such a thought.' In ultimate analysis, 'the degree of pain produced is in any case unknown to us.'[51]

4 Critical remarks—de Sade

De Sade's characterisation of cruelty possesses so much rhetorical force as it lacks careful critical analysis. This is not uncommon in the philosophical literature about cruelty at large, which regularly relies upon the commonsensical understanding of the term and presupposes its obvious badness. This very same badness is that which de Sade and Nietzsche are actually glad to exploit to their benefit, i.e. in order to *épater les bourgeoises* by sounding most radical in their assertion of amorality—beyond good and evil.

In effect, this common vagueness notwithstanding, further contradictions mine de Sade's treatment of the concept of cruelty, which I consider most revealing of the fundamental axiological dimension lurking behind his philosophical considerations. First of all, the distinction between 'bad' and 'good' cruelty does not appear solely with respect to de Sade's rejection of civilisation in lieu of nature's order. Perplexingly, in de Sade's *Philosophy in the Bedroom*, we read:

> We distinguish two types of cruelty… [the former] originates from stupidity and, involving no reason or analysis, makes the individual that was born like this similar to a wild beast… [This type of cruelty] does not provide any pleasure, for the one who is prone to it does not search for any refinement… [The latter type of cruelty] is the result of the sensitivity of the organs, it is known only to extremely delicate beings, and the excesses it generates are nothing else than refinements of their delicateness; it is this

> delicateness that employs all the resources of cruelty to alert itself, as it vanishes too easily because of its fineness.[52]

This statement is at odds with the understanding of cruelty given throughout the rest of the novel—and of his writings in general. Predominantly, de Sade argues in favour of the renunciation of all forms of cultivation of the spirit and *pro* the full-fledged return to nature's law of 'usurpation.' In this passage, instead, de Sade seems to be suggesting that the cruelty to be praised more is the one involving calculated sophistication, rather than natural, animal spontaneity. Indeed, in de Sade's *Philosophy in the Bedroom*, we also find a scene where the innocent Eugénie is being taught by an exquisitely refined libertine on how to be 'careful about your reputation and, without letting anybody be suspicious…[53] [acquire] the art of doing that pleases you most.'[54] Perhaps, de Sade's inverted Rousseauianism cannot exclude completely some other forms of satisfactory adherence to the principle of 'usurpation.'

Furthermore, de Sade appears to be taking nature at face value, thus never reconsidering his characterisation of it, which speaks only of brutish violence and of selfish interest, and leaves no room for tranquillity and altruism. *Contra* de Sade, it could be argued that such benign determinations are also present within nature's scope. Rousseau's luminous understanding of nature may not be completely right, but it cannot be denied that it may equally contain some elements of truth, which de Sade blocks out *a priori*.

The problem is that de Sade looks at the universe from the perspective of cruelty alone, and cannot see anything that is not untainted by it.[55] Yet, in his more personal writings, a different picture of the world seems to emerge. In his prison letters, for example, we find de Sade lamenting about the inhumane cruelty suffered by himself and by his fellow inmates: 'Here is nothing in the universe that concerns me or interests me like my release from this abominable place where men are treated like wild beasts and, which is worse, by their fellow men.'[56] Why should the advocate of 'usurpation' complain about such a treatment? Consistently with his views on artificial cruelty, penal institutions should not exist; but why is de Sade complaining about the guards' callousness to the prisoners? Aren't they just serving nature by taking advantage of their position of superiority and by showing no mercy to the inmates? Rather than complaining, de Sade should invoke revolt, thus adhering to the cruel principles of nature's order: 'the weak' ought to strike back against 'the mighty.'

An analogous contradiction appears in de Sade's political writings, in which he dreams of the city Paris becoming 'the bane of despots, the temple of the arts, the motherland of all free men.'[57] It is known how de Sade, despite his aristocratic lineage, joined wholeheartedly the forces of the Revolution against the privileges of the nobility and, in particular, against those of the clergy. This move would have been consistent with his views on cruelty if he had condemned the *ancien régime* for preventing cruelty from flowing freely according to the laws of nature. However, that was not the reason he gave, at least publicly. On the contrary, de Sade condemned 'religion' for its 'cruelty,' and for being 'an inexhaustible source of murders and crimes…[58] invented by men's infamy, which has no other goal but to deceive them or to arm them against each other.'[59] In their place, de Sade spoke in favour of 'filial piety, greatness of soul, courage, equality, good faith, love of the fatherland,'[60] i.e. in favour of all 'the virtues… to become the only objects of our veneration.'[61]

In conclusion, it could be said that there exists a fracture separating de Sade the novelist and philosopher of *libertinage* from de Sade the man and *citoyen* of the first French republic. This fracture makes de Sade appear like an upside-down Schopenhauer: whereas Schopenhauer preached compassion and behaved selfishly, de Sade preached selfishness and behaved compassionately.

5 Critical remarks—Nietzsche

Nietzsche's treatment of cruelty is not less richly rhetorical and poorly analytical than de Sade's. Nor does it display fewer internal tensions, which, as it was already the case with de Sade, I believe capable of disclosing interesting information about the ultimate ground of value lurking behind their reflections concerning cruelty.

Nietzsche's admiration for the barbaric societies of the ancient times is the most evident sign of his exclusivist attitude in social matters, especially when it is formulated as the appreciation of the hierarchical organisation of society: 'We must accept this cruel sounding truth, that slavery is of the essence of Culture… This truth is the vulture, that gnaws at the liver of the Promethean promoter of Culture…[62] The misery of toiling men must still increase in order to make the production of the world of art possible to a small number of Olympian men.'[63] For Nietzsche, if we want beauty to have any chance to blossom within the *polis*, then hierarchical domination and outright exploitation must be carried forth without restriction and without remorse. The few elected can enjoy a life full of frenzy and of intensity of experience, if and only if the many are enslaved to labour for them. Aesthetic perfection presupposes political cruelty. This is why Nietzsche fears 'the secret wrath nourished by Communists and Socialists of all times,'[64] whose priestly political program of liberation of the masses and universal levelling 'would be the cry of compassion tearing down the walls of Culture.'[65]

Nietzsche's uncompromising stance for the aristocracy of the spirit sounds definitely unilateral, and

it could not sound differently, for it is based upon an equally unilateral interpretation of nature. Nietzsche's worldview is analogous to de Sade's worldview, insofar as both of them depict nature Darwinistically,[66] i.e. as a battleground rewarding the 'naturally' superior few over and against the inferior many. Perhaps, such a view is correct in many a respect, but it seems to ignore blatantly the common traits that the few share with the many—not to mention the plausible Rousseauvian and benign colours that nature may also possess.[67] This issue becomes particularly controversial if we consider that Nietzsche does not reject *in toto* the possibility that human instincts can be moulded—and mis-moulded. Conditioning, however unhealthy it may be, can be a powerful tool used to shape and reshape both individual souls and collective cultures. This does not mean solely that cruelty cannot be eradicated. More dramatically, it also means that cruelty can be instilled within otherwise merciful souls, as Nietzsche himself suggests in a rare passage from *Human, All Too Human*: 'The degree of moral flammability is unknown. Whether or not our passions reach the point of red heat… depends on whether or not we have been exposed to certain shocking sights or impressions… that determines the lower and higher man, in good and evil.'[68] To this, Nietzsche adds that 'no cruel man is cruel to the extent that the mistreated man believes. The idea of pain is not the same as the suffering of it,'[69] as 'cause and effect are experienced in quite different categories of thought and feeling.'[70]

These two last remarks carry with themselves an unseen challenge to Nietzsche's admiration for the mores of the ancient hero, insofar as the hero would appear unable to perceive fully the actual pain and/or shock that his ruthless actions cause the victim to experience. To be cruel, then, would not be a sign of particular strength. In reality, the intensity of experience pertaining to being cruel would not be so high as it had been suggested, for the hero's *telos* of domination would turn into a trivial task that can be easily complied with. No particularly exciting challenge is left in Nietzsche's version of de Sade's 'usurpation,' for the undertaking at issue requires simply that the stronger, naturally-rapacious, lupine, knightly man has to prey upon the weaker, sensorially-removed, ovine, priestly man. In truth, as Nietzsche himself writes, the pain of the latter is so separated from the perception of the former, that 'the individual man [can be] eliminated like an unpleasant insect'—i.e. something that even a child could do, and, most probably, without much thrill.[71]

6 Conclusion

The main line of argument about cruelty of both de Sade and Nietzsche can be synthesised as follows: [a] cruelty is a natural datum, henceforth a good one; [b] it is a powerful natural datum, which cannot but be there, for it operates behind all animal activities, including the human ones; [c] its operations unravel either openly or secretly and, correspondingly, either healthily or unhealthily; [d] the mightiest examples of healthy expression of this datum in the context of human interaction are those of crime, iron-fisted self-affirmation, immorality, and similar (puzzling) expressions of utmost vitality.

It must be highlighted that neither de Sade nor Nietzsche provides any precise definition of 'cruelty.' Mostly, they outline general traits revealing the presence of a form of fundamental energy rooted within the most basic natural drives. Without it, no self-affirmation would be possible, whether on an individual scale or on a collective scale. Cruelty appears to be part of (if not even the whole of) a cosmic *logos* of generation, destruction and regeneration (e.g. de Sade's logic of 'usurpation' and Nietzsche's natural *Werden* as 'begetting, living, and murdering'). As such, cruelty can be either good or bad. It is good insofar as it follows its natural path, i.e. as it brings forth new life, though sacrificing some of the old. It is bad insofar as it follows an artificial path, which prevents new life from emerging, and which allows old life to persist in a progressively corrupted state. This persistence interferes with the cosmic *logos*, hence reducing future chances of generation and regeneration (e.g. Nietzsche's horror for priestly 'self-narcotisation' and 'emptiness' and de Sade's condemnation of man's tampering with the freely-growing 'trees'). In brief, life itself, which de Sade and Nietzsche connote as intensity of experience (e.g. the libertine's shock of the senses and the warrior's destructive frenzy) and as unrestrained self-affirmation (e.g. de Sade's Nero and Nietzsche's founders of States), seems to be the axiological basis upon which their considerations about cruelty rely.

Actually, even the puzzlement that the reader may experience, whenever he is presented with de Sade's and Nietzsche's positive assessment of the most heinous crimes, seems to rely on the very same axiological basis. It is the destructive side of the cruel *logos* embodied by their heroes that appears to be afflicting us. Something terrible is displayed thereby, i.e. the ruthless elimination of life—even though in the name of further life. The sacrifice of virgins, of infants, of the priestly man, and of 'the weak' in general, is that which horrifies so much—the sacrifice of life, no matter how 'inferior' and 'worthless' it may be. Life, in brief, would appear to be the ground of value on which dwells the positive and/or negative assessment of cruelty.[72] Besides, the experience of sheer horror itself, which the reader may have when entertaining the terrible scenes of depravity depicted by de Sade and Nietzsche, can teach us that the cruel frenzy of life, which so important a role plays in both de Sade's and Nietzsche's philosophies, may not be the only way in which life is to be understood. Lower degrees of

intensity may be preferred to higher ones, in order to enjoy more of them and more often.

In other terms, their conception of life is merely *vertical*, as both de Sade and Nietzsche are concerned with reaching the most voluptuous heights of aesthetic frenzy and utmost vitality. Still, there is a *horizontal* element to be considered as well, at which they seem to hint with their contradictions, and which they sacrifice blindly to the vertical element, thus causing perplexity and moral disapproval to emerge in their readers. The dialectical interplay between the vertical and horizontal dimensions of life is not totally absent from their works; still, the dominant line of argument that they follow seems oblivious to it. It is only *in margine* to their main philosophical considerations, in fact, that de Sade and Nietzsche present us with the notion that life, 'horizontally' intended, may require preservation by avoiding just the dangerous disruption that van be involved in living 'vertically' to the point of vice, sadism, and super-humanity. de Sade's compassion toward his fellow inmates and his adamant political stance in favour of the Revolution are particularly suggestive in this sense.

Equally significant are Nietzsche's remarks from *Human, All Too Human*, from *The Greek State*, and from the third *Untimely Meditation* about the 'cruel andvv desolate face of nature;' that is the reality at which the priestly man cannot stare, for that face being the epiphany of a 'sorry scheme of things.'[73] Nietzsche's choice of adjectives may have been episodic and rhetorical in this case, still it does involve the recognition of the tragic element of life-destruction entailed by the Lucretian universe that he portrays in his works. There, Nietzsche seems to recognise that there is a despicable loss of some kind that makes this 'scheme of things' a 'sorry' one. Of course, Nietzsche is known to have recommended a full acceptance of this 'sorry-ness,' by embracing it in a narcissistic act of fusion between the universe and the superior will of the *Uebermensch*.[74] The horizontal factor of life-determination is, in his philosophy, immolated on the altar of vertical vitality; whether we may want to follow him along this path, it is open to debate—as we have seen, not even the Divine Marquis was really capable of doing it.

In conclusion, we are free to appreciate or not the unique exemplars o f cruelty populating the writings of de Sade and Nietzsche; for sure, their reflections about cruelty are greatly helpful in the individuation of a deep-seated axiological assumption, which operates tacitly beneath their moral and political hermeneutics and, most likely, beneath the reader's as well: the fundamental value of life. For all those who are engaged in the field of value theory, I believe this to be an important result of my succinct comparative study.[75]

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Notes:

1. I derived the title of this paper from K. Millett's *The Politics of Cruelty: An Essay on the Literature of Imprisonment* (New York: Norton; 1994). I believe that the reflections of the Marquis de de Sade and Friedrich Nietzsche on the hidden cruelty of public institutional practices anticipate Millet's thorough criticism of penal justice as cruel.
2 In order to satisfy my tripartite aim, I shall present hereby what I believe to be the most significant remarks on cruelty offered by both authors. I hope, in this way, to be able to highlight their striking affinities.
3 A comprehensive account of the properly *philosophical* literature on cruelty, and of the paucity of it, is given in my PhD Thesis *Understanding Cruelty: From Dante to Rorty* (University of Guelph, MacLaughlin Library; 2002). Further published works of mine dealing specifically with cruelty are: 'Rorty's Painful Liberalism,' in *Bijdragen International Journal in Philosophy and Theology* 63(1), pp. 22-45, and 'Debate on Cruelty,' with Dr Antonio Casado da Rocha, *biTARTE* 27, pp. 5-22.
4 It is known that Nietzsche scholars have come across no trace whatsoever of any direct reading on Nietzsche's part of the Marquis' writings. There are no direct quotes, no indirect references, and no book or manuscript by the Divine Marquis was ever found in Nietzsche's personal library. Still, their views are too similar not to suspect that Nietzsche had knowledge of the Marquis' philosophy.
5 The scholarly comparative literature regarding these two authors is rather scarce. Recent attempts to contrast their views and highlight their affinities are to be found in Fouad Kalouche, *Ethics of Destruction: The Path towards Multiplicity: The Cynics, de Sade, and Nietzsche* (SUNY Binghamton, DA3006909; 2001), and José Lasaga-Medina, 'El mas alla libertino,' in *Revista Anthropos* 192-3 (July-Dec. 2001), pp. 171-84.
6 Donatien Alphonse Marquis de de Sade (hereafter de Sade), *Philosophy in the Bedroom* (1795), Dialogue III. All of de Sade's texts but his letters are retrieved from: *Oeuvres du Marquis de de Sade*, http://desade.free.fr/, and translated by me.
7 ibid.
8 ibid.
9 Cesare Beccaria, *Dei delitti e delle pene* e *Commento di Voltaire*, (Roma: Newton; 1994), p. 42.
10 de Sade, *Philosophy in the Bedroom* (1795), Dialogue III [emphasis added].
11 ibid.

12 ibid.
13 de Sade, *Histoire de Juliette* (1801), Part I.
14 de Sade, *Philosophy in the Bedroom* (1795), Dialogue III [emphasis added].
15 I do not intend to discuss de Sade's dubious claim about trees: his botanical expertise is not an issue in the present study.
16 de Sade, *Philosophy in the Bedroom* (1795), Dialogue III.
17 ibid.
18 It is interesting to note how this radical approach will return in the 20th century in the work of the French playwright Antonin Artaud, father of the *Theatre of Cruelty*, and great admirer of de Sade's art.
19 de Sade, *Philosophy in the Bedroom* (1795), Dialogue III.
20 ibid.
21 Nature's selfish and merciless *modus operandi* becomes the commandment to be honoured, for cruelty is embedded within nature's own language: 'Nature, our common mother, does never talk to us of anything else but ourselves; nothing is so selfish as her voice and we recognize therein the most candid… and saint counsel that we should enjoy ourselves, no matter whom is going to pay for it. But the others, you may say, could seek revenge… At the end of the day, the mightiest alone will be right' [ibid.].
22 ibid.
23 Friedrich Nietzsche (hereafter Nietzsche), *Ecce Homo* (1908), Chapter 11.
All of Nietzsche's texts are retrieved from: *The Nietzsche Channel*, http://www.geocities.com/thenietzschechannel/ntexteng.htm, translations by Walter Kaufmann et al.
24 Nietzsche, *The Dawn* (1887), Book One, par. 19.
25 Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), par. 229.
26 ibid.
27 Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human* (1878), par. 99.
28 ibid.
29 Nietzsche, *The Dawn* (1887), Book One, par. 104.
30 Nietzsche, *The Dawn* (1887), Book One, par. 18.
31 A most cunning scheme of 'de-responsabilisation' is at work at the institutional level: '[T]he commander and the executor are different people: the former does not witness his cruelty and therefore has no strong impression of it in his imagination; the latter is obeying a superior and feels no responsibility' [Nietzsche, *The Dawn* (1887), Book One, par. 101].
32 Nietzsche, *The Greek State* (written 1872, published posthumous), Preface [emphasis added].
33 Nietzsche, *The Dawn* (1887), Book One, par. 18.
34 Nietzsche, *The Will to* Power (1901), Book I, Part I, par. 29.
35 ibid.
36 Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations III*: *Schopenhauer as Educator* (1874), Chapter IV [emphasis added].
37 Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1892), Part IV, Chapter 65.
38 The priestly man cannot accept the fact that life is 'a struggle [whence] each new phase strides on past the earlier ones with a cruel injustice, and with no appreciation for their means and ends' [Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human* (1878), par. 104]. The priestly man's line of reasoning, deep down, is desperately nihilistic: 'For everything that arises is worth destroying. Therefore, it would be better that nothing arose' [Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human* (1878), par. 268].
39 The Christian faith implies, for Nietzsche, 'a certain cruelty toward one's self and toward others' [Nietzsche, *The Antichrist* (1894), Section 21]—and *enfin* is cruelty to God himself, who, in the age of positivism and idealism, is sacrificed to other ethereal divinities: 'stone, stupidity, gravity, fate, nothingness' [Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), par. 55].
40 Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human* (1878), par. 99
41 Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887), Book I, Section 11.
42 ibid. [emphasis added].
43 Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human* (1878), par. 88.
44 Nietzsche, *The Greek State* (written 1872, published posthumous), Preface [emphasis added].
45 Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1892), Part I, Chapter 13.
46 The liberation from our pathological condition will come with the 'philosophers of the future… investigators to the point of cruelty, with uninhibited fingers for the unfathomable, with teeth and stomachs for the most indigestible, ready for every fear that requires a sense of acuteness and acute senses, ready for every venture, thanks to an excess of "free will"' [Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), par. 44]. They 'will say "there is something cruel in the inclination of my spirit",' for in no other way they could reply to the question: 'why knowledge at all?' [Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), par. 230].
47 Interestingly, among the 'cruel deeds' that are performed in the priestly world, Nietzsche enlists 'pity,' which would be 'considered contemptible and unworthy of a strong and terrible soul,' but which finds its way in many social institutions, whence the weak, priestly citizen may find occasions to feel superior: 'Oh, those good ones! Good men never speak the truth' [Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1892), Part III, Chapter 56]. The priestly man pretends to be respectful of the other, but, according to Nietzsche, 'When the great man crieth– immediately runneth the little man thither, and his tongue hangeth out of his mouth for very lusting. He, however, calleth it his 'pity'' [Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1892), Part III, Chapter 57].
48 Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1892), Part I,

Chapter 13.

49 'No cruel man is cruel to the extent that the mistreated man believes. The idea of pain is not the same as the suffering of it… cause and effect are experienced in quite different categories of thought and feeling.' [Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human* (1878), par. 81].

50 ibid.

51 ibid.

52 De Sade, *Philosophy in the Bedroom* (1795), Dialogue III.

53 ibid.

54 ibid.

55 The irreverent stances that de Sade took throughout his career were not always consistent and not always easy to accommodate with one another. It is certainly true that his literary and philosophical production covers a period of more than fifty years, but it is also true that de Sade did revise all of his major works several times, especially in the later years of his life. He had the opportunity to revise and expunge those claims that he considered obsolete and inappropriate within the corpus of wisdom he assembled, which he himself described as an 'encyclopaedia of vice.'

56 De Sade quoted in Neil Schaeffer, *Prison Letters* (1999), available online with additional material at *Letters of The Marquis De de Sade*: http://www.neilschaeffer.com/de Sade/index.htm, 18-8009.

57 De Sade quoted in DuPlessy-Grey, *At Home with the Marquis De de Sade,* (New York: Simon & Schuster; 1998), p. 337.

58 De Sade quoted in DuPlessy-Grey, *Op. cit.*, pp. 338-9.

59 De Sade quoted in DuPlessy-Grey, *Op. cit.*, p. 339.

60 ibid.

61 ibid.

62 Nietzsche, *The Greek State* (written 1872, published posthumous), Preface.

63 ibid.

64 ibid.

65 ibid.

66 This time the reference to 'social Darwinism' is not *ante litteram*, as it was the case when dealing with de Sade.

67 Also related to de Sade's and Nietzsche's neglect of a more Rousseauian picture of nature is their dismissal of religion. The hypothesis of an afterlife is unilaterally discarded as uncongenial and its explication as the expression of man's sense of insecurity and resentment toward 'the mighty' is never questioned thoroughly. No argument is given: a different worldview is provided instead. Nature's face hides nothing to either de Sade or Nietzsche; or, at least, this is a tacit belief of theirs. Consequently, the identification of life with the orgiastic frenzy of, say, the Romans' Bacchanalia, or of the Vikings' plundering, is never questioned either, despite the fact that Nietzsche himself, for instance, admits that Christian monks or nuns are capable of enjoying frenzy in their indirect, pathological fashion. Unhealthy cruelty is at the core of the Christian way of life. Cruelty's energy and the intense frenzy of experience that is quintessential to it, for which Nietzsche longs so anxiously, are still present in the priestly world. Perhaps, this world may not allow for the peaks of intensity that the Romans' or the Vikings' did allow for, but why should they be discharged, if they can still provide some? The lack of health *hinc et nunc* may be the source for absolute realisation, i.e. for the most intensity of experience imaginable, in a realm of being awaiting us *post mortem.* Of course, this possibility relies on a non-falsifiable hypothesis, i.e. that such a realm of being actually exists. Indeed, many a form of cruelty has been justified in the name of non-falsifiable hypotheses of this type: in the USSR, during the 1920s, the proletarian dictatorship instituted by the Communist Party was deemed necessary in view of the final stage of social realisation i.e. the classless society promised by Karl Marx; in Germany, during the 1930s, forced sterilisation was considered unavoidable in order to acquire racial purity and the attainment of an Arian *Gemeinschaft* of which dreamed Adolf Hitler; in Russia, during the 1990s, the starving of millions of citizens was accepted as a necessary step toward the creation of the proper economic conditions in which the Invisible Hand foretold by Adam Smith and Fredrick Hayek could exercise its trickle-down miracles of boundless wealth for all market agents.

68 Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human* (1878), par. 72.

69 Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human* (1878), par. 81.

70 ibid.

71 ibid.

72 As for the idea that the destruction of innocence, and not of life, is the axiological ground that makes cruelty horrible, let us pause and reflect upon why innocence may be so valuable. Innocent is the one who has committed no crime, no injury, no harm, that is to say, the one who has preserved himself/herself from doing evil. What does doing evil imply, though? It means to affect life negatively. It means to have participated in the struggle for existence that de Sade and Nietzsche have praised, i.e. living by begetting and murdering.

73 In the later Nietzsche the approbation of cruelty persists, but the recognition of its tragic face fades away.

74 I am indebted to Dr Alan Ford for the recognition of the fundamental narcissism pervading the philosophies of both de Sade and Nietzsche: rather than compromising their drive for self-affirmation, which is prevented from full realisation by the presence of other individuals and by obvious

limiting conditions (e.g. physical reality itself), they opt for the implausible reduction of the universal (i.e. the super- and inter-subjective) to the subjective (i.e. the intra-subjective), thus denying any mediation with that which is other than the desiring individual subject i.e. de Sade and Nietzsche themselves. In de Sade, this move takes the form of theatrical, exotic, Shangri-La-like settings, which are placed in a fictional time and in a fantastic geography, and in which the sadist, the savage, or whoever incarnates de Sade's 'mighty' one, is free to operate without any constriction. In Nietzsche, this move takes the form of a lay Paradise, namely the complete identification between the superiorly willed individual and the universe, as the former accepts all manifestations of the latter as willed by himself/herself, the most sorrowful and destructive ones included.

75 I have pursued an analysis of the notion of life in much finer detail in my Ph.D. thesis (see note 3) and, to a lesser degree, in my critical notices of John McMurtry, 'The Cancer Stage of Capitalism', *Canadian Journal of Development Studies* 22(1), pp. 255-69, and *Value Wars, Appraisal* 4(3), pp. 147-52. I owe to McMurtry's life-value philosophy the inspiration and the conceptual tools for my axiological analysis of life.

THE REASONABLENESS OF CRUELTY:

AN INQUIRY INTO WANTON DESTRUCTIVENESS

Wendy Hamblet

1 The neglect of cruelty

Despite the great scientific and technological advances that have delivered humankind to the doorstep of the third millennium of the common era, it has oft been noted by philosophers and anthropologists, historians and sociologists that the most recent times comprise an apex in the self-destructiveness of humankind, rather than a pinnacle in their social or moral progress. Kant's famed claim that human reason is con-substantial, as it were, with the divine cosmic force of harmonious goodness ('the starry heavens above and the moral law within') has been shown ludicrous in the century since he voiced that optimistic metaphysical declaration. The critical observer of modernity is more readily inclined, with Dostoevsky, to question the humanity of the human, than to draw lofty parallels.

Dostoevsky throws into question whether the 'moral law within' shines through to the dark underside of the human heart, and he inquires whether the epithets of goodness which we attach to the god are fitting descriptions for an all-powerful being who permits, and perhaps even orchestrates, that darkness-at the cost of the suffering and humiliation of innocents. Dostoevsky's charge against the god, voiced through the character of Ivan Karamazov, (in *The Brothers Karamazov*) rings profoundly true in many modern ears: Would *you* consent to be the architect of a fabric of human destiny that is built upon the tortured death of innocents? But his charge against humankind rings truer still: 'No animal could ever be so cruel as a man-so artfully, so artistically cruel.' [1]

We cannot do much about the cruelty of the god, though certainly, after Auschwitz, many have had to dismiss him, or redefine him (as 'limited' in power or absent from the world) to keep him in existence. However, it bears considering Dostoevsky's charge regarding the darkness at the heart of humankind. It bears questioning what it is that eclipses our more enlightened intentions and cultivates our moral darknesses. It needs to be asked, in view of the massive wounds from which the earth and its beings now suffer, how it is that human beings are 'so artfully, so artistically cruel?' We, especially we scholars trying to understand that world, need to share Dostoevsky's questions and allow them to inspire our research into the nature of human being and the collapse of our ideals of fraternity.

The twentieth century has seen cruelty and massacre enough to rival Kant's claims of any moral law within. The mutual slaughter of two world wars, the first fought over almost nothing, the second launched far too late to save the millions upon millions already slaughtered in Nazi ovens. Then there were the terror-famine of the Ukraine, the butchery of the Soviet gulag, the Burma Railway, the technological triumph of Hiroshima, the useless excesses of Vietnam, Mao's 'Great Leap Forward', the Cambodian killing fields, the Rwandan genocide, the Yugoslavian 'ethnic cleansing'. The list goes on and on.

Scholars have been no more successful in understanding the violence that has exploded during the previous century than they had been at accounting for the brutalities of previous millennia. Perhaps this is the case because violence takes on so many and diverse forms. The viciousness of children, the aggressiveness of young men, the cruelty of sadists, the expulsive murders of religious fanaticisms, ethnic cleansing, genocide—violence takes on more forms than could ever be counted, categorized and catalogued. In this paper, I shall be thinking human violences in the broadest and most general way, as a continuum of cruelty that begins in crimes of omission and finally embraces crimes of the most brutal commissions.

We do not find ourselves bereft of 'reasons' for the high degree of violence in modern cities and states. Experts cite many obstacles to stability and harmony that contribute to current disorders: the breakdown of traditional family structure; changes in the way that our children are raised; gendered dispositioning and mutual resentments and violations between the sexes; distorted attitudes toward poverty and abjection propagated by the individuating, isolating, commodity-fixated 'capitalist ethic'; struggles for religious domination and fanatical fundamentalisms that transcendentally prescribe and justify terrorisms for the sake of the coming of the god; the impact of rapid scientific changes upon cultural traditions and institutions; moral attitudes cut free from their social anchors in a secularizing world that spawns evolving viewpoints on the nature of the good, the definitions of the 'good life', sex, gender relations, and death; elitist 'humanistic' attitudes toward animal and other life and mechanistic understandings of the planet that sustains us. The bare fact of technology's shrinking the distances that separate the peoples of the earth brings face to face such a plethora of differences that carving out one's identity and maintaining cultural integrity becomes more and more problematic for individuals and for cultures.[2]

These factors may explain why people feel threatened and react violently toward their neighbours in an ever-evolving, morally confusing world. What they fail to explain, however, is the gratuitousness of so much of the violence, the sheer cruelty and wantonness of the brutality, the incredible scale of the

killing, the increasing deviousness of the means, the dwindling age of the killers and their victims, and the growing number of the murdered who are civilian innocents—often the old, the women, the children and babes. It seems that human savagery is mounting with each new decade, unfolding exponentially into ever more 'artfully, artistically' brutal forms. After millennia of 'civilising effects', civilisation has shown itself to be little more than a thin veneer, a cloak of civility that barely, any longer, veils the darkness at the heart of humankind.

Jonathan Glover, in his *Humanity: A Moral History of the Twentieth Century*, declares: 'Deep in human psychology, there are urges to humiliate, torment, wound and kill people'.[3] Glover posits, as the turning point of 'civilisation', the war strategy that broke the code against the slaughter of innocents, beginning in the early twentieth century with the economic blockade of Germany during the First World War. This strategic manoeuvre was calculated, not to defeat enemy militia in battle, but to cut off food and other vital goods on their way to Germany. The direct result was the semi-starvation of masses of civilians (estimated deaths were between 400,000 and 800,000) of whom the greatest numbers were women and children.

This prolonged act of barbarity, decided in cold rationality by an allegedly exemplary, 'civilised' government and maintained long after individual consciences had begun to ache, set a precedent in war strategy that, Glover argues, opened the door to the savagery of the second world war with its massive ghettoizations and murders.[4] The massacre of civilian populations grew more and more easy for warring nations to include in their arsenal of battle strategies. Glover traces what he calls a 'moral slide' in the eroding warfare ethic from the British naval blockage of WWI, to the routine bombing of civilian populations (an estimated 305,000 non-combatants killed) practised during the Second World War, to the horrific 'fire-bombings' of Hamburg that killed over 40,000 people, leaving 'woman and children… so charred as to be unrecognisable'.[5]

To choose, as a deliberated strategy of war, to sacrifice masses of innocent civilians says much about the moral decay of modern nations. That allies that saw themselves as the 'good guys' in the conflict could resort to such policies seems sheer absurdity, but as Dostoevsky has Ivan Karamazov grieve, 'The world stands on absurdities!' Oddly, precisely because this phenomenon appears so entirely senseless, it has received little attention from political scientists.[6] Jacques Semelin, research fellow for the *Centre National de la Recherche scientifique* (C.N.R.S.) and teacher at the Institut d'Etudes Politiques (Paris), is one of the few whose work seeks to understand violence, especially in its most 'senseless' manifestation, the grand-scale massacre of civilian populations. In an important article, 'Penser les Massacres', Semelin explains that there are three main reasons why massacres have failed to receive the attention they deserve from the political scientific community. The first is psychological: researchers tend to avoid topics of study that elicit horror and repulsion. The second is logical and methodological: how does the scientist claim the necessary 'scientific objectivity' toward acts that elicit such responses in the researchers? The third obstacle is intellectual: phenomena of such savagery appear to defy explanation. How can one seek to give reasons for phenomena so apparently senseless? There remains the tendency, asserts Semelin, to attribute brutality to sheer 'human folly'.[7]

So, philosophers and political scientists are only just beginning to take seriously the possibility of learning to understand violence. They are only just now beginning to penetrate and expose the mysteries of human destructiveness. Yet, the research barely begun, already a striking obstacle sets itself in the road in comparative studies of mass violences. No two instances of brutalisation are exactly alike—neither in intention, nor in manifestation, nor yet in their consequences nor repercussions. Therefore, research is threatened altogether by the disappointing possibility that we may never be able to 'make sense' of the worst cruelties of human design, by researching past brutalities, precisely because their perpetrators are 'so artfully, so artistically cruel'. We may never be able to look at past atrocities and discover, from them, how to foresee and thus prevent future slaughter.

There does, however, emerge one consistent factor that links victims to perpetrators, a factor that seems to repeat itself, not only at the level of the individual, but at the level of human communities of all sizes and identity forms (families, religious sects, ethnic groups and nations). Those individuals or peoples that have previously been victims of brutalising atrocities have a strong tendency to become the perpetrators of violence in future conflicts. This fact has long been noted and suggests a possible way of understanding how violence works—how it tends to suck up its victims into its violational logic and thus to recruit future practitioners from within the fold of the terrorised and wounded. If, in the context of a single family, we can trace the repetition of physical abuse from father to son, and then again from that son to *his* son, we have good reason to conjecture that violence shapes attitudes and actions. It establishes dangerous world-views and dictates desperate and overzealous modes of being-in-the-world. Violence may have a functional performative effect upon individuals and cultures, so violent histories may require people to repeat and act out their affliction. Events suffered and committed *by* bodies *upon* bodies become very quickly absorbed *into* those bodies to make us who we are, to teach us 'truths' about our world, and to set in place certain dispositions that will remain with us, perhaps deeply concealed within the flesh, as it were, but nonetheless

persistent, tenacious, equipping us with predispositions toward alien others, and inclining us to violent response.

Since we can trace the persistence of a logic of violence in the life of an individual or a family or across groups of victimised peoples, then the fact that destructiveness has permeated the history of the species ought give us all pause to reflect and fear our own dispositions toward violence. We all need to question whether dangerous tendencies may be stored within our flesh, in the fleshy practices of our families, and even in our cultural 'bodies' (institutions, political systems and social rituals). Much of the 'reason' behind the unreasonable violences, the inter- and intra-species aggressions we witness daily across the globe, may have been lodged in our flesh and in our cultural traditions, despite—and perhaps directly because of—the millennia of 'civilising effects' that compose the annals of human history.

If Glover is right that '[d]eep in human psychology, there are urges to humiliate, torment, wound and kill people', and, if Konrad Lorenz, Walter Burkert, René Girard, Maurice Bloch, and many other anthropologists are correct in thinking that these 'urges' can be traced to violent rituals (mutilations, castrations, scapegoat murders) practised for millennia during the early history of the species, then to understand the ever more 'artistically cruel' reformulations of violence, the philosopher must turn to the scientist and the social scientist to learn the deepest secrets of 'human nature'. If we can look back to the past sufferings and cruelties practised by our ancestors and discover the nature of the social rituals from which we have taken rise—the wounds that remain 'imprinted' and genetically encoded, the ontologies that endure in our systems, the ideologies that persist in our ontologies—we may gain a clearer perspective on the nature of the human beast and, most importantly, that clearer perspective may offer us an understanding of how to heal those perilous wounds that configure us for violent behaviours.

2 The embodiment of experiences

The assumption that undergirds this paper is that the basic configurations of human life are contained in, and conveyed by, experiences rather than rational analysis. By this I mean to imply that who we, as human beings, may largely be a function of the histories that we carry, not in our history books, nor in our active memories, but in the fleshy silence of our bodies and in the 'bodies' of our cultures—in their customs and their practices, their political institutions and their religious beliefs, in their languages and their everyday social rituals. Our histories, understood as the complex systems of interconnections among series of actions, repeated over lifetimes and over multiple generations of lifetimes, may hold the secrets of human nature, though nurture has played, and continues to play, a crucial role in the determining the formations and reformulations that constantly reconfigure our natures. Therefore, an examination of 'history' as a record of political events or as a chronicle of human achievements cannot begin to capture the sheer excess of human reality—the meaning-defying nature of the density and convolution of human events and their constant recapitulations in the face of new opportunities and new terrors in the environment.

History, as a science, cannot hope to disentangle the infinitely elaborate secrets of our histories of experiences. Yet experiences do display a certain patterning that can be detected, mapped and rallied as an interpretative device to anticipate future events. Experiences can be said to demonstrate a certain 'logical structure' all their own. Persistent 'logical structures' have been noted to characterise sequences of actions that have persisted over generations of lifetimes, for centuries and even millennia. This is because sequences of actions repeated over long periods of time become inscribed, not only into the bodies of the participants but, as it were, into the 'bodies' of those cultures, silently in-*corpo*-rated into the cautious wisdom of its elders, into the submissive timidity of its women, into the fleshy terrors of its young—into the joyful, hope-filled or resentment-riddled, guilt-prone materiality of its progeny. So actions speak to and through bodies, but they also become lodged in cultural practices as ontological suppositions, common worldviews and ideological assumptions, and dispositions toward certain behaviours and attitudes.

Actions when repeated over long periods become 'ritualized'. That is, they take on a portentous seriousness—a 'sacred' import—for the practitioners and the inheritors. They come, over time, to be obsessively-ordered, with strict governance over the place, time and circumstances of their repetition. All manner of valuable—and not so valuable—practices become 'part' of people in this way, 'essentialised', 'incorporated', we might say, into their very being as identifying marks. People become wedded to their customs ('rituals' in ethological parlance). Giving up *what we do* comes to be equated with giving up *who we are*.

Thus rituals have a time-honoured weight in a community. Their communicative power extends the identity, and indeed often the life, of the social group across vastly changing political, economic and social circumstances. Rituals comprise a medium of continuance of the most powerfully impressive kind, because the most concrete and material. They supply the performative 'logic', a kind of a material ideology that charts out future sequences of actions for individuals and for cultures. Therefore ritual traditions insidiously convey information; we might say they in-*form* future actions and attitudes. By this term 'informing' I mean to highlight the tendency of

repeated practices to transfer ontological and ideological messages. Rituals perform operative, influential functions.

Many anthropologists and ethologists claim that the violent ritual customs repeated by our most distant forbears could still live on in each of us, lodged in our bodies, shaping our social and political institutions, configuring our interpersonal encounters and inclining our everyday attitudes and decisions—in short, framing the horizons of our lifeworld, however alien our lifeworld may be to that of our distant progenitors. Anthropologists are convinced of the persistent power of ancient ritual customs over modern behaviours and attitudes because they can empirically trace the way that bodily experiences carve themselves into feelings and desires, even over only a few generations of practice. They insist that new 'needs' crop up where repeated sequences of actions have gone before—new 'needs' that grow powerful and *require* fulfilment.[8] Since ancient rituals of violence were practised obsessively over many millennia, there is every reason to see modern tendencies toward violence as consistent with long and persistent histories of violent practices. It seems that nature sets certain dispositions toward violent behaviour and then nurture continues to promote those dispositions, since the same dispositions that live on in human bodies persist in the institutions and customs that themselves continue to hold sway over social practices and attitudes. Thus, it is not a question of nature *over* nurture, but a case of the two working hand in hand to suggest to modern agents, as both 'natural' and appropriate to the phenomenal occasion, violent responses to the human condition.

If we accept the claims of anthropologists of violence regarding the persistence of violent tendencies in both our bodies and in our cultural institutions and practices, then, if we are to understand who human beings truly are and *why* we do the things we do, it would seem important for us to consider the histories of our species, the mechanisms whereby human communities have been formed, the logic (ideological and ontological assumptions) that chart our interactions. We need to think, not only the bloody annals that comprise the history of the species, but attend to what kinds of actions were obsessively and religiously repeated in the formative millennia of our species and our cultures. Thus, a brief tour through anthropological terrain is needed here.

3 Lorenz on aggression

Konrad Lorenz, medical doctor, philosopher and animal behaviourist, writing in the 1960's, was convinced that human development went astray from the first moments of human culture. In his masterpiece, *On Aggression*, Lorenz explained that adaptive rituals designed, in animals and in humankind, to ensure species survival, turned maladaptive early in the dawn of human time. Lorenz contended that, because, in humans, the development of cultural artefacts was so sudden and so rapid, it outpaced biological evolution. As a result, humans, at a very early point in their evolution beginning with the mastery of fire, gained a relative freedom from environmental exigencies. However, intraspecific aggression, natural to all creatures and serving important functions of *selection* within the familial group and *spacing* between diverse groups, can develop in markedly maladaptive directions, explains Lorenz, if it exerts selective pressure uninfluenced by environmental pressures. Therefore it is likely that human aggressive tendencies became 'exaggerated to the point of the grotesque and the inexpedient'.[9]

Humans, argues Lorenz, developed an arsenal of aggressive weaponry of destructive potential and diversity of form unparalleled in the animal kingdom, while failing to develop the inhibitors, natural to animals, that would prevent their turning that weaponry upon their own kind. In a particularly disturbing passage, Lorenz writes:

> Obviously, instinctive behaviour mechanisms failed to cope with the new circumstances which culture unavoidably produced. There is evidence that the first inventors of pebble tools, the African Australopithecines, promptly used their new weapon to kill not only game but fellow members of their species as well. Peking Man, the Prometheus who learned to preserve fire, used it to roast his brothers; beside the first traces of the regular use of fire lie the mutilated and roasted bones of Sinanthropus pekinensis himself'.[10]

This passage demonstrates that the first rituals that were definitively 'human' were rituals of violence directed interspecifically. We tend to take for granted that aggression flares where there is a breakdown in loving or, at least, neighbourly affections. However, and ironically, violent rituals, explains Lorenz, are *fundamental* to human group behaviour, rituals of love and friendship comprising only secondary and derivative rituals that grew out of the violent forms, as rites of appeasement to seduce or divert an aggressor. For Lorenz, the 'grotesquely exaggerated' aggressiveness that marks the perversion of our species can still be witnessed today—in the way young boys thrash each other, or men brawl in barrooms. A further example of our grotesque aggressiveness resides in the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction by creatures as flammable as we.

4 Girard on violence and sacrifice

Some experts now challenge a number of Lorenz's basic assumptions. However, no theory on aggression seems to get off the ground without addressing Lorenz from its outset. Many of his criticisms of human ways of being pluck chords in our consciences, and many of his warnings resonate with the claims of other experts from diverse fields of research. René Girard, literary

theorist, takes up the question of originary violences by tracing a pattern to human behaviour as it is depicted in the classic narratives of the West. Girard has, in an impressive corpus, developed a theory that claims that violence is endemic to, and definitive of, human society.[11] Girard's most important work, *Violence and the Sacred*, opens with the stunning assertion that violence is the crucial catalyst of human communities, and that religion arises in response to the need to create an illusion to mask this discomfiting truth. Violence, according to Girard, is a manifestation of the sacred in the temporal world. Girard polarises violence into two forms: good violence and bad violence. The violent rituals that make possible community, rituals of communal expulsion and murder, Girard calls 'good violence' since, by definition, they involve obsessive regulation. Its evil twin, uncontrolled violence, is best exemplified in the murderous hostilities that can maintain for generations between feuding families, states or nations where there is no ritual outlet for vengeance.

Girard takes the phenomenon of ritual sacrifice as the central event in the entire performative and symbolic drama of human civilisation. Girard posits an original 'dark event', a ritual killing of a random victim by a unanimous community. This original murder, contends Girard, underlies all subsequent forms of ritual, the latter comprising obsessive re-enactments of that prior event in order to establish the fiction of the 'justness' of that original killing, to keep hidden its true randomness.[12] Girard insists that the entire breadth of systems that give structure to human communities have their origin in this one murderous event and its subsequent ritualised concealments. Language, codes of etiquette, kinship systems, cultural prohibitions, marriage and procreation traditions, customs regulating birth and death and all patterns of exchange and domination—in short, all civil, political and social institutions—emanate from this one ritualised origin.

Girard states: 'Sacrifice is the most crucial and fundamental of... rites; it is also the most commonplace'.[13]

Sacrifice rituals are crucial to the formation and the stable continuance of a social structure, explains Girard, for they direct and control human aggressiveness, explained in Girard as the psychic mechanism of 'mimetic desire'.[14] This mechanism dictates that we all pursue all objects of desire, not because of the value placed in those objects, but because those objects are desired by others whom we value. The problems arise as we approach more closely toward possession of the desired object. The closer one gets, the more one arouses the animosity and rejection of the model, the truly loved and venerated one. Thus arises the paradox of veneration and rejection that Girard terms the 'double bind'. In this paradoxical relation, the model, remaining exemplar and object of veneration, becomes at the same time the enemy—a 'monstrous double' of the venerated one.

The mechanism of mimetic rivalry is both the motivator and the frustrator of human community, in Girard's theory. Due to the lack in human beings of 'braking mechanisms' against intraspecific aggression, rivalry leads invariably to violence, and violence spirals into cycles of violence until finally the conflict fulfils itself in murder. The original murder leads to cycles of reciprocal retaliations that form an unending series of revenge killings as long as the murders continue to have the same retaliatory meaning for both groups. The only way, says Girard, to put an end to the cycles of uncontrolled violence is through a final killing of a random victim whose guilt for all previous violence can be agreed upon by all warring parties.

The selection of the victim is arbitrary and often spontaneous but the victim will always have certain qualifications. He will be a recognisable surrogate for the guilty party so that he can make a believable 'real culprit' for 'just' punishment. But he will also be vulnerable, without familial resources, without social allies to champion his innocence or revenge his death after the fact. Once there is unanimous agreement that the surrogate is the 'real cause' of the social disruption, the victim will be treated as a criminal, denounced publicly, insulted, humiliated, whipped and beaten, and finally killed (or symbolically killed through expulsion from the community). The murder has a finality that brings the cycles of violence to an abrupt halt, leaving the community freshly unified through the redirection of their aggression and the realignment of their communal integrity and the cleansing of their collective conscience.

5 Burkert on ritual and tradition

Sacrificial rituals and the metaphorical 'murder' rituals of expulsions and physical mutilations were practised for millennia by early cultures of the Western tradition, long after their social functions had disappeared and their 'meanings' had been lost. Walter Burkert, classical philologist and anthropologist of religion, struck by the unshakeable hold that these rituals exercised from prehistoric through classical times, seeks to explain the uncanny endurance of these murderous anomalies. Burkert, too, looks to the distant past of the species for insight into ritual beginnings. He emphasizes the rich palette of ritual evidenced in earliest hominoids, rituals that centred about life's most significant functions—hunting, warfare and mating display. Many of these early rituals, claims Burkert, have been bequeathed to modern man across millennia of historical evolution. Burkert is convinced that many modern practices, involving the search for food, the disposition in favour of fear and flight, aggressive display and sexual customs, comprise the ritual residue of the traditions forged by our earliest forbears.

The quest to understand the persistence of rituals led

Burkert to a remarkable insight: rituals function in such a way that they do not require either belief or understanding in order to remain operative and effective. All tradition, explains Burkert, consists of condensed, systematized information. The logical functions peculiar to *experiential* tradition are designed to keep conceptual systems finite. Ritual traditions act out strategies of negation, class-inclusion and exclusion, and patterns and analogies of 'reality'. Thus they achieve a 'reduction of complexity' that provides a simplified system of meanings that orients those who would otherwise feel powerless amidst the infinite complexity of their environment.

This 'ordering' and 'simplifying' constructs hierarchies and links of causality that result in a radically simplified and polarised worldview that sorts existents into 'two containers'—'good' and 'bad'. Add to this orienting system an 'ultimate signifier' (god, king of the gods), and the system then offers easy solutions even to conflicting equations of life, resolving, as matters to be left to infinite wisdom, those factors of existence that refuse to fit neatly into the two 'containers'. Even the most oppressive domination, for example, is justified and made easier to bear where the dominator is understood to be empowered, and himself governed in turn, by a higher power. Insecure or unjust distribution of goods can be brought into moral balance by the positing of a transcendent gift system overseen by the absolute signifier. Thus, resonant with Dostoevsky's spirituality, the worst affliction and grievous loss is made less absurd by the positing of a divine overseer directing the cosmic drama.[14] Burkert believes that the pervasiveness of the ideologies compressed into the murderous rituals witness the advent of a 'common mental world' in early civilisations, whose symbolic content and seriousness, claims Burkert, has been transmitted to modernity through an uninterrupted chain of tradition.

Burkert insists that pervasive and persistent rituals conveyed 'collective representations' to the young of each successive generation in the form of cultural traditions, myths and institutions. Rituals comprise, for Burkert, the 'very epitome of cultural learning'. It is not merely *that* they are self-reinforcing by the power of resonance, but it is *how* they are made to resonate in the bodies of participants. Ritual learning, historically, often took place in the context of harsh forms of intimidation.[15] Learning is most indelible where the memories are most painful, humiliating or anxiety-ridden. Ancient ritual practices centred about bloody sacrifices, painful purgatorial purifications and excruciating physical mutilations. The participants were made to witness and even perform these acts. They were made to handle, drench themselves and sometimes drink the sacrificial blood. Whippings, purgings, humiliations and physical tortures were administered to them and by them. Terror and pain leave indelible scars. The horrifying, agonizing repetitions ensured a culture's survival, by etching into each coming generation the traditions that marked the culture as self-identical across the flux of time and connected it with the changeless eternality of the ancestors and the gods.

Violent rituals have persisted throughout vast historical changes and centuries of 'civilising influences'. Burkert and many others are convinced that long-standing ritual traditions, due to this endurance, have successfully manipulated the evolutionary chain as well. After all, ritual killing, ritual castrations and ritual expulsions are real murder, real closure to particular genetic lines, and real ejection from the genetic pool of the society. So violent rituals not only enjoyed remarkable longevity throughout prehistory and well into the classical period but this longevity has ensured ritual's very real and wide-ranging consequences in the social, political and economic domains of a culture, since ritual traditions have had biological effects as well. Those powerful individuals that oversaw the religious lives of their communities were in a strong position to fix and manipulate the biological composition of their social group, directing the 'selective processes' of the group through selection of the victims.[16]

Burkert understands murder rituals to be so fundamentally stabilising that they come to be repeated at any time when the social order is seen in need of rejuvenation or resolidification. Burkert believes that the entire spectrum of social ritual in later societies (the myth of the hero, Greek dramatic theatre in general, the tradition of the royal hunt) can be traced back to this original event. Bloody sacrifice, ironically, articulates the moment of 'humanisation' that is the founding stone of human civilisation.

However—and Burkert is firm on this point—the cracks in that founding stone of human culture are still clearly visible and threaten to topple the edifice of human achievement. Burkert holds that ritual's effects are still manifest in our feelings and our dispositions today. Our own behavioural patterns, he explains, shaped by the survival practices of the earliest societies, 'reflect the hard rocks of the biological landscape, the dangers, limits and the drive for the preservation of life'.[17] Burkert warns that the ritual past continues to drive humankind toward excessively 'serious' and obsessively rigid responses to the human situation. On the persistence of histories that turn maladaptive, Burkert asks: 'What kind of a fitness is it that renders people unfit for change?'[18]

6 The reason beyond reason

Given the remarkable persistence of violent rituals in the early history of the West, one has good reason to suspect the inscription of violence into the very materiality of our cultures. One might even be tempted to endorse, with some behaviourists, the seemingly

radical postulation of the existence of a 'violent gene' in the human being's biological composition. Such a gene could conceivably have become 'programmed' by millennia of murderous traditions. This is not a speculation that could ever bear substantiating proof, but, if it could, it could help to explain, not only the cruel history of the West, but the otherwise inexplicable ability of ordinary 'decent' human beings to remain detached and apathetic in the face of the most cruel acts to others,[19] or even automatically to assume, conscience-free, a designated role in the most hideous crimes: the degradation of entire races, their mass starvation and brutalisation, the thousands herded off to death camps by their own religious leaders and the millions rounded up and sold into slavery by their fathers and their uncles.[20]

We have been educated to expect and to look for coherence and meaning in human behaviour. But there appears to be no 'reason' behind most brutalising occurrences, and even less behind the willingness of the participants and the apathy of onlookers. But, if the reasons for human brutality are lodged in our bodies and not in our conscious minds, if their violence-legitimating ontological and ideological messages are *embedded in* our 'civilising processes', in the practices and traditions of our cultures, they are far more deeply 'incorporated' than we can ever rationally appreciate.[21] The ethological perspective holds that the selective process that advantages the ethically unobtruded has been functioning for thousands of generations.[22]

7 Conclusion

The theorists that I have rallied here all suggest that human community originated in murderous rituals. I am adding to their claims the suggestion that those histories, because functional, material histories, remain harboured in our bodies and in the 'bodies' of our cultures (systems and traditions), and may thus exercise still today a profound effect upon our ways of being-together. I believe that it is altogether possible that much of what we are today, our tastes and inclinations, our loves, our joys, our anxieties and our terrors, may emanate from an original fleshy ground that brings us, already violence-prone, to modern social arenas, themselves inherently repressive to greater or lesser degrees due to their own common origins in violent ritual. The bodies of people and the 'bodies' of their everyday practices—their cultural customs, the logic of their political ideologies, and their patterns of exchange—both conceal and convey deeply violent secrets. The ontologies and ideologies communicated in ancient rituals—their logic of domination, their starkly polarised, morally simplified worldview (sanctifying what is mine and demonising what is alien), and their general legitimation of violence as an effective and legitimate ordering device—may still structure the way we think and behave today.

I am suggesting furthermore that we may be witnessing the most direct reformulations of those violent histories in the aggressive 'identity work' that is carried on in the world today, and in the ideals of integrity and unity that underlie our identity projects and drive us as peoples and nations. We may see our past violences in the zealous quest for ethnic purity and 'homelands' that characterize ethnic conflicts, in the evangelical lust of religious cults and fundamentalists as they seek to solidify their spiritual identity to the cry '*Écrasez l'infidel!*' and in the typically Western understanding of self as autonomous and free. We have come to be who we are, and we continue to carve out who we are, as individuals and as cultures, by distinguishing ourselves from others—demonising difference as impure, contaminated, evil.

Violence has triumphed as an ideology in so far as we, as individuals and as cultures, practise demonisation (racism, sexism, religious and cultural intolerances). Perhaps it is not the case that *all* interaction around the globe, whatever noble ideals and higher justifications are given, are nothing more than re-enactments of violent ritual histories, re-manifesting their logic of domination, re-asserting the uncleanness of the alien, and re-legitimating violence as a valid and effective 'ordering mechanism'. But, if understanding and curbing wanton violence is object of our inquiry, if the quest for the 'right conduct of life' is the primary philosophical task, it at the very least warrants serious consideration that violent histories may still be informing our ways of being-in-the-world.

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Notes:

1. Both citations from the chapter 'Rebellion' in *The Brothers Karamazov*. The first is a paraphrase. Dostoevsky spoke of the cruelty of 'man' but there is little doubt that woman too practices the art of violence, though her weaponry and strategic devices may differ from her male counterpart. Yale scholar, Charles Mironko, whose research considers the Rwandan genocide, in speaking at the recent meeting of the Association of Genocide Scholars in Minneapolis (June 2001), reported that it was not uncommon, during the Rwandan genocide, for a Hutu mother to voluntarily offer up to Hutu authorities her half-Tutsi children, saying 'Take them from me; they are the enemy'.
2. For further explanations for violence, see A. Caputo, S. L .Brodsky, S. Kemp. 'Understanding and Experiences of Cruelty: An Exploratory Report' in *The Journal of Social Psychology*. 140, 5. pp.649-60.
3. Jonathan Glover. *Humanity: A Moral History of the Twentieth Century*. p.33
4. Churchill was an advocate of the area bombing that

broke the ban on civilian targets in WWII but, long before he expressed qualms about their decision, asking 'Are we beasts?' (Glover. *Humanity*. p.82)

5. Glover. *Humanity*. p.78.
6. It ought to be noted that, in the case of the holy war, it becomes even easier to effect the 'moral slide' of which Glover speaks, since, by definition, the holy war has been granted permission to cruelty and transcendental justification for its war crimes. There tends to be shared the overriding conviction amongst fundamentalist soldiers that one is fighting for the just cause, ordained by the god. Thus, the harder one fights, the more the god must be pleased with the results of the battle, and the more one will be rewarded for his viciousness in heaven.
7. R.I.P.C. vol. 7, no. 3.1. (08/02/01) 'The Problem of Ritual Killing' in *Violent Origins*. p.153. c.f. *Creation of the Sacred: Tracks of Biology in Early Religions*. p.28.
8. *ibid*. p.42.
9. *ibid*. p.239.
10. R. Girard. *Desire and the Novel, Violence and the Sacred, Le Bouc émissaire, La Route antique des Hommes Pervers, Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*.
11. *ibid*. pp.240-243.
12. R. Girard. *Violence and the Sacred*. p.300.
13. Girard's theory of 'mimetic desire' works from, and still retains striking similarity to, Freud's Oedipus complex. This mechanism causes one person to value another's object of desire, not as a function of the absolute or subjective value of the object (as is generally supposed), but because the possessor of that object is himself valued and emulated. In Freudian terms, I desire my mother only because my father, whom I value, desires my mother. But, in Girard, Freud's familial rivalry is universalised. In Girard, Freud's 'father' can be any model or rival; Freud's 'mother' can be any desired object, and Freud's 'unconscious' becomes, in Girard, the 'mythic mentality'. Freud was the first to see conflict as the determinative socialising mechanism. For Freud, as for Girard, all ritual practices have their origin in actual murder. See *Violence and the Sacred.* p.201 ff.
14. *ibid*. p.28.
15. *ibid*. p.29.
16. See Walter Burkert, 'The Problem of Ritual Killing' in *Violent Origins*, p.153.
17. Burkert, *Creation of the Sacred*, p.33.
18. *ibid*. p.16.
19. One of the most disturbing proofs of this apathy was reported by A. M. Rosenthal in *Thirty Eight Witnesses* (New York: McGraw-Hill. 1964) who recounted the brutal attack of a young New York woman, known as 'Kitty' to her thirty-eight neighbours who watched, from their windows in a quiet middle-class neighbourhood, as a killer stalked and stabbed her in three separate attacks. Not one of these 'decent' 'moral' citizens responded to her screams. No one even telephoned the police until after the woman was dead. They explained that they did not want to get involved. This massive evidence of the stark indifference of people to another's suffering drew from Rosenthal the following pessimistic assessment of the species: '... only under certain situations and only in response to certain reflexes or certain beliefs will a man step out of his shell toward his brother'. It is not difficult to make the conceptual leap from the absurdity of this neighbourhood's response to the fact of other 'witnesses' silent in the face of other, more extensive if not more brutal, atrocities.
20. Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the banality of evil* was found scandalous and disturbing by many precisely for pointing out the normalcy of such behaviour as 'responsibly' taking up one's place in the chain of atrocity. Karl Jaspers underscores the vileness of passivity in the face of radical evil in his *The Question of German Guilt*. He writes: 'But each one of us is guilty in so far as he remained inactive. The guilt of passivity is difficult. Impotent excuses; no moral law demands a spectacular death ... But passivity knows itself morally guilty of every failure, every neglect to act whenever possible, to shield the imperilled, to relieve wrong, to countervail'.
21. If, then, violence is lodged in bodies, those biologists may be right who suspect that only the selfish survive. Burkert reminds us: It is the genes, not the individuals, which get passed on; hence it is the cheater within a group who enjoys the greatest advantage and by this very fitness will multiply his genes. The 'selfish gene' has become the catchword [for this process].
22. An even less palatable observation from the anthropological community asserts that hunting, killing and the consequent 'distribution of meats', so pervasive during the first millennia of human societies, can be observed even within chimpanzee cultural groups. This fact raises the possibility that the rituals which human beings practised for thousands of years before they developed speech, let alone the skill of writing and the self-reflective practice of philosophy, were bequeathed to us across genetic boundaries.
23. See W. Burkert. *Homo Necans*. I. 2. n.23 for a full bibliography.

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THE COSMIST FUTURE OF PERSONALISM

Konstantin K. Khrutski

Abstract

The general purpose of this article is the substantiation of the original conception of Cosmist Personalism. It is significant that author works on his own philosophical basis (already exhibited in *Appraisal,* 2001) and, additionally, he elaborates here the original Cosmist trend in the philosophical and scientific thinking. The Cosmist personalism, presented in the paper, has the very *bio-social-cosmist* essence; and the notion of a Person Transcending-the-Society directly derives from it. The latter means that man always lives in society, but he (macro-evolutionary) is free from society. The heart of the matter is that man is ultimately a function of Process but not of Society; Man, Nature (Biosphere), and Society are equal elements of one common Process, the cosmic evolutionary process of life on Earth. Process, in turn, is a genuine objective phenomenon, as is Society. Thus, 'cosmist' trend has the *dialectic personalist* substance: changeable, of evolutionary process and, primarily, of free subjective determination. Likewise, cosmist personalism is *responsible* personalism, for man is always personally responsible for the subjective discovery, re-creation, and realisation of his cosmist functionality on the every macro-level of the ontogenesis of his well-being. Thereby, in the Cosmist theory, the meaning of man's life is considered to be embedded in the active successful ascending evolution of man, successively transcending through all macro-levels of his ontogenesis, for the ultimate achieving, in the period of maturity, the personal cosmist *creative* macro-level of being, for the execution here the individual's specific (functional, personal) contribution to the evolution of his well-being of one common, whole Process. In the conclusion, the author stresses the necessity to part with the basic personalist principle of the 'irreducibility and primacy of personal categories' and to introduce instead the Cosmist universal reductionism of true functional essence. The latter means that every living subject (organism) on Earth (man, primarily) has a health-design, its/his Basic inherent (Cosmist) distinct Functionality, to contribute ultimately to the well-being of Process. Consequently, the universal nature of man is comprehensible exclusively on the 'subjective' (personalist) level.

Key words: cosmist dialectical philosophy, process, wholism, creative activity, individual's well-being, personal health.

'Philosophy is a science and therefore, like every other science, it seeks to establish truths that have been strictly proved and are therefore binding for every thinking being and not only for a particular people or nation'.

Nicolei O. Lossky (Lossky, 1951, p.402)[1]

1 Introduction

'It is impossible to drive forward while looking in the mirror of back watching'. I fully agree with this judgement. In other words, seeking for the answers to open personalist questions: *What is the meaning of human existence? How is man's well-being*[2] *(individual's health) achievable? How is happiness or a better future visualised?* We apparently need, to my mind, the search for novel original philosophical and theoretical bases, which could serve as direct premises for the further deductive elaboration of the general effective scientific methodology of human affairs.

Aiming at the exploration of these personalist problems, this work develops the original basic systemic (Cosmist) assumptions, which were previously expressed in my article 'The Doctor of Tomorrow' (*Appraisal,* 2001, vol. 3, no. 4). Necessarily, however, I return to some basic notions of my philosophical system, intending to make them more clear in the face of resolving new exploratory tasks.

I prefer to start my reasoning with the significant judgment of Professor Erazim Kohak:

Personalism is a philosophy predicated upon the irreducibility and primacy of *personal* categories, that is, the kind of categories that govern the meaningful interaction among personal beings—categories of meaning rather than cause, of respect rather than force, of moral value rather than efficacy, of understanding rather than explanation. (taken from the editorial article of Thomas Buford, 1985).

I believe that I am taking (in this my exploration) the road of true personalism. However, basing on original philosophical fundamentals (cosmological, ontological, epistemological, anthropological, axiological, ethical; their essential characterisation is given in my publications and partially will follow below), I aspire to push forward a paradigmatically novel (Cosmist) consideration of personalism. The chief distinctive points, in relation to the ones of Professor Erazim Kohak stated above, are the following:

(1) I claim the actual existence of the four main integrated elements of Earth's reality: Nature (Biosphere), Society, Man, Process. The last is one common whole cosmic evolutionary process of life on Earth.

(2) Hence, in respect to personalism, we ought also to consider, as well as 'the moral issues of dealing with

environment' and 'the meaningful interaction among personal beings' and 'a society of persons' (Buford, 1985), the interaction of man with Process, the actually ultimate reality of life on, in my Cosmist view).
(3) Finally, in the new philosophical light, an attempt is undertaken to integrate the categories of meaning with the categories of cause, of respect with force, moral value with efficacy, understanding with explanation; for, all of them are the elements of the one whole, living world of Earth.

Of course, my propositions can easily be treated by a reader of *Appraisal,* as very speculative, which merely present one more view of man in the cosmos. Somebody, I know, will certainly see in my reasoning the consequences of the old communist regime with its universal solving of theoretical issues by inventing new and peculiar, but senseless, names for them. At the same time, however, the world we are living in is undoubtedly universal. The latter is the incontestable fact of natural sciences, known at least since the 1953: after the discovery of the structure of DNA by Watson and Crick, which proves the unity of all kinds of life on Earth, and the genetic transmission of psychic character by DNA molecules. Hence, every new original systemic explanation of 'personhood' (including mine) has the chance to present itself as a universal truth. In other words: Every new original systemic explanation (in relation to personhood), once present, is universal until the readers of *Appraisal* show clearly the deficiencies of the system of assumptions under consideration. At any rate, my exploration is the original philosophical creation of naturalist (cosmist) essence rather than philosophy as a kind of analysis. In this, the paradigmatically novel essence of my approach is precisely the reason of my non-reference to the works of classic personalists of ancient and modern times.

I would like also to quote the statement of Sir Alfred North Whitehead, which I entirely uphold: 'Philosophy will not regain its proper status until the gradual elaboration of categoreal schemes, definitely stated at each stage of progress, is recognized as its proper objective' (Whitehead, 1967, p.12). In reality, however, modern philosophy and science cannot comprehend the wholeness of man's existence and thus cannot embrace and coherently organise man's subjective experience and objective knowledge (psychological, biological, sociological and other data about the person). The real reason for this, to my view, is the crisis of general philosophy.

2. The individual's health: a great personalist problem

At the very beginning, I would like to continue citing the remarkable judgement of Professor Erazim Kohak:

While we recognize the legitimacy of materialistic categories derived from the metaphor of matter in motion and of vitalistic categories derived from the metaphor of need and satisfaction for certain purposes, we regard them as derivative, special case theories legitimate within the basic framework of personal categories. It is moral categories that we consider epistemology and ontologically fundamental, not merely a peculiarity of human subjects but most approximating the ultimate structure of reality. In a time honoured metaphor, though reality can at times be treated as a system of matter in motion, ultimately it is a society of persons, and so to be understood. (Buford, 1985).

Accordingly to traditional personalism, every philosophical system 'must be justified by clear and present needs' (Buford, 1985). My Cosmist philosophical system serves ultimately the end of scientific comprehension of the phenomenon of individual's health. Thus, it inevitably upholds the two great personalist tasks: (1) of disclosing for man the sense 'of living rightly in a deeply disturbed world', and (2) for philosophy, 'that philosophy must strive earnestly for maximal comprehensibility.' (Buford, 1985).

It is significant that the issue of the individual's health is a particular point in question, which cannot be confused with the notion 'health'. The latter is an object of extremely broad front of explorations. At the same time, the notion of individual's health has pure personalist meaning and reflects personal well-being during a man's entire ontogenesis. The exploration of individual's health, of the individual's natural personal well-being, on the contrary, is extremely reduced in modern philosophy and science.

Due to my medical background, I would like to add some more points to my 'biomedical' reasoning of my previous article in Appraisal. Again I lay stress on the following fact: in spite of the undoubted tremendous success of the mainstream biomedical model, modern medicine is still impotent to transcend the historical dichotomy between biomedical sciences and behavioural sciences. In other words, dominant medicine is still substantially bio-reductionist and dualist, and unable, in principle, to deal with mental life. At the same time, as stated above, the universality of Earth's living world was proved long ago by natural sciences. Hence, the current mainstream dualist and pluralist development of medicine[3] is 'natural' in the historic-cultural settings of the evolution of (post)modern Western civilisation, but it is not natural (and just un-natural) from the point of view of the natural sciences.

In turn, forms and endeavours of current patient-centred medicine and person-centred medicine are numerous, active and noteworthy, but, essentially, they play no autonomous and determining role in the entire development of modern medicine. Actually, they only complement the dominant empirically and biologically oriented medical community's activity. The failure of

psychosomatic medicine is a significant symbol in this respect. The principal impracticability of Engel's 'biopsychosocial model' is another corroboration. At the same time, as truly noted by Niall McLaren, 'By excluding mental life, researchers modified the data to fit their concept of science, rather than vice versa' (McLaren, 1998, p.91). That is to say, biomedical science was very successful so long as it did not stray too far from the same theoretical position as veterinary science.

As a result,[4] contemporary biomedicine is impotent5 to comprehend the etiogenesis of modern chronic non-infectious and non-traumatic diseases. Thereby, modern biomedicine lacks the possibility of their radical treatment and, hence, lacks the true humane individual (personal, person-centred) approach to the diseased man.

Furthermore, the discipline of public health directly sees man as a bio-statistical unit while studying the characteristics of populations and communities that create health and cause diseases within them. On the contrary, curative medicine focuses its attention on the individual, but it likewise basically exploits the bio-statistical principle: although admitting the uniqueness of man's individual bio-organismic or psycho-social characteristics, it sees them exclusively as variables within the common range of a given trait, i.e. as the bio-statistical norm and its possible deviations. In outcome, modern biomedicine individualises, but 'depersonalises' the man (Glick, 1981, p.1037), treating him as an abstract statistical unit.[6]

Moreover, modern biomedicine is totally pathocentric. Really, the exclusion of the problem of the individual's health from the present scope of the mainstream philosophy and science leads us to the paradoxical situation that contemporary civilised man, living in a democratic society, is in fact deprived of the right to have the information about his well-being, his individual health. In fact, he has to become already diseased or find himself in the surroundings of serious risk factors, to make the impressive power of modern science (medicine) turn to help him.

As a corollary, the crisis of general science,[7] which directly stems from the crisis of general philosophy, is quite evident. All this urgently calls upon the new philosophical foundations for science, which would provide the comprehension of man as a person, but not as a unit. In my case, I have met this challenge and am advancing a cosmist trend aimed at the philosophical, scientific and ethical comprehension of the phenomenon of individual (personal) well-being of the man. My cosmist approach is being framed on the already created original bases of philosophical cosmology, ontology of Absolute Cosmist Wholism, cosmist epistemology and anthropology. Some of these bases will be briefly (but I hope sufficiently) represented below. However, to have the full possession of information, please, see my previous publication in Appraisal, and other references (2000, 2001, 2002, 2003).

3. Three macro-trends in the philosophy of science: 'naturalist', 'metaphysicist', 'cosmist'. The notion of 'presentism'.

Endeavouring to substantiate and elucidate my cosmist approach in personalism, I propose the discrimination of three macro-trends in the philosophy of science: (1) 'naturalist'; (2) 'metaphysicist'; (3) 'cosmist'. It is essential that they all deal with the actually existing reality. However, there are some substantial differences between them. The naturalist philosophical trend explores the physically positive (sensible) world and aims at the rational disclosure of the natural laws. The naturalist approach can be strikingly exemplified by the genius of Sir Isaac Newton, which guided him in the selection of physical phenomena to be investigated, resulting further in the formulation of the fundamental principle of universal gravitation[8] which sufficed to regulate the new cosmos and underlie a new physics. Likewise, James Maxwell's creativity explained the physical phenomena of electricity and magnetism by introducing the fundamental notion of electromagnetic field.

In turn, metaphysics, that is meta-physics.[9] The metaphysicist philosophical trend, although it deals with the same actually given reality, is unable to frame theories for empirical testing and, thereby, explores the a priori aspects of the nature of the universe. In other words, metaphysics is the philosophical study whose objects ('being as such') are 'beyond the senses'. However, a metaphysicist approach always aims at the determination of the nature of things, the exploration of the meaning, structure, and principles of whatever is insofar as it is.

WHO's well-known definition of human health, in 1946[10], presents a typical example of metaphysicist thinking. This one treats human health (well-being) as a state. Therefore, man's health (due to the metaphysicist thinking) is a positively given phenomenon in the present reality, a product of the present being determined (caused) by the occasions and factors that have taken place in the past and are acting in the continuous present. Essentially, man here is deprived of the right to have his specific (personal) emergent future.

Another clear example of 'metaphysicism' is the old angry battle between creationists and evolutionists.[11] Taking into account the extreme polarity of their positions, they, however, both deal with the reality of the currently existing world (of the evolution of life on Earth), disagreeing only on the substance of its origination in the past.

As a result, both the naturalist and metaphysicist philosophical trends have one and the same core aim of exploring the given intelligible reality, which is

basically thought to be causally and teleologically dependent on the past and the present (continuous) events. In this, however, a naturalist deals with the sensible world, whereas a metaphysicist aims at objects that are 'beyond the senses'. Nevertheless, both naturalist and metaphysicist trends deal with and explore exclusively the present state of world's and man's being, seeking for its rational explanations by causative occasions and factors in the past and the current teleological motivations of a subject. Reasonably, this phenomenon can form an ontological conception of 'presentism'.

Indeed, since Aristotle, the Western world has strictly pursued two chief tasks for philosophers and scientists: first, to investigate the nature and properties of what exists in the natural, or sensible, world, and, second, to explore the characteristics of 'being as such' and to inquire into the character of 'the substance that is free from movement' or the most real of all things, the intelligible reality on which everything in the world of nature was thought to be causally dependent. The first was called in the Aristotelian treatise as 'Physica' (I consider it relative to the whole trend of Naturalism), the second 'Metaphysica' (metaphysicism). In turn, 'presentism' directly derives from 'metaphysicism'.

Presentism (alike naturalism and metaphysicism), to my view, is a very typical phenomenon for the Western type of mentality on the whole. Really, even Hegel, the most prominent Western dialectician, considered the contemporary 'Germanic world' to be the final stage of the evolution of his Absolute. Hence, he was a true metaphysicist, who explored the existing reality 'in the present' as the given and ultimate one, but who, in turn, invented, elaborated and employed a new great philosophical concept, of the dialectical essence, which explained the evolution, in the past, of the 'presently existing' world.

At any rate, both contemporary mainstream naturalism and metaphysicism deny the ascending emergent essence of the world evolutionary process and hence they deny the scientific value and sense of the future emergent levels of a man's evolution (ontogenesis).

4. Cosmist trend: characterisation, cosmological and ontological foundation.

Naturalism and metaphysicism evidently are the mainstream trends in contemporary Western philosophy and science. At the same time, as stated above, we have a need for a novel general philosophical foundation of science.

Precisely meeting this challenge and substantially relying on the potentials of the Russian[12] cultural tradition of philosophical cosmism, I venture the introduction of novel philosophical and theoretical fundamentals, of cosmist essence.

However, it is impossible, in principle, to give the detailed characteristic of the entire cosmist philosophical system within the limits of this article. Again I make an appeal to the readers to refer to my previous article. At the same time, I hope that the substantial presentation of the core principles, categories and notions would be sufficient for grasping the crux of the matter.

To start with, the core notions of philosophical cosmology ought to be presented first.

First of all, that is the cornerstone notion of CEPLE: cosmic evolutionary process of life on Earth (my abbreviation is Process). Process is an objective phenomenon of reality verified by numerous sciences, including comparative anatomy and biochemistry and other disciplines concerning evolutionary history but, chiefly, by molecular biology. Therefore, naturally, Process is an a posteriori notion (of objective, empiricist, and descriptive essence). Simultaneously, Process is an a priori notion, for it is solely revealed through rational (phenomenological) cognition. Hence, notion of Process integrates a posteriori and a priori thinking (although the latter is the greater philosophical sin), disclosing the approach for universal comprehension of the phenomenon of life on Earth. Essentially, Process, in its universal ascendant complication, has the Past, Present, and Future emergent being, integrating the entire living matter and—functionally—every living subject on Earth. In other words, Process embraces all the other processes (ontogeneses) of all the subjects (living organisms: biological, personal, and societal) of life on Earth, determining, through the functional belongingness (usefulness) to CEPLE, the healthy ontogenesis of any living subject on the Earth. In this, to my view, the scientific value of Process is comparable with such fundamentals as Newton's 'Universal Gravitation' or Maxwell's 'Electromagnetic Field'.

Process (CEPLE, Absolute) has the following substantive properties:

(1) Cosmic origin. This fact does not depend upon any of the existing hypotheses of the origination of life on Earth; in any case, life on Earth has developed from cosmic matter and energy.

(2) Universal, evolutionary (self-unfolding), ascending essence.

(3) Essence of the emergent evolution.

All these properties of Process are the undoubted truths of natural sciences. Primarily, the actualities of ascending evolutionary emergencies are evident for us: the origin of life, the origin of nucleus-bearing protozoa; the origin of sexually reproducing forms; the rise of sentient animals, with nervous systems and protobrains; the appearance of cogitative animals, namely humans; further occurred the historical emergence of families, social bodies, communities, societies and civilisations. Not less importantly, all Earth's organisms originally have a sameness of basic structure, composition, and function. Herein, all forms of life on Earth have, as it was already stated above,

the same chemical substance, deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA), in the forms of genes which accounts for the ability of all living matter to replicate itself exactly and to transmit genetic information from parent to offspring. Likewise, all living organisms, regardless of their uniqueness, are composed of the same basic units, or cells, and the same chemical substances. The latter, when analysed, exhibit noteworthy similarities, even in such disparate organisms as bacteria and man. Furthermore, since all cells interact in much the same way, the basic functioning of all organisms is also similar.[13]

(4) Cephalisation. That is an evident law of Process, which has been proved as through the study of fossil records as, nowadays, on the molecular level.[14]

(5) Process actually is an autonomous subject: having the one cosmic, transcendent origin, Process is entirely independent of our interpretation of its origin (God, Nature, Cosmos, etc.); Process acts autonomously and independently, exploiting man's Mind, Reason, and Action merely as a means. It has produced Man as the crown of the biological evolution not only for the role of creator of the Earth's Society,[15] but on the looser yet crucial role as creator of the future (integrated levels) well-being of itself (Process), of the whole evolutionary process of life on Earth.

Process is the primary, basic, and ultimate (ever-evolving) organism on the Earth. Process (cosmist) philosophy is an organismic philosophy. Essentially, in this, Process is clearly discerned from the well-known Gaia hypothesis:[16] Process has the future emergent stages of evolution, while Gaia is a phenomenon of the present state.

The other basic notion, which stresses upon the universality of the life on the Earth, is 'subject'. In Cosmist philosophy 'subject' means the integrated functional subject, which is always integrating itself/himself (to be the functional whole) and, simultaneously, always being functionally integrated by the higher organised subject (organism). In other words, subject means, from the cosmist point of view, every living organism on the Earth: molecule, cell, biological organism, biosphere, human being, family, community, social body, society, mankind, and, ultimately, Process itself (CEPLE) is the one common whole cosmic evolutionary process of life on Earth.

Another cornerstone notion is 'emergent future', that is, the successively coming integrated macro-level of the ontogenesis of a subject's (man's) well-being (the university for a schoolboy; the vocational body for a graduate student, etc.). In this, the term 'emergence' substantially has the accepted meaning (in evolutionary thinking) of the rise of a system that cannot be predicted or explained from antecedent conditions.

Admission of the notion of 'cosmist dualism' is likewise essential: We reasonably ought to accept two incommensurable categories: (a) life on Earth evidently has a cosmic and transcendent origin, but the latter is principally not researchable on the current level of the world scientific development; (b) simultaneously, we have the real challenge and the real possibilities to comprehend, by means of philosophy and science, the natural (cosmist) laws of the being of common, actually existing, emergent evolutionary Process of life on Earth (Process).

Further, I would like to stress the cosmist meaning of the term 'society': this has not the prevailing political meaning, but precisely relates to any body, community, structure, organisation, or any other functioning of society, a body of people having common ends.

It is also important to discern the meaning of my terms 'cosmist' and 'cosmic': the former stresses two points: (a) on the intrinsic subjective origination of the primary perceptions of man's creative activity; (b) the deliberate character of a person's creative activity, aimed at the achievement of the most desirable possible state of adaptation on the current level of his existence and, simultaneously, of the gratifying ascent on the successively higher level ontogenesis of the person's entire well-being. In other words, man performs cosmist creative activity basically by himself. In turn, the term 'cosmic' particularly emphasises that a subject is ultimately the function of Process.

Original cosmological bases lay the foundation for the advancement of the framework of ontological assumptions, the system of Absolute Cosmist Wholism. The latter is characterised in detail in my previous work (Appraisal, 2001). Therefore, here I can only list the ten chief principles of this system:

(1) Principle of the universal functional integration: 'all living is a whole, an integrated functional subject', which is always integrating by itself/himself (to be the functional whole) and, simultaneously, always being functionally integrated by the higher organised uterine subject ('organism'), from a molecule up to a human being, society, mankind.

(2) Principle of the universal emergent evolutionism: 'all living, any subject, is the evolutionary process'. This principle has as much the macro-evolutionary essence (of ascending, cosmist, creative, personalist creativity aimed at the ascent on the successively higher integrated levels of the ontogenesis) as the micro-evolutionary essence (of adaptational, actual, constructive, individual creativity) for reaching the optimal stableness on the given environmental (societal) macro-level of the subject's (man's) ontogenesis.

(3) Principle of the creativity: 'man is a creator'.

(4) Principle of the unity of evolutionary levels: 'of man's constant active creativity'.

(5) Principle of the cosmist hierarchy of evolutionary levels: 'of the managing priority of the higher integrated level'.

(6) Principle of the cosmist functionalism: every subject of the lower level, from a molecule up to a modern civilised society, is the Function of the higher,

uterine, wholly organised subject (level): a molecule of the cell, man of the family or the social body, social body of the society; Nature (Biosphere), Man, and Society equally of Process.
(7) Principle of the evolutionary selection from above: 'evolutionary selection from the emergent future'.
(8) Principle of the particular role of modern man in the being of common cosmic evolutionary Process of life on Earth (Process): 'the future well-being of one common Process, of life on Earth, entirely depends on the individual's deliberate cosmist creative activity'.
9) Principle of personal functional elitism: 'the meaning of man's life is embedded in the successful ascending evolution of man through all macro-levels of his ontogenesis for the ultimate achievement, in the period of maturity, of specific (cosmist) macro-level of his being, to realise here man's personal (functional, of 'elite selection') contribution to the well-being of the whole, common Process.

(10) Principle of subject's individual well-being: 'the subject's well-being directly depends on the extent of one's adequate functional belongingness and integration into Process'.

Finally, I stress the definition of contemporary civilised man (Man) as the equal (in comparison with Nature-Biosphere and Society), autonomous, and determining evolutionary element, who is solely capable of preserving life on Earth and of continuing the whole Process (CEPLE) to its emergent, future, integrated well-being.

In completion to this section, the characterisation of the proposed novel cosmist trend in philosophy and science is introduced. First of all, the cosmist trend deals equally with the positive reality of the surrounding and constituting Earth's world,[17] but the cosmist approach considers life on Earth and any living subject of the Earth's world as process. Hence, every subject on the Earth has its times of past, present and future emergent being. Process itself also has its Past (biological evolution), the Present (the current moment of world social and cultural history), and the Future of its further emergent advancement, of integrated mankind.

Logically, every other subject on Earth likewise has its/his biological and social past and present; and, simultaneously, on every macro-level of a subject's ontogenesis, its/his individual (personal) future of the ascending functional integration into the successively higher emergent level of the subject's (man's) well-being.

In conclusion, the following statement is made: both the naturalist and metaphysicist macro-trends considered above, act exclusively within the limits of the present and the past. As opposed to them, the cosmist trend establishes the chief significance of the emergent future, as much as of the past and present, for the scientific comprehension of the well-being of a subject (man). The object of the individual's well-being (personal health) is available for the scientific exploration exclusively by acceptance of the cosmist approach.

5. Crucial Points from Philosophical Cosmology and Ontological ACW System

In the light of Cosmist philosophy, it is reasonable, primarily, to claim the actual existence of three distinct functional macro-orders of man's being:
Homo Sapiens animalis—the direct function of Biosphere
Homo Sapiens sapiens—the direct function of Society.
Homo Sapiens cosmicus—the direct function of Process.

HSA and HSS are the object (and subject) of numerous natural, human, and social sectoral sciences, including philosophical anthropology, which originally treats individuals as both creatures of their environment and creators of their own values, and argues that human nature is complex and dynamic and is constantly able to rediscover and re-create itself within the confines of its biology and culture.

At any rate, both HSA and HSS are always bio-social creatures, and never bio-social-*cosmist* ones. In other words, man here is always a bio-organism, social actor, and a unique person (in his adaptation to the society), but never a *cosmist* actor of executing his personal (specific, functional) assignment of contributing to the well-being of one common Process. Henceforth, on the ontological level, the cosmist approach challenges to replace 'being' (a basic concept that serves as a clear starting-point for any serious metaphysicist) by 'functioning'—as a more basic *cosmist* concept, which points on the necessity of active evolution for every living subject (chiefly, for a person).

The notion of Homo Sapiens *cosmicus* (HSC) significantly stresses two points: (a) man is an equal element (to nature and society) in the evolution of Process; and (b) that HSC is the present-day forefront of Process. The heart of the matter is that the further well-being of Process depends nowadays neither so much on biological evolution,[18] nor from social evolution (reaching its high point in the emergence of contemporary Western civilised society and HSS, Homo Sapiens *sapiens*). The further continuation of the evolution is the mission of a new evolutionary active subject, Homo Sapiens *cosmicus*: the man, who is free from physical, biological, ecological and social harmful and oppressing influences, and who is ready to realise his creative specific functional ability and contribute personally to the current and future well-being of Process.

In other words, the modern mainstream Western 'humanistic' paradigm has the bio-social-*individual* essence. In this, 'individual' (a person) is free (phenomenologically, existentially, spiritually, etc.), but exclusively within the given society. He is always

ultimately a function of Society. Thereby, this humane *anthropocentric* ('normal') approach has the essence of metaphysicism and presentism, insofar as it is substantially static, ever dealing with the given present society, and always falling (scientifically) under the causal or teleological determination.

On the contrary, the *cosmist* approach (paradigm) establishes the need for a novel alternative cultural trend of *Cosmist Dialectics*. Cosmist dialectics precisely strives to comprehend and embrace the real world in its gradual ascending—emergent—becoming. The term 'dialectics', herein, does not naturally relate to logical disputation and has no commitments to either Hegelian dialectical (historical) process or Marxian critique of this process. Cosmist dialectics precisely serves the present and emergent future well-being of any living subject on the Earth: from a molecule up to a human being, society, and mankind.

Finally, the definition of the individual's health is put forward: 'The individual's health is the successful cosmist unity of adaptational and creative processes of the human organism and personality'

In other words, the individual's health is the 'process of processes' ('ontogenesis of ontogeneses') of man's well-being. It comprises:

(a) man's successful ontogenetic *macro*-evolution (the process of active ascending integration of the individual's entire being into the successively hierarchical levels (of the ascending emergent complexity) of the individual's specific (in the given circumstances) integrated well-being); and, at the same time,

(b) man's regular and necessary *micro*-evolution (process of the individual's successful development and adaptation, from initial, elementary (infantile) forms up to the mature 'homeostatic' forms and stages of the individual's integrated well-being on the given macro-evolutionary level).

6. Man's ontogenesis—the ontogenesis of homo sapiens cosmicus

When arguing for the cosmist trend in philosophy and science, naturally a series of questions arises, most likely of such a kind as: How can one focus only on the 'health of individual' and not also on the health of the society? Are we not, in reality, both individuals and members of a society? Is not any subject (man, a single entity) is both a unique entity and, also, a member of a higher integrated subject (of a collective)?

The heart of the matter is that our central conception of HSC means precisely the following: Homo Sapiens *cosmicus* is not the 'Beyond-the-Society' person, but precisely the 'Transcending-the-Society' person. Thus a boy needs to transcend his level of childhood and become the schoolboy; being further a schoolboy to transcend the level of secondary school and to become the student; next to transcend studentship and become the employed professional; etc.

It is essential, therefore, that HSC comes into being not exclusively from the mature Cosmist Creative level of the individual's direct contribution to Process. Homo Sapiens *cosmicus* emerges precisely with the first smile of a baby who has recognised his mother[19] and further he always is a man transcending the limits of a given biological or social level of his being. Even ultimately, being the mature, highly socially esteemed and stable man, ready to contribute directly to Process's well-being, he, as a HSC, is ever precisely the Transcending-the-Society man (executing ultimately his specific function of Process), but not the Beyond-the-Society man.

To the point, what is meant by 'creative contribution to Process'? From my position, the latter may acquire the very various forms: from gardening or active religious belief, or bringing up children up to private business undertaking, or participating in international (as well as regional) ecological actions, or the elaboration of a novel philosophical or scientific project, or artistic efforts, or founding a new organisation, etc. Of course, the realisation of the reproductive function by a woman—pregnancy, childbirth and children upbringing—is naturally a cosmist function.

At this place one more essential *cosmist* conception emerges 'of a subject's basic functionality'. As logically follows from what was stated above, every man has the cosmic assignment[20] of realising and executing his Basic Functionality, his Ultimate Cosmist Personal Need. This conception comes very close to the sense of Maslow's 'a single end-goal', 'a single ultimate value or end of life' or *self-actualisation* (Maslow, 1969, p.154). However, Basic (Cosmist) Functionality, as distinct from Maslow's concept, is organised to evolve into the person's emergent future.

Hence, HSC's activity is not the execution of one's 'inborn cosmic functional (personal) ability' to participate in a cosmic 'good world' but is exactly the activity which realises the basic inborn functional ability of the man to contribute personally (specifically) to the preservation and continuation of Process. It is very essential, that precisely the execution of this inherent basic functional ability solely and naturally gratifies his behaviour and concrete actions. I mean here that, logically, there must exist, in the human organism, the inborn mechanisms (physiological apparatus) of satisfaction (gratification) of the individual's activity directed to the execution of his Basic Cosmist (Ultimate, Personal) Functionality (BCF, in abbreviation).

Reasonably, in a cosmist light, Basic Functionality steers the whole process (ontogenesis) of man. Hence, the extent of well-being (health) of the entire human ontogenesis is essentially the extent of the individual's pursuing and complying with the natural (cosmic) guiding demands of his BCF.

In fact, every human organism develops from one

and the same cell—zygote, which genotype contains one and the same number of molecules, identical in their quantity and quality, but varying in functional predisposition. From a zygote (cell) the foetus develops, and further the human organism comes into being, each cell of which has the inborn functional (cosmic) assignment (specialisation). That is the indisputable biological empirical truth: actually, each cell of a human organism has its inborn ultimate functional specialisation—to be a muscle cell or fat cell, or immunecyte, or neurocyte, etc.

Then, how might it be, in a logical sense, that man, who comes from the same zygote, does not carry the specific functional assignment? Where appears the interruption of the coherent logical line? May be that is the residual influence of the current mainstream Western socio- and anthropocentrism?

It is likewise within the cosmist logical line, that Basic (Cosmist, Ultimate) Functionality hierarchically organises the entire number of man's biological and social needs in the one whole order. This order, in principle, corresponds (repeats) the hierarchy of the main stages of biological (ecological) and social stages of the life evolution on Earth. Hence, biological and social needs are merely the tools for BCF to realise its self-unfolding and ultimate (functional, personal) self-actualisation. In other words, all biological and social needs of a man are conformed to the ultimate end of execution by the man his specific (personal) functional contribution to the well-being of common Process life on Earth. The latter is chiefly possible on the high *creative* level—of mature social stability—of the individual's entire ontogenesis.

Significantly, BCF exists as much in the *present* and *past* (the individual's genetic experience; his personal life experience, including nurturing and education), as in the emergent *future*—yet non-realised creative potentials of his functional integration into the successively higher macro-levels of the ontogenesis individual's entire well-being—for ultimate reaching the personal creative level of direct functional contribution to the well-being of Process.

7 'Womb' metaphor—HSC ultimately becomes a 'womb' himself

The end of the realisation and execution of a subject's *intrinsic* Basic Functionality—directly to Process—forms the highest meaning of the subject's life. For an enzyme (molecule), for example, that is to grow into a mature active form and to participate effectively in the due biochemical reactions. For man, specifically, that means: (a) first of all the discovery of his Basic Functionality, and (b) its ultimate *functional* realisation, chiefly on the individual's mature creative level of the ontogenesis of his well-being.

It is very important that the term *functional* (*functionality*) directly points, in the cosmist trend, on the utmost plural number of the expressions of life ends and realisations of the individual's Basic Functionality. Therefore, the future for man is always open and emergent on every macro-level of his being, for, it chiefly depends on the individual's ability primarily to discover (realise) his Cosmist Functionality (basic functional ability) and further to produce the results and effects of the appropriate (gratifying) functional activity, to the extent of their noticeability and observability for the 'selectioners' from a higher (above, of the emergent future) level of the ascending ontogenesis of the individual's well-being.

The core point of the cosmist personalist theme development is the introduction of the 'womb' metaphor. Indeed, if observing the individual's entire life span, the following fact can be revealed: on every given macro-level (except the Cosmist Creative one) man exploits the resources of the 'uterine' higher integrated level of his life as a means to realise and carry out his emergent ascending macro-process of ultimately reaching the highest appropriate level of the ontogenesis of his well-being which is *creative* for his direct controibution to Process. Actually, from the cosmist stance:

(1) Each man primarily exploits his mother's organism to evolve from the molecules (genes) into the cell (zygote), further to the embryo, later on to the foetus, and, finally, to come into being as a new-born, already as a member of the society; and, here, during the period of intrauterine development, he every time naturally gratifies the ingress of energy, materials and information into the actualisation and continuation of his personal ontogenetic (evolutionary, ascending) process;

(2) Further, each man exploits his family, which feeds him, protects from the harmful surrounding influences, educates and integrates into the surrounding community and society; hence, when a baby sees his mother, he enjoys and happily laughs, because mother's care serves the realisation of his Basic Functionality and thus precisely makes more realistic personal ascent on the future well-being levels and the ultimate realisation of the individual's cosmist contribution to Process's well-being;

(3) Next, man exploits the educational bodies (school and university), where he subconsciousnessly chooses, likes and extends the study exactly of the certain subjects, the knowledge of which makes his ultimate assignment more tangible;

(4) In continuation, man chooses and exploits the societal bodies (vocational and civil), which likewise make his cosmist functional (personal) assignment more realistic;

5) Ultimately, however, at the mature period, he himself becomes 'a centre of attractivity' or, alternatively,—an active functional unit of the pre-existing social body, which would integrate his

inherent personal functional (cosmist) activity into the direct preservation and continuation of the evolution of one common Process.

Now, it is possible to introduce the metaphor of 'womb'. Primarily, on the intrauterine stage, the term 'womb' has its natural, biological significance. In other words, from the very beginning of the ontogenesis man exploits his mother's womb as the necessary source of the energy, material, and information needed for growth, for the transcendence from a molecule and cell to the mature foetus (organism), to Homo Sapiens *animalis* and to the potential Homo Sapiens *sapiens* (to become after the birth). Further, having come into being man begins to act as HSS; in this he equally exploits the surrounding society as the necessary conditions ('womb') for his personal ontogenetic ascent and eventual achievement the level of the mature, highly stable, experienced and mighty Homo Sapiens *sapiens*, capable of direct creative activity as a Homo Sapiens *cosmicus*. From this stage, according to the cosmist paradigm, a healthy man originates a 'womb' by himself and thus gives birth to (provides the necessary conditions for) a new (cosmist) creature: be it a masterpiece, or participation in a ecological (any other) organisation, or scientific project, or any other kind of cosmist creativity. In my firm conviction, the attainment of this high ontogenetic level (of a man's cosmist creativity), and his being as a 'womb' ('donor') as the organiser and provider of the needed conditions for the development of his creaturely well-being, are the absolutely for the individual's personal well-being (health) and happiness.

At this point, conducting further the cosmist reasoning, we can introduce likewise the notion of *cosmist personalism*. Cosmist personalism has the very *bio-social-cosmist* essence; and the conception of a Transcending-the-Society Person directly derives from it. The latter means that man always lives in society, but he (macro-evolutionary) is free from society. The heart of the matter is that man (like any other living subject) is ultimately a function of Process but not of Society; Man, Nature (Biosphere), and Society are equal elements of one common Process. Process, in turn, is a genuine objective phenomenon, as is Society. Thus, the 'cosmist' trend has the *dialectical personalist* substance: changeable, of evolutionary process, and, primarily, of free subjective determination. Likewise, cosmist personalism is *responsible* personalism, for, a man is ever personally responsible for the subjective discovery, re-creation, and realisation of his cosmist functionality on the every macro-level of the ontogenesis of his well-being.

Let us consider, in this course, two historical figures: Firstly, of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, a novelist (Noble Prize Winner, 1970). He fearlessly transcended all the societal constraints ('societies'): eight-year imprisonment, government pressure and censorship, forcible deportation to the West (1974), and has realised ultimately his cosmist assignment—informed the world about the techniques of terror and resulting moral debasement in the USSR, and exposed the nature of the Soviet system. Eventually, he has returned (in 1994) to his native land as a very respected citizen. His life's ontogenesis can be fairly considered as well-being (healthy) one. At any rate, up to the present, in his 85th year, Aleksandr Isayevich is in good spirits, enthusiastic, active, and creative.

The other well-known figure is Mikhail Lomonosov (1711-65). He was the son of a fisherman. In spite of his peasant background ('society') he left his village (in 1730, at the age of 19!) and got (on foot! covering the distance of more than seven hundreds kilometres) to St Petersburg, where he started his education. Finally, he obtained an extraordinary broad education, received a life appointment to the Russian Academy of Sciences, and was recognised as an outstanding scientist, scholar, and writer.

8. Conclusion

These two examples clearly show that man ultimately is the function of Process, but not merely of biosphere or society.

Now, drawing a conclusion, I would like to accentuate that the current world (Western) mainstream philosophy and science easily recognise the biological and social levels of man's ascending development, but they categorically deny the existence of the cosmist—Transcending-the-Society—processes of the individual's being and well-being as much during the whole ontogenesis as on the every given macro-level of the individual's integrated being. Man is not merely a bio-social, to stress it once again, but precisely a *bio-social-cosmist* creature. That is the central thesis of my proposed cosmist trend in philosophy and science. A corollary: Man's ontogenesis is ultimately the ontogenesis of Homo Sapiens *cosmicus* from the molecules (zygote's genotype) up to the highest cosmist creative level of man's well-being, of his direct functional (personal) contribution to Process's well-being.

It is very important, herein, that the whole author's original approach builds substantially on the Russian—but not Soviet!—cosmist philosophical tradition of pan-unity and active evolution. Russian cosmism, and the author's variant of it—philosophical cosmology, ontological ACW system, and the derived principles and notions—form a philosophical and theoretical trend, which, in brief, relies on the conceptions: (i) of the *personal emergent future*: of man's ascending emergent integration into the successive future integrated levels of the ontogenesis of his well-being; (ii) of the *personal (responsible) cosmist activity*: of man's responsibility for active re-creation, on every given macro-level of his ontogenesis, and ultimately his deliberate execution of his inherent Basic (specific,

cosmist, personal) Functionality; on the high *creative* level of the ontogenesis of his well-being. Another crucial point is the statement that if man does not follow this (cosmist) line of his ontogenesis, the excess of the non-utilised creative energy will inevitably disturb the man 'from inside' and cause a chronic disease (for more information, please, see my article: 'Epistemology of Civilised Man's Diseases', 2002).

The other significant point is the designation, in conclusion, of the '*personal paradox of creativity*'. In the 2001, I gave the definition to the '*ontological paradox of creativity*': that modern chronic diseases have mainly an anthropogenetic origin; and that this fact reveals the existing incompetence of (post)modern philosophy, science, and man. Now is the time to introduce the '*personal paradox of creativity*', of distinct essence: that every man, as Homo Sapiens *cosmicus*, needs constantly, during his entire ontogenesis, to disturb and transcend, on his own, the state of his mature, highly stable state of adaptational stability and well-being (on the every given level of the individual's ontogenesis), for the sake of successful integration into the successively higher (emergent) levels of the ontogenesis of his well-being, and for the ultimate attainment of the personally high *cosmist creative* level of the individual's well-being ontogenesis and execution on this his personal (inherent, specific) functional contribution to the well-being of one common Process.

My completing (Cosmist) deduction and claim is the following: Insofar man (HSC) is ultimately the function of Process, we encounter the necessity to part with the basic personalist principle of the 'irreducibility and primacy of personal categories' and to introduce instead the functional reduction of man to Process, stressing its inherent specific (personal) essence. In contradistinction to existing personalist theories, Cosmist theory establishes: Human behaviour (and human well-being, health, and happiness) is determined not exclusively by biological, social, and environmental factors, but, equally and ultimately, by the basic functional (cosmist, specific, personal) belonging of man to Process. In other words, man equally is as a bio-organism, social actor, and unique person (in adaptation to the society), as a COSMIST actor of executing his cosmist functional assignment of personal contribution to the well-being of Process.

In this, a novel approach basically relies on the Cosmist universal reductionism, of true functional essence, which is clearly discriminated from the common morpho-functional approach of reducing living phenomena: from biosphere to populations, organisms, cells, organelles, genes, etc.; or from mankind to societies, communities, social structures and bodies, families, man himself. On the contrary, the Cosmist 'functional' reductionism means that every living subject (organism) on Earth (man, primarily) has the health-design, its/his Basic inherent (Cosmist) distinct Functionality, to contribute ultimately to the well-being of Process. Consequently, the universal nature of man (any living subject) is comprehensible exclusively on the 'subjective' (personalist) level. Herein, the key principle of CosmoBiotypology has been introduced (for details, please, refer to *Appraisal,* 2001). The latter establishes, in accordance with the Cosmist philosophy and theory, that the individual's gratifying feelings and perceptions (of his vital activity), his appropriate social surroundings, and his physiological biotype, have the same single basic inherent functional meaning. In this functional tri-unity the personal (subjective) perceptions of man have the decisive significance. Hence, Cosmist theory leads to a 'person-driven' philosophy and science, which are claimed to be capable to realise the integration of man's subjective (personal) experience and objective knowledge: of psychological, biological, and sociological data about the man.

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Notes:

1. This passage opens the chapter 'Characteristic Features of Russian Philosophy' N.Lossky's book *History of Russian Philosophy*.
2. I would like to treat my core term 'well-being' as meaning a state of being contented, healthy, successful, satisfactory, safe, etc.
3. And other sciences concerning man's well-being.
4. Of modern biomedicine's inability to integrate psychological, biological and sociological knowledge about the man.
5. In spite of the triumphs of modern public health care, behavioural, and curative medicine in preventing and managing chronic diseases.
6. In this continuing to break new frontiers daily and extending scientific benefits of medicine.
7. Which is exemplified by the contemporary medicine's striking inability to comprehend the phenomenon of the individual's health, his personal well-being.
8. Complemented with Newton's three laws of motion.
9. 'Metaphysics', 'meta ta phusica' ('what comes after the physics') was, of course, the title given to a set of treatises by Aristotle that the editors place 'after the *physics'*. But it has often been taken to mean the study of what is behind the physical world and, thus, behind the given, really (physically) existing world. Metaphysics, hence, deals with the given reality, the really given world (of the surrounding and constituting essence), existing in the present and being caused by the past.
10. As 'a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity'.
11. The most recent place to face a battle over evolution and creationism is Kansas, the U.S., where the Kansas State Board of Education decided, in the August, 1999, to remove references to evolution and cosmology from its state education standards and assessments, thus directly strengthening the creationist positions. At this point, see: (Belluck, 1999; Davis, 1999; Glynn, 1999).
12. But not Soviet!
13. The more complete exhibition of cosmological principles is given in my work entitled as 'Introducing Philosophical Cosmology' (2001).
14. There is a tendency in the evolution of organisms to concentrate the sensory and neural organs in an anterior head. The larger, anterior end of the central nervous system is called the brain. The degree of development of the brain is called cephalization. Scientific studies have disclosed that the evolutionary process is characterised by the progressive increase in the 'index of cephalization', which differentiates the various levels of organisms on the planet. Human beings have the highest ratio of cephalization to body weight, as well as the most developed forebrain, the centre which is capable 'for understanding and producing language, for conceptualisation and abstraction, for judgement, and for the capacity of humans to contemplate and influence their lives' (*Grolier Multimedia Encyclopaedia* 1995). (The property of evolution is cephalization—the evolutionary progressive increase and development of brain and important functions of the nervous system... How not to remember here Plato's 'dictatorship of philosophers' as the resolution of ideal social organisation?)
15. Of the world social and cultural historical process.
16. Referring to J. Lovelock and L. Margulis: biosphere-'Gaia' is likewise viewed as a single, self-

regulating organism.
17. Precisely as the naturalist trend does.
18. Which has reached its high level in the emergence of HSA: Homo Sapiens animalis.
19. More correctly, Homo Sapiens cosmicus emerges precisely since the origin of the zygote.
20. Insofar as man is, ultimately, a function of Process.

MICHAEL POLANYI ON TEILHARD DE CHARDIN[1]

Phil Mullins

I. Introduction: A puzzling connection

Those who have carefully read Michael Polanyi's *Personal Knowledge* know that about a third of the way into the final chapter (PK 388)[2] of the book, Polanyi introduces Teilhard de Chardin and a couple of Chardin's terms, noogenesis and noosphere. Polanyi found some of Chardin's ideas and terminology useful to characterize what he dubs 'the second major rebellion against meaningless inanimate being'(PK 389), the rise of human knowledge understood as a fabric creating a context for life that transcends the individual. Introducing Chardin only at the end of Part IV of his magnum opus in the chapter titled 'The Rise of Man' seems to have been part of Polanyi's rhetorical strategy: I suspect that he found Chardin's terms perfect for his own staged discussion of anthropogenesis, and he wanted to ally his discussion with that of Chardin. However, he did not want his readers to make too much of such an alliance. Polanyi wanted to be regarded only as a distant relation of Teilhard de Chardin. My reasons for this reading will become clearer in the discussion below. The late injection in Personal Knowledge's final chapter of a small dose of Chardin made me curious about Polanyi's more general interest in and use of Chardin. In what follows, I will say a bit more about the use in *Personal Knowledge*, but I also will comment upon ways in which Chardin is mentioned in several other Polanyi publications and public lectures. In fact, Polanyi wrote a review of *The Phenomenon of Man* that was published in 1960 in the popular American magazine, *Saturday Review*.[3] Chardin also is discussed in some of Polanyi's correspondence. There is, in sum, an interesting story here, a story perhaps more historical than philosophical, but nevertheless worth telling because it helps clarify some of Polanyi's ideas about evolutionary emergence. Although my discussion will analyze several references to Chardin in Polanyi's writing, I take a chronological approach, casting my examination as an unfolding narrative.

2 J. H. Oldham and Polanyi: The early discussion of Chardin and Personal Knowledge

In his 1960 review of *The Phenomenon of Man*, Polanyi notes that he first read the book in 1956 when it came out in France; he says that he 'was profoundly moved by it.' Because he very frequently made reading suggestions to Polanyi in his letters, I originally suspected that Polanyi's friend, the Christian activist and intellectual J. H. Oldham might have advised Polanyi to read Chardin. Oldham often suggested theologians and philosophers that he thought might interest Polanyi, and Oldham's discussion groups and the work of preparing for them often influenced what Polanyi read. By 1956, Polanyi had been participating in Oldham's occasional discussion group meetings for over a decade.[4] However, Polanyi did not come to Chardin through Oldham. In fact, in a Sept. 26, 1956 letter, Oldham notes that Polanyi has sent to him a copy of *The Phenomenon of Man*, which he promised to read.[5] The fall of 1956 is an important period in which Polanyi was finishing up *Personal Knowledge*. Polanyi apparently read Chardin not long before this period, since the French text was published in 1955. Oldham's letter mentions that he is looking forward to reading the revised text of the Gifford Lectures. Oldham indicates he had already read a draft, but this may only be typescripts of the original lecture material that he received several years earlier and prepared his own summaries of; these summaries may have been used as a focus in one of his earlier discussion group meetings.[6]

Twenty days after Oldham's first letter mentioning Chardin, Oldham noted in another letter that he was reading *The Phenomenon of Man*, which he found difficult; at the time, he was also reading *Neo-Finalisme*, a book by Raymond Ruyer, a French philosopher of science, that Oldham describes as 'in the main a review of the position reached by contemporary biological science.'[7] Oldham suggested to Polanyi that perhaps Chardin and Ruyer seem 'like yourself, to be pointing towards a new picture of the world.'[8] About a week later, Oldham wrote to Polanyi again, reporting that he had read Chardin a second time, and expressing great appreciation to Polanyi for recommending him. He indicates that Polanyi had shown interest in Ruyer and included some further comparisons between Polanyi's ideas and those of Ruyer and Chardin. Ruyer's book, Oldham proclaims, 'like that of Teilhard, as well as your own, seems to me one more evidence of a turning of the tide.'[9] Although Oldham seems quickly to have become enthusiastic about Chardin, there is no correspondence that provides insight about Polanyi's reactions. That he recommended Chardin to Oldham, however, certainly implies that Polanyi was interested in Chardin's book.

Apparently, winding up the draft of *Personal Knowledge* was more difficult for Polanyi than he anticipated. In early February of 1957, Polanyi wrote Oldham saying he was coming for a visit and would

> bring along, or perhaps send in advance the bulk of the manuscript of "Personal Knowledge". Unfortunately I still have not been able to make up my mind about the

> concluding section, so there are about 10 or 20 pages missing at the end.[10]

By the end of March, Oldham had still not received a draft of the manuscript, but Polanyi wrote saying that he had finally finished writing ten days earlier and Oldham would have a copy by about April 10. He asked Oldham to point out inconsistencies in the manuscript.[11] As I have discussed elsewhere,[12] Oldham carefully scrutinised the manuscript for a month and wrote what appears to have been a very influential six and a half-page critique in his letter of May 11, 1957 to Polanyi.[13] Polanyi apparently remained unhappy with the conclusion of his March draft, for he wrote Oldham even before receiving the May 11th letter that he was going to make (or perhaps had already begun) some changes 'at the very end of the book' since 'its closing pages are limp and not definitively formulated.'[14] Oldham's lengthy letter of criticism covered several topics, but the most pointed remarks concern 'The Rise of Man.' Oldham thought this final chapter was poorly written and poorly conceived: it will disappoint readers and, Oldham at least implies, Polanyi is not himself quite sure what he intends to do at the end of his book. Oldham recommended that Polanyi needed a better integrated conclusion that makes clear 'how the facts of evolution look in the light of the fiduciary philosophy':

> The kind of final chapter I should like to see, summarising the essential ingredients of a fiduciary philosophy, might quite properly fulfil this task by relating the argument to evolution, and a critique of natural selection would be quite in place. But the treatment of these subjects would then be an integral part of a philosophical conclusion and not appear so much as a rather isolated addendum and after-thought.[15]

This general criticism lead Oldham to a more concrete criticism of Polanyi's use of Chardin in the draft of his last chapter:

> Pp. 9-13 are obviously inspired in part, as you indicate, by de Chardin's book. But the only reason for bringing into this final chapter what is said about man's earlier lineage is that it serves as an introduction to the conception of noogenesis and the noosphere. Having read de Chardin I understand what is meant and appreciate its far-reaching significance. But hardly one reader of your book in a hundred will have read de Chardin, and I doubt whether any one who encounter (sic) the idea for the first time, as most readers will, is at all likely to obtain from only two paragraphs any sense or understanding of its real importance. If you introduce it all (sic), I believe that you must devote at least two or three pages to bringing home to the reader in your own way, as de Chardin does in his, the immense range and depth of the conception.
>
> I rather hope that you may do this. The idea of the noosphere has a close kinship with what you say in the deeply moving concluding pages of the preceding chapter on 'Knowing Life', and with what you say about originality in the present chapter (pp. 24-5). I have a certain caution and reserve in regard to de Chardin's enthusiastic exposition—there are many profound problems to be faced. But I do not see how one can talk about evolution at all—especially in the light of your fiduciary philosophy—without looking very closely at the issues he raises.[16]

These comments are somewhat ambiguous; since the original draft of Polanyi's final chapter was not preserved, it is impossible to address some of the puzzling elements. Nevertheless, a few conclusions seem clear in Oldham's remarks: (1) The original draft of the chapter included several pages 'inspired in part' by Chardin; these pages apparently referenced Chardin's book. (2) Oldham did not think Polanyi's readers would be familiar with Chardin. (3) He believed that pages linked to Chardin were not sufficient to convey the richness of Chardin or of Polanyi's ideas that are akin to those of Chardin; the draft merely introduces the conceptions of noogenesis and noosphere. (4) Oldham saw connections between Chardin and material discussed in Polanyi's next to last chapter as well as what Polanyi said about originality in the draft of the final chapter. But Oldham does seem to warn Polanyi to be wary about Chardin since Chardin's text includes 'profound problems.' (5) Oldham recommended that if Chardin is introduced at all, then Polanyi should expand his discussion of noogenesis and the noosphere. On the balance, Oldham does seem to be encouraging Polanyi to expand and clarify what he has done and that will include, if not drawing more on Chardin, at least addressing issues Chardin raises.[17]

What the follow-up correspondence with Oldham reflects is that, after receiving Oldham's critique, Polanyi quickly wrote to Oldham, profusely thanking him and advising him that he had enlisted Irving Kristol[18] to sharpen the writing in his draft. About the draft of the last chapter, Polanyi says 'I shall rewrite the last chapter altogether in the sense that you suggest. I hope to show you the new version by the middle of June.'[19] In a letter to Oldham of July 15, 1957, Polanyi does report finishing the revision of the manuscript and that

> the last chapter has been completely re-written, and I hope it is now more satisfactory.' He adds later in the letter 'I am writing only to thank you once more for your advice which has proved of decisive value to me. As soon as I have a copy of the last chapter available, I should like to send it to you so that you may see to what extent I have benefited from your criticism.[20]

The correspondence with J. H. Oldham certainly makes it appear that Oldham decisively influenced Polanyi's reshaping of the concluding chapter of *Personal Knowledge*. Looking at the final version of the chapter itself in light of the correspondence, however, reveals no definitive clues about Polanyi's

revisions. The published chapter presents what might be termed a tight argument; perhaps this tightness is the result of Oldham's incisive remarks. But there is not a lengthy discussion of Chardin or noogenesis or the noosphere in the final draft of the chapter. Polanyi is very circumspect. As I have noted in my introduction, Chardin and his terms seem to be cited (PK, 388) chiefly because they provide a succinct way to identify an evolutionary step in which human knowledge and 'a lasting articulate framework of thought' come into existence. Following the citation, there are only three paragraphs remaining in the chapter's section; these three do discuss, as Oldham perhaps recommended, what might be construed as noogenesis and the noosphere. That is, they discuss how human knowledge transcends the individual and the death of individuals. Human knowledge, or the project of expanding human knowledge, is a 'second revolution' in the development of life, a revolution that 'aspires to eternal meaning' (PK 389). Such eternal meaning remains incomplete, 'yet the precarious foothold gained by man in the realm of ideas lend sufficient meaning to his brief existence' (PK 389).

3 Polanyi's review of The Phenomenon of Man

Polanyi's 1960 review of *The Phenomenon of Man* sheds a much more definitive light on Polanyi's reaction to Chardin's ideas and this, in turn, perhaps illumines the circumspect use of Chardin in the last chapter of *Personal Knowledge*. To put it in a few words, Polanyi suggests in his review that Chardin is a wonderful poet, but he does not address the hard questions about the reductionism of the new synthesis of genetics and Darwinism.[21] The review does offer both praise and concrete criticism of Chardin's book, but it spends as much time reflecting on the meaning of the popular success of *The Phenomenon of Man* as upon the book itself. Polanyi points out that the wide acclaim the book has received is ironic, given that the general perspective of the book is in sharp tension with the praise for genetic determinism that emerged in 'pronouncements made on the Darwin centenary.' Polanyi sharply attacks Sir Julian Huxley, who, Polanyi asserts, provides a self-serving introduction to the English translation. Polanyi points out (with quotations) that in other writing Huxley supports a view in which natural selection is coupled with genetic mechanism and such views are quite unlike those of Chardin. Near the end of the review, Polanyi suggests that 'Teilhard's poetry' likely would not have received such broad interest and 'warm response' fifty years ago:

> No, its contemporary success is a portent. There is a tide of dissatisfaction mounting up against scientific obscurantism. Book after book comes out aiming against the scientific denaturation of some human subject. Teilhard owes his present success to this movement. But, unfortunately, this has made his success a little too easy. I do not believe that the origin and destiny of man can be defined in such vague terms.

Polanyi focuses attention on what he regards as the vague wording of many passages of *The Phenomenon of Man*. He suggests that Chardin glosses over the difficult issues and is not forthcoming about his allies:

> Teilhard's way of shrugging aside any question concerning the mechanism of heredity also casts a veil of obscurity on the foundation of his position. And this is how he avoids an explicit attack on genetical selectionism and also feels entitled to use, without more than the most cursory acknowledgment, the ideas of Samuel Butler, Bergson, and others who have previously interpreted evolution in his way.

In a very succinct statement, Polanyi manages to summarise what he takes to be the main theme of *The Phenomenon of Man*.

> This active striving towards ever higher, more vividly conscious forms of existence, which eventually achieves responsible human personhood and establishes through man a realm of impersonal thought, is the dominant theme of 'The Phenomenon of Man.'

Polanyi is appreciative of Chardin's book, but emphasizes that this is poetic vision and Chardin's science largely serves this vision:

> He is a naturalist and a poet, endowed with contemplative genius. He refuses to look upon evolution like a detached observer who reduces experience to the exemplification of a theory. Instead he stages a dramatic action of which man is both a product and a responsible participant. His purpose is to rewrite the Book of Genesis in terms of evolution. . . . . Teilhard uses scientific knowledge merely as a factual imagery in which to expound his vision. His work is an epic poem that keeps closely to the facts.

The review's final sentence leaves the reader with the distinct impression that Polanyi simply cannot shake his sense that Chardin's book in part misses the mark: 'Having avoided so many decisive issues, it can serve only as a new and powerful pointer towards problems that it leaves as unsolved as before.' It is, of course, Part Four of *Personal Knowledge* that straightforwardly takes on the problems Polanyi alludes to.

4 Some later comments on Chardin

Although Polanyi seems to have been critical of much of the work of Teilhard de Chardin, it appears that his friend J. H. Oldham whom he introduced to *The Phenomenon of Man*, was more enthusiastic. Chardin's ideas probably came up again in the discussion of one of Oldham's discussion group sessions held March 25-28, 1960, just two months after publication of

Polanyi's review. In this period, Oldham had apparently been reading Hengstendberg's *Philosophische Anthropologie*, and he was working to reconcile Hengstendberg's ideas with the views Polanyi develops in the final sections of *Personal Knowledge* and the ideas of Chardin. Although he was eighty-five years old, Oldham himself wrote a paper titled 'The Person' that was circulated to those attending the discussion session on March 25-28, 1960.[22] On March 16, Oldham sent to Polanyi a lengthy letter that includes a set of questions and comments on Chardin, Polanyi and Hengstendberg.[23] Unfortunately, the correspondence record does not include a reply from Polanyi. The long weekend meeting of St. Julian's Group (Oldham's name, taken from the location of the meeting) was slated to spend some time discussing part of Oldham's paper 'The Person,' but at least two sessions seem to have been organized to focus on Polanyi's ideas in *Personal Knowledge*. In his March 16 letter, Oldham recommends that Polanyi 'devote your time to the question of the Person or Self, which is the subject of the Saturday morning session.' The discussion on Sunday was to be 'for considering your philosophy of commitment.'[24]

The continuing discussion with Oldham and others of links between Polanyi and Chardin apparently did not significantly alter Polanyi's response to Chardin. At least there is little evidence of any change in later writing. The following discussion briefly treats three later comments on Chardin that seem to me representative. All are concise and fit into the orbit circumscribed by Polanyi's 1960 review.

There are two references to Chardin in the 1962 Terry Lectures. In one of these, Polanyi mentions Chardin along with Bergson and Samuel Butler, as a figure who posits a creative agency at work in the process of evolution. Polanyi acknowledges that his view of emergence, applied both to biological evolution and human comprehension, is more akin to the ideas of Bergson, Butler and Chardin than to Kohler's dynamic equilibration.[25] In the other reference in the second Terry Lecture, Polanyi notes that the mechanical explanation of life does contain much truth, and this makes an altogether mechanical conception of life plausible. But a mechanical explanation

> fails to account for the most remarkable feature of life, which is its capacity to achieve consciousness and responsible personhood. . . . Teilhard de Chardin's merit is to have, by his poetic imagination, forced this problem into the centre of attention. The problem of understanding the rise of consciousness may not be ripe for scientific enquiry, but that is no reason to accept, or even to tolerate, a perspective which would reduce this aspect of life to the rank of a minor unsettled detail.[26]

As in his 1960 review of *The Phenomenon of Man*, Polanyi praises Chardin as a poet who draws attention to an issue covered over in contemporary scientific discussions and treated as only a loose end rather than a matter of significance. Apparently, the material in the Terry Lectures went through several revisions before its 1966 publication in *The Tacit Dimension*. This comment about Chardin is eliminated in the revised version of the second chapter (titled 'Emergence'), although there remains a reference (TD 46) to Chardin, along with Bergson and Butler as figures who postulate a creative agency in evolution.

In Polanyi's 1963 essay 'Science and Religion: Separate Dimensions or Common Ground?'[27] Chardin again comes up in the discussion of protests against dominant views that are a 'denaturing of evolution': the protesters such as Chardin maintain 'the central feature and problem of evolution lies in its sustained tendency to produce higher levels of existence' (12). Polanyi complains that protesters have been silenced. As an example, he cites a recent publication of the distinguished biologist P. W. Medawar who 'brushes aside Teilhard de Chardin's plea for the recognition of this central fact of evolution: ". . . the idea that evolution has a main track or privileged axis is unsupported by scientific evidence"'(13). Polanyi criticizes Medawar in a way that links up with Polanyi's larger set of philosophical themes :

> Such statements confirm my view that as long as science accepts the false ideal of strict detachment, it cannot but deny reality to the most significant features of the universe. The new theory of knowledge combined with the logical distinction between levels of existence, should cure us of the blindness, by providing a conceptual framework which recognizes the emergence of ever higher levels of reality by evolution (13).

Polanyi's brief mention of Chardin thus really is only a lead into his own more general philosophical conclusions. A mechanistic account of evolution has 'no place for directed evolutionary emergence; nor can it account for the rise of consciousness, let alone the progress of human thought' (13)—matters treated in Part IV of *Personal Knowledge* and elsewhere in Polanyi's writing. The failures of mechanism are ultimately grounded in acceptance of the false ideal of objectivity and in failure to make proper logical distinctions between levels of existence, matters Polanyi also had treated.

Finally, in Polanyi's 1968 essay 'The Body-Mind Relation,'[28] Chardin comes up again at the very end of the essay in a discussion of the relation between imagination and creative acts. Polanyi acknowledges that imagination is a 'motive force of invention' and this force has 'no counterpart in the process of organic evolution' (102). But he contends this disparity is reduced because a careful account points out that 'the imagination alone does not achieve inventions or discoveries, but merely evokes a spontaneous, integrative event which brings about the discovery' (102). For Polanyi, 'discovery or invention are, as it were, processes of spontaneous growth induced by the

labours of the questing imagination. Originality is deliberate growth' (102). But this claim leads Polanyi to a careful delineation of his own position vis-à-vis that of Chardin:

> The way my conclusions bear on Teilhard de Chardin's book *Le phénomène Humaine* is fairly clear. I agree with his vision of evolution as a continuous sequence of creative acts. I do not think that he has done much towards meeting the difficulties arising when we try to spell out this vision in terms of biological detail. I would think that a precise conception of creativity and the proof of its being equally present in human originality, individual ontogenesis, and phylogenetic evolution will remedy this deficiency up to a point. But I think that this involves an idea of the body-mind relation that is very different from the dualism accepted and elaborated by Teilhard de Chardin and all his predecessors (102).

The criticism regarding lack of biological detail is reminiscent of Polanyi's remarks in his review of *The Phenomenon of Man*. The 'remedy' Polanyi recommends is the argument that he makes in Part IV of *Personal Knowledge* as well as in other discussions after *Personal Knowledge*. That is, Polanyi does develop a 'precise conception of creativity' that he claims is found in responsible human thought and in individual ontogenesis and phylogenetic evolution.[29] What is new here is the claim that Chardin's work must overcome a more traditional body-mind dualism in order to provide a more 'precise conception of creativity.' What Polanyi sees very clearly is that Cartesian substance dualism subverts even richer accounts of evolution, such as that of Chardin; ultimately, such dualism undermines the portrait of Chardin's topic, *The Phenomenon of Man*:

> The problem of the body-mind relation is thus resolved by being shown to represent but an instance of these two alternative ways of knowing the subsidiaries of a coherent entity.
>
> The hierarchy of levels I am postulating cannot be represented in a Cartesian dualism. I believe that this hierarchy gives a truer picture of *The Phenomenon of Man* (102).

5 Conclusion

Discussions above have made clear that Teilhard de Chardin was a thinker that Michael Polanyi regarded as raising important questions about evolution, the same questions in fact that Polanyi insisted biology and philosophy of biology needed to address, and that he did address in Part IV of *Personal Knowledge* and some other writing after *Personal Knowledge*. But Polanyi was very careful and selective in his praise for Chardin. While Polanyi borrowed and built upon some of Chardin's terminology, Polanyi was clear that Chardin failed to adequately address the important questions that he raised. On the balance, Polanyi seems to have appreciated Teilhard as a visionary poet but thought his philosophical acumen was limited.

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Notes:

1. I have profited much from e-mail exchanges over the last year with Marty Moleski who shares my interest in Polanyi's response to Chardin. Moleski pointed me to one of the late Polanyi reference to Chardin treated at the end of this essay; he also read a draft and offered many thoughtful comments that enriched my own perspective on both Chardin and Polanyi.
2. All references to *Personal Knowledge* and other major Polanyi books are simply noted by title abbreviation and page number in parenthesis in the text; all references to *Personal Knowledge* are to the pagination in the 1964 Harper Torchbook edition.
3. Michael Polanyi, 'An Epic Theory of Evolution,' *Saturday Review*, XLIII (Jan. 30, 1960): 21. The entire review is printed on one page; quotations from the review that follow are not footnoted since they are identical to the citation above..
4. For a full discussion of Oldham's influence on Polanyi, see Phil Mullins, 'Michael Polanyi and J. H. Oldham—In Praise of Friendship,' *Appraisal* Vol. 1. No. 4 (Oct. 1997): 197-189. Here I treat Polanyi's participation in Oldham's discussion groups. References hereafter to this earlier essay are foreshortened to Mullins, *Appraisal* 1:4 and relevant page numbers.
5. Oldham letter to Polanyi, Sept. 26, 1956, 1956, Box 15, Folder 5 in The Papers of Michael Polanyi held by the Department of Special Collections of the University of Chicago Library. This and succeeding quotations from The Papers of Michael Polanyi are used with permission of the University of Chicago Library. Citations of archival material will hereafter be shortened to the letter and date, box number, and folder number.
6. For a fuller discussion, see Mullins, *Appraisa*l 1:4, p. 185. .
7. The book title is provided in Oldham letter to Polanyi, September 25, Box 15, Folder 5. The description of Ruyer's subject matter is provided in Oldham letter to Polanyi, Oct. 16, 1956, Box 15, Folder 5.
8. Oldham letter to Polanyi, Oct. 16, 1956, Box 15, Folder 5.
9. Oldham letter to Polanyi, Oct. 22, 1956, Box 15, Folder 5.
10. Polanyi letter to Oldham, Feb. 8, 57, Box 15, Folder 5.
11. Polanyi letter to Oldham, March 29, 1957, Box 15 Folder 5.

12. See Mullins, *Appraisal* 1:4, pp. 186-187.
13. Oldham letter to Polanyi, May 11, 1957, Box 15, Folder 5.
14. Polanyi letter to Oldham, May 8, 1957, Box 15, Folder 5.
15. Oldham letter to Polanyi, May 11, 1957, Box 15, Folder 5.
16. Oldham letter to Polanyi, May 11, 1957, Box 15, Folder 5.
17. My earlier comment on Oldham's ambiguous suggestions regarding use of Chardin (Mullins, *Appraisal* 1: 4, p. 186) I now think somewhat missed the mark: Oldham qualifies and is tentative about using Chardin, but he does seem to favour it rather than discourage it, as I earlier suggested; he emphasizes that a fuller discussion is needed.
18. Polanyi acknowledges Kristol as one of the people who read the whole manuscript in the Acknowledgments of *Personal Knowledge* (PK xv).
19. Polanyi letter to Oldham, May 14, 1957, Box 15 Folder 5.
20. Polanyi letter to Oldham, July 15, 1957, Box 15 Folder 5.
21. This perhaps puts matters too simply, as my comments below clarify, but it certainly is the case that Polanyi would have been happier with Chardin if Chardin had overtly attacked the new synthesis and provided biological detail in his account of evolution.. I am indebted to Marty Moleski for pointing out to me that there is apparently some evidence that Chardin finished *The Phenomenon of Man* in 1940, but was not allowed to publish it. See the chronology at

    http://noosphere.cc/teilhbiolang.html.

    This is not something that Polanyi likely knew, since the book was published posthumously in Paris in 1955. Perhaps Polanyi's criticisms would have been less harsh had he known that *The Phenomenon of Man* was written before the new synthesis became as dominant as it later did.
22. There are circular letters for the meeting dated Feb. 14, 1960, March 4, 1960 and March 12, 1960 in Box 15, Folder 5. Parts of Oldham's paper were apparently attached to all of these circulars to those attending. There also apparently was attached material germane to his paper with Oldham's personal letter to Polanyi of Mar. 4, 1960, Box 15, Folder 5. What is apparently Oldham's paper or a draft of at least part of it is also in Box 15, Folder 9.
23. Oldham Letter to Polanyi, March 16, 1960, Box 15, Folder 5.
24. Oldham Letter to Polanyi, March 16, 1960, Box 15, Folder 5.
25. 1962 draft of Terry Lecture 2 (titled 'Comprehensive Entities'), p. 16, Box 35, Folder 11.
26. 1962 draft of Terry Lecture 2 (titled 'Comprehensive Entities'), pp. 11-12, Box 35, Folder 11
27. *Philosophy Today* VIII Sp 1963: 4-14. Quotations from this essay in this paragraph are simply noted by page in parenthesis following the quotation.
28. 'The Body-Mind Relation' is the title of a lecture that Polanyi delivered for what apparently was the first (but not the last) time in a philosophy seminar at Yale on December 10, 1965. The lecture is in Box 37, Folder 14. The published essay of this title is in *Man and the Science of Man,* (eds.) William R. Coulson and Carl Rogers (Columbus, Ohio: Merrill Publishing Co. 1968): 85-102. The comment about Chardin quoted below appears in both the lecture and the published essay. Quotations from this essay in this paragraph are simply noted by page number in the published version in parenthesis following the quotation.
29. One of the interesting questions is how to construe Polanyi's case that thoughtful human creativity and phylogenetic evolution are analogues. I read Polanyi as primarily interested in responsible stewardship in the cosmos and for humans that includes accepting our calling to explore the universe. Polanyi thinks that reductionistic accounts of natural selection are finally accounts that fatally dim the human capacity to understand and accept our calling.

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Correspondence: J. H. Oldham and Michael Polanyi. Box 15, Folder 5 in Papers of Michael Polanyi. Department of Special Collections. University of Chicago Library.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Liberty, Wisdom and Grace: Thomism and Democratic Political Theory
John P. Hittenger
Lanham, Md, Lexington Books, 2002; ISBN 0-7391 0142 8, pbk; xx + 314 pp.

This collection of essays ranges both more widely and narrowly than its title suggests: there are essays on Locke, D. A. J. Richards (an American advocate of 'human rights'), and Newman (no Thomist) on universities, while there is nothing directly on Aquinas himself. Nor is the book Thomist in any narrow sense. The essays are united by the theme of confrontation of, and attempted *rapprochements* between, pre-modern political philosophy (Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, and the natural law tradition generally) and contemporary theories and practices of democracy along with their forebears (Hobbes and Locke, plus a side-swipe at the subjectivism of Descartes' philosophy).

The first four essays present recent Thomist political philosophy in generally appreciative accounts of Jacques Maritain and Yves Simon. Hittenger questions their enthusiasm (especially Maritain's) for liberal democracy, the accuracy of their appeals to Aquinas on its behalf, their 'progressive views' which envisage it as the telos of political history and the Gospel régime, and their attempts to unite modern conceptions of natural or human rights with the very different tradition of natural law.

Next are the essays on Locke and Richards. Hittenger defends the 'old "new"' interpretation of Locke (Strauss and MacPherson) as continuing Hobbes though appearing to confute him, against the 'new "new"' interpretation which re-instates Locke's religious language as genuine but takes it to be a 'merely historical' residue. In particular he shows how Locke came to base his ethics and politics upon hedonism and the desire for self-preservation. On Richards' logical elaboration of the autonomous individual of modern theory, he comments:

> The doctrine of state neutrality combined with the aggressive pursuit of equal respect for persons also seems to indicate the problems with a form of liberalism based upon neutrality with respect to the good (p. 140).

He then returns to Maritain and Simon and confronts them with Aurel Kolnai who saw the dangers to both liberty and order in the egalitarian cult of 'the Common Man' (*not* the 'Plain Man'—see the next review). Although they acknowledged the need for a conservative element in politics, they undermined it by making it a mere brake on progress towards the desired goal of equality, about which they are in any case vague, and thus it would increase envy and impatience. Kolnai's own political philosophical is then summarised in 'The metaphysics of political conservatism' (first published in *Appraisal*, Vol. II No. 1).

The final group of essays are more diverse: John Paul II on Descartes; Maritain and the intuition of being; Marion Montgomery on the poet's recovery of being (especially interesting on Nathaniel Hawthorne and on the ways in which modern rationalism was smuggled into theology, ethics and politics via Locke); J. Schall on faith reason and politics; and Maritain on the co-operation of Church and State.

This closely and clearly reasoned collection can be warmly recommended in several ways: for those not yet familiar with them, it is a good introduction to modern Roman Catholic political thought in the Thomist tradition, and to the more independent and penetrating thinking of Aurel Kolnai; also to the great divergences between classical political theory generally and the tradition of natural law in particular, on the one side, and, on the other, modern liberalism, stemming from the 17th C, and emerging today as radical 'human rights'; and to the author's own discerning grasp of the great issues at stake.

R.T. Allen

Privilege and Liberty and Other Essays in Political Philosophy
Aurel Kolnai
ed. Daniel J. Mahoney
Lanham, Md, Lexington Books, 1999; ISBN 0-7391 0077 7, pbk; xi + 187 pp.

Mea culpa! In my review, in the previous issue, of Aurel Kolnai's *Early Ethical Writings*, I wrote that I had not heard of this collection. Yet I gave permission for the inclusion in it of 'Three Horsemen of the Apocalypse', first published in *Appraisal* Vol. II No. 1. My poor memory is therefore the reason for the long gap between publication of this book and this review.

The collection consists of an introductory essay by the editor and five essays and two reviews written by Kolnai between 1949 and 1972, of which two were not published in his lifetime, 'Three Riders .....' and 'The Utopian Mind', the latter appearing here for the first time.

The collection opens with 'Privilege and Liberty' (1949). To my mind, this is the most important of all Kolnai's political essays: it encapsulates or adumbrates all the themes and principal arguments of the others, and expounds Kolnai's own positive philosophy as well as his profound analyses of the errors of modern liberalism and collectivism. The opening sentence states Kolani's negative thesis:

> The cult of the 'Common Man' and the corresponding hatred of 'Privilege' constitute the classic ideological

> bridges, connecting-links, or portages as it were, between equalitarian 'progressive' Democracy and Communism—or to put it with greater precision, *from* Democracy *to* Communism (p. 19).

Hence those who are opposed to Communism on principle, and in Kolnai's case that means because it is 'The Divinisation and the Ultimate Enslavement of Man' (to translate the title of a short work in Spanish published in 1952, and not yet translated and republished), must also seek actively to destroy the idol of the Common Man and to defend what does remain of Privilege and the new types that will, one hopes, emerge in the future. Such forthright language was not likely to win friends and influence people at the time of writing, and there is a note of despair and self-mockery in this and other writings of the time, when, despite the obvious threats posed by the USSR, so many left-thinking people were at least anti-Anti-Communist and even many who opposed Communism tacitly held the same fundamental beliefs. Nor today, though Communism has disappeared in substance from everywhere but Cuba, does Privilege command respect, for hatred of 'elitism' is still with us and unscrupulously employed by the present Government, as seen in its treatment of the universities. So, then, why did Kolnai write so provocatively? Because he meant what he said.

The notion of the Common Man rests on three fallacies:

1. that of class conflict and the assumption that all goods are goods for consumption and destroyed in use, and hence form a 'zero sum' such that what one gains another must lose;
2. that all allocations should be equal or at least proportionate to everyone's contribution to their production, which in turn erroneously presupposes that all value *in* society is value *for* society (this last point appears in the relevant Note, and it is a feature of this essay that the Notes are as important as the main text);
3. the most important one, that the 'Common Good' must refer to same things.

In this last, Kolnai expounds one of his most important insights, which I shall now quote:

> As the subversive mind is essentially individualistic and isolationistic, so also is it essentially collectivistic and identitarian: on the view inherent in it, the curse of division and of being 'set against one another' cannot be surmounted except by a 'fusion into one'; and actual identification of consciousness, of qualities and of interest. In fact, individualism (tending towards equalitarianism) prefigures collectivism from the outset, and again, collectivism is only individualism raised to the high power of an absolute monism centred in 'all and every one' . . . .To put it briefly, then, the Common Man is not merely the plain or ordinary man 'wronged' by 'master men' . . . ; he is, above all, Man good and valid and confirmed—in virtue, purely and simply, of being 'nothing more than Man': and accordingly, Privilege is not merely an 'injustice' which favours the 'few' to the detriment of 'the many' but above all, a symbol of the imperfection of Man as compared with God, a symbol of the 'irksome', 'irritating', 'humiliating' transcendence of the Good in relation to human Will as such. (pp. 21-22).

This has been the fundamental dialectic driving modern politics: Liberal individualism 'liberating' man from inherited and customary restraints upon and 'repressions' of his autonomous will, and then, either directly by seeking liberation *through* the state (typical of Continental theory and practice which recreates the state for that purpose) rather than simply *from* it (more typical of Anglo-Saxon theory and practice), or indirectly by way of a reaction against the resulting isolation of each from the others which seeks union in a new and total society (as in Rousseau, Marx, Heidegger, Sartre). Kolnai, as well as recognising it, shows how it has been reinforced by the cult of Common Man who is 'summoned to reject and refuse to recognize as *his* good' any specification of the Common Good distinct from the scheme of private goods. Whereas the 'plain man' at worst only shows indifference to higher values which are not his values, the Common Man (or 'mass man', to use a term of the 1930s) and his worshippers would either eliminate them or, more importantly, twist them to fit into and serve his scheme (p. 23). Hence, we note, the Marxist and Utilitarian attack upon the freedom, the *privileges*, of science, scholarship, the universities and other seats of learning, and their intention to plan and compel them to serve, by way of technological innovation, 'welfare' interpreted solely as health and money and what money can procure. The Liberal rejection of a substantive and 'material' Common Good in addition to the abstract and formal Common Good of protecting private goods whatever they may be, so long as they are not injurious to others, thereby leads to the turning of the most common private goods (those of the 'the workers' or 'the people' understood as *excluding* any distinctive individuals or groups, especially nobles, clergy, 'capitalists', landlords, Jews, etc.) into a new substantive Common Good to be actively promoted by the remodelled and centralising state.

Kolnai develops this insight into two opposing principles: 'Identity' and 'Participation':

> The Common Man means Man aspiring to 'have' all goods and to 'be' all that is good is the simple, ultimate and selfsame sense of having and being: any one man attaining, through the oneness of Society actualise into a common Subject, all that any other men attain, according to the mode of *Identity*. Inversely, Privilege means the social projection, the institutional recognition, the traditional embodiment of the essentially insurmountable dividedness, imperfection and subjectivity (in the face of a transcendent Object and Good) of Man, and by the same token, the really existent—although always limited and again, in its own way, imperfect—remedy or correction of that metaphysical smallness, failure and fallenness of Man: the fact that a few

> or rather, very many men in different ways transcend the 'common level' of mankind, as though that in man which points beyond man took shape in them, in this or that limited respect, so that through their instrumentality others reach out beyond their own immediate possession or proper nature, and enrich themselves by a contact with higher values primarily alien from them and not properly theirs, according to the mode of Participation. (p. 22)

Identity, and with it Emancipation and (complete) Equality, is the logical consequence of the modern rejection of any Law or Value superior to human will. Its political consequence, as Kolnai goes on to demonstrate, is totalitarian freedom and democracy, the attempt to regain a sense of belonging and substantive being by merging oneself, as the 'mere man' that one has been reduced to as a result of one's total autonomy, into the Sovereign People whose will can brook no limitation nor thus the state as embodying it—us all, as mere men, Common Men, and so *identical* in nature and in *number* as well. In the Sovereign People I experience no alien will at all and so I am *wholly* free, for we all are Man as such, not individuals, and thus we will the same (reduced) content. Having thrown off the original 'alienation' of man as *subject* to God, the Natural Law, or an objective order of values, and the secondary alienation of subjection to those who presume to speak in their name, we overcome the remaining alienation of subjection to each other by way of conflict among and limitation by the differences among our merely private wills and desires (which the Liberal state fails to assuage by its merely formal equality and its inevitably inadequate arrangements for each to go his own way providing he does not tread on another's toes). Man, no longer subject to God, collectively becomes God.

Participation, which entails Hierarchy as Identity entails equality in *all* respects, in contrast, alone can provide a solid foundation for freedom, precisely because it refers primarily to man's subjection to a higher Way, Law, Good, or order of values which he does not create, posit or legislate for himself. Hence those specifically dedicated to them, can legitimately claim the privilege ('private law') of a realm of freedom from interference by the state as well as by private parties, in that self-dedication and the self-regulation it requires. (Readers of *Appraisal* will recognise here Polanyi's themes of liberty as primarily self-dedication to 'public' goods rather than private ones, to which slavery is the only alternative.) These privileges of some promote and guarantee the liberties of all, by limitation of state power and its claim to omnicompetence and by the ('secondary') participation, actual or potential, of all in the higher values participate in and not created by the privilege groups and institutions. To eliminate Privilege, which is based on the duality of 'the person' and 'the community' as such, reduces the person to nothing in the face of the community while divinising him as identical with it. No social, nor indeed institutional hierarchy including that of the Church itself, will unfailingly mirror the order of values:a plain man may excel an 'aristocrat' in intellectual and moral powers and virtues; great men may rise from the ranks; a peasant girl be a saint while a pope is not. But to attempt to destroy all social hierarchies, except for purely functional ones, is to aim to surmount 'the individuation, plurality and contingent inequality of men, inherent in the specific imperfection of man and his position in the order of being', that he is subject and not sovereign. Identity also excludes men from Participation in its consequence intolerance of all who are 'alien', who do not fit in, with whatever and whomever are taken to be 'Common Men', 'us', 'the Sovereign People', and so forth. And, because there is nothing superior to man to serve as a common measure, the resulting anarchy of conflicting opinions and wills can be resolved only by rejecting from recognised those who do not see what are taken to be 'self-evident truths' or not to fit in with typical 'needs'.

Identity is the principal of totalitarianism and totalitarian freedom, the freedom of *all together* as the Sovereign People whose power and competence must be complete and unlimited. Liberal Democracy has a fatal drift towards totalitarianism in its specifically Communist form, not simply because under pressure from 'the Common Man', it has moved from liberty to welfare, or rather, denies the individual the capacity for freedom unless or until he is made wealthy, and thus to doing things *to* and *for* 'the people', but, more importantly, because it tries to combine both the divergent expressions of the sovereign self-determination of man as such, 'the rights of the individual' and 'popular sovereignty'. They are kept in balanced only insofar as there remain elements of a concrete order of society and its traditions, customs and habits, which are 'ideally negated and condemned by the very conception of man's unlimited self-sovereignty', but without which no actual agreement among the citizens can be achieved. Freedom, therefore, has to be concrete and limited and not abstract and unlimited. But Liberalism, historically deriving from humanist emancipation, is opposed both to man's primary subjection to God (or any power, law or values above him) and to inherited laws and institutions which have not been explicitly chosen. But

> Man's true freedom, including his civic liberties, his constitutional self-government, and his right to an 'equal' justice, has its proper place in a *Conservative* conception of society, in the framework of which (and in the measure made possible by the given favourable circumstances, such as stability, the tradition of 'law-abidingness', a certain pattern of ownership, and others) a particular *stress* may be put on civic liberties, regional and other group autonomies, the participation of a broad electorate in the business of the State, and similar points of view cherished by many of us; whereas a *Liberal* conception of society in the systematic

> and comprehensive sense of the term, as opposed to that 'Conservative conception with a particular emphasis on Liberty', cannot support and protect liberty except in a precarious and self-contradictory fashion, at the price of relying on Conservative values unofficially tolerated yet continually harassed, and eaten away, by the immanent dialectic, the 'law of evolution', of liberal-democratic society as such. (p. 39).

Kolnai argues that the historical fact of the increasing extension of privileges does not fact show that privilege would eventually disappear. For the citizens' rights against the State are not simply an extension of those of the barons' against the Crown: the individual citizen has little power and the Crown has become the sovereign people. In fact, ordinary citizens have effective rights only because some have 'exemplary' privileges. (We see daily that there are no rights for anyone, e.g. pistol- and rifle-shooters and foxhunters, once the 'people' or their representatives have spoken, unless some other group or body, e.g. the House of Lords while it still has some independence and power, will and can support them: the House of Lords, precisely because it is not elected or as yet wholly appointed by those who are elected, has become the last day-to-day protection against the omnipotent State which is why it must go. And the Crown remains the ultimate protection for the same reason: in the last resort the armed forces will be loyal to it, to which they have pledged allegiance, and not to the government of the day: Hitler was wiser, in their scheme of things, than Mussolini.) Hence only a dispersal and plurality of powers, some inevitably greater than others, can protect liberty. And that by itself is insufficient if it is a mere 'arrangement' for co-ordinating arbitrary and inevitably disparate wills and interests, which Identity would merge into or replace with one arbitrary will, and is not also founded upon the recognition of a Common Good distinct from human appetite, of distinct human wills and interests, and of a concrete order of differentiated groups, bodies, and patterns of ownership.

Privilege means

> a pattern of concrete and specialized 'points of interblending' between the private and the common good; an expression of the fact that man cannot rightly tend towards the private and the common good by splitting uniformly and schematically into a private and civic personality, the latter forming with the rest an 'indivisible' Public Will globally coordinated to and representative of the common good . . . but only in a manifold system of particular 'group' perspectives, insights and devotions, virtues and loyalties, standards of honour and accumulations of values. (p.46)

It is only because *some* people, in different manners and respects, '*weigh*' something in the scale as against state-power that the 'individual' as such, the 'plain man' who is not in any sense a 'master', may also 'count for something' and may make an active contribution to the life of the State. (p.47)

For example, 'rich men' form some independent centres of capital and initiative, and thus poor men can set themselves apart from the collective and indeed, supported by the laws of the State, resist the encroachments of the wealthy and powerful. (The truth of this is shown in most of Africa where there are no indigenous sources of capital and so, part from subsistence farming and small-scale trading, capital and many incomes derive from the State's taxes upon and royalties from foreign companies, and hence power is concentrated in the government and those who run it. And it took the private initiative and resources of a rich man, Sir James Goldsmith, to ensure that we, the 'plain men' of the electorate, will decide if the £ is to be subsumed in the Euro.) Even in a plutocracy, there is still division and competition among the 'monopoly capitalists' which prevents them from forming one cartel which could buy up the State.

Hence Kolnai concludes that the only viable alternative to the Jacobin and Communist idea of the collective freedom of the Sovereign People is the Conservative idea of an actual dispersal of power among many centres apart from the State, over and above the merely formal Liberal separation of powers and any 'federalist' scheme, and of a society rich in privileges and hierarchies which refer to supra-social values, hierarchies limited in scope but both sustaining and sustained by the constitution, 'the universal moral Law, the protection of general human and civic rights, and the plane of Christian equality among men'.

The other papers, in effect, elaborate specific aspects of 'Privilege and Liberty': 'The Meaning of the "Common Man"' (1949) in the individualist and collective interpretations, and the development from the former to the latter to the eventual self-enslavement of man; 'Three Riders of the Apocalypse ....' (1950) on Progressive Democracy, Nazism and Communism as 'the three mass régimes, made to fit the body of emancipated Man', and the proclivity of the first to the allurements of the third, ultimately more evil than the second; 'The Utopian Mind' (1960) on the formal characteristics and contradictions of that way of thinking, especially perfectionism; 'The Conservative and Revolutionary Ethos' (1972) on the different orders of preference and relative intensities of feeling which the two attitudes attach to the contents of roughly similar systems of moral values; and reviews of Oakeshott's *Rationalism in Politics* (1965), which Kolnai generally praises though reserving doubts about Oakeshott's uncritical anti-rationalism and his account of Conservatism as a certain attitude without a substantive content, and of Maritain's *Man and the State* in which he criticises Maritain for adopting as Christian an unChristian progressive philosophy of history and its culmination in secular humanism and the 'self-worship of the "person" and of "the body

politic"', and thus of allowing egalitarianism to submerge the 'pluralism' that he also and rightly favours and which really involves a Conservative outlook.

Though he never wrote such systematic works, as did J. L. Talmon, Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin, Kolnai ranks with them in discerning the fundamental political and thence moral and philosophical, and ultimately theological problems of, and defining the modern age: the denial of any value or law summoning or obligatory upon man which man has not created and legislated for himself. And he went beyond their diagnoses by at least sketching the positive alternative that is required, not only in basic orientation and principles, but, at the time of his involvement with groups in Spain towards the end of Franco's régime, also in terms of institutions and policies. Liberty has been subverted and overthrown because its was upheld on principles whose logical, and increasingly actual, consequences were total collectivism. Though the ambitions of revolutionaries, Utopians, collectivists and even progressive democrats have been tempered by the total collapse of Communist régimes (save in Cuba and North Korea, and in China where it is now only a shell to preserve the power of the Party gerontocracy), nevertheless Kolnai's diagnoses of the errors of the age are still relevant and his positive alternatives are of perennial application.

R.T. Allen

R E Allinson
Space, Time and the Ethcal Foundations
Guildford, Ashgate. 2002; ISBN 1 84014 927 2; 216pp; £40

This book is the promised continuation of the author's *A Metaphysics for the Future* (reviewed in *Appraisal*, Vol. 3 No. 4). Like that book, it is a stimulating work but which tries to cover too much ground in too short a space.

Part I begins with a re-iteration of the author's thesis that the distinctive method of philosophy is the subjective discovery of necessary truths, in their truth and necessity, in reflection upon one's own experience. From this phenomenological starting-point he seeks to expand the scope of philosophy, which he rightly sees as fundamentally metaphysical, by way of his own interpretation and correction of Kant's insights and methods.

His first move is to expand his starting-point to show that it is also a discovery that man is a truth-seeking and truth-discovering being. But it is to our experience of space and time that he principally looks. Space involves a distinction *within* consciousness between 'inside' and outside'. All contents of consciousness can be thought away, to leave, not nothing, but an *a priori* residue which has been called 'isness' or 'thereness' but which is properly to be called 'space', as an irreducible form of distinctiveness. Now although the author clearly states that this 'space' is not the same as physical space (i.e. extension), he does properly explain how the two are related. It is 'space' in that wide sense in which, for example, one idea or thought in one's mind can 'take the place' of another. (I would prefer to use the term 'field', and would still maintain against him that all consciousness is consciousness *of,* such that in the experiences that he cites we are aware of an *empty* field and not nothing at all: seeing nothing because there is no light at all is not the same being blind; hearing nothing, when there is total silence, is not the same as being deaf.) Time is the other irreducible form of distinctness, plurality and individuation, *not* a concept, and the two are co-terminous, interdefinable, co-ultimate and cannot be separated in thought. For space is the transcendental condition for the representation of multiple existence at some time ('alongsidedness', one might say) and time that of multiple existence in some space ('successiveness'). But I wonder if they are so inseparable: *prima facie* I see nothing incoherent in the idea of a static and hence timeless universe (though it would not be this one) nor in that of a non-spatial one (e.g. one of pure spirits), though this is to refer to physical space. Even with reference to the wider sense of 'space', it is surely possible to imagine and experience multiple existences at the same time without reference to space and vice-versa, e.g. hearing several tones or voices at the same time, which we distinguish solely by their distinct qualities. Later on, he does say that they are logically separate but cannot be empirically represented as separate, whence arises the belief that there is no thought without words. That he rightly contests. There are two sources of knowledge: the non-conceptual knowledge of pure ideation and that of pure difference found by reflection on the means of representation, namely space and time. A 'word' (any mode of expression) is the fusion of the two, and an 'idea' is a specious notion which cannot exist by itself, for a concept is already a mixture of ideation and difference.

Rightly holding that philosophical thesis should be fruitful, he later applies this account of space and time to the problem of macro- and micro-objects, such as the brown table of everyday perception and the atoms that compose it according to science: there appear to be two objects in the same space at the same time. His suggestion is that they are the same object seen at different times (as would be the dots of paint and the represented shapes of a *pointillist* painting). That is true for one viewer: but what about *A* seeing the same macro-object in the same place and time at which *B* sees the micro-object? (Readers of *Appraisal* will see the solution in terms of the from-to structure of tacit integration). He also applies it to the problem of

whether actual space and time are finite or infinite: neither can exist without the other. But the problem of conceiving a first moment in time, one without a 'before', is no real problem at all: only once change and time have begun can one, from *within* a temporal world, speak of a 'before' when nothing was happening and imagine an 'after' when nothing will happen.

So far he has been operating *within* consciousness. To go straight into metaphysics would be to embrace some form of Idealism. Allinson does not take that road. Instead, he proposes that there is an isomorphism between what can and cannot be known in pure phenomenology and about the structure of the universe, for the part must resemble the whole and the macrocosm (of mind), having developed out of the microcosm, must include it. Again, I wonder. These seem to be very large assumptions and there are different types of wholes and degrees of wholeness: to what extent does a man's toenail resemble the man himself? And when he concludes that 'a correlation must exist between metaphysical laws and reality' (p. 109), he is really propounding a presuppositional argument. I suggest, that whatever other approaches may be followed, there can be no substitute in metaphysics for a wider generalisation than the special sciences which seeks fundamental categories applying to and differentiating within all of them, an attempt to articulate that comprehensive world-picture to which they all contribute.

Pt II, on the foundations of ethics, is something of an appendix, and I found the topics treated too quickly and only loosely related to Pt I. He begins with a deduction of emotions, but makes the old mistake of confusing logical interrelations among the formal objects of emotions with the genetic derivation of one emotion out of another. He rightly sees that love is primary and that negative emotions presuppose positive ones (except for sheer malice which philosophers have always tended to rationalise away). He vigorously defends moral truth as seen to be true and universal in the apprehension of it, which is not confirmed but repeated by each person who apprehends it. Yet he does not indicate the range of this form of moral truth: it would seem to apply to fundamental principles and not to particular judgments. He also briskly disposes of the pseudo-question of 'Why be moral?' and all extrinsic reasons for being moral. Nevertheless he does argue (but too briefly) that the choice of good over evil bestows true and complete freedom on the will. Unless moral values are transcendent, there is no guidance for the freedom of the will: 'One cannot worship at the shrine of an abstract and empty freedom' (p. 176)—Allinson has forgotten Sartre! Ethics, he argues, is a regional metaphysics, with its own distinctive range of universal and necessary truths, in which fact and value intersect because the subject knower possesses the power and responsibility at least partially to determine the nature of the subject matter. The final question is, 'Is human nature good?' to which he gives a positive answer. But I think that Allinson confuses two questions here: 'Is human nature a good to be realised?', which is the one he really addresses, and 'Are human beings actually good?', which is what he appears to be answering. One can coherently answer 'yes' to the former and 'no' to the latter.

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