Obsah

Revolution, Commemoration, Interpretation

The year 2017 saw a massive output of writing to mark the centenary of the October revolution. By conventional standards, this special issue of our journal is behind schedule. We might, however, cite various historians who agree on dating the decisive turning-point in the course of 1918. Seen in isolation, the "invisible insurrection" [*Koenen 2017*] in St. Petersburg hardly qualifies as a revolutionary event; it acquired that character through a sequel of violent, all-consuming struggle across the territory of the largest empire on earth. The week-long fighting in Moscow that followed the self-appointment of a Bolshevik government in the capital did not launch that process. But at the beginning of 1918, the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly set the course towards a one-party dictatorship, which had not been an obvious or generally expected outcome of the *pronunciamiento* in St. Petersburg. This was followed by the capitulation to Germany and its Austro-Hungarian ally (euphemistically labeled a "separate peace") and the establishment of a short-lived German empire in Eastern Europe. There were several aspects to this strategic shift. For the Bolsheviks who accepted the decision, and for Lenin in particular, it was a choice between priorities; they had to opt out of the European great power conflict and abandon all hopes of turning it into a revolutionary war, in order to take control of Russia. But it was also a gamble, and a double one. The possibility of a revolution that would knock Germany out of the war was not ruled out, although it was no longer invoked as a near-certain promise. But Lenin could not be unaware of the very different and more realistic scenario that American intervention, well underway at the time of the Brest-Litovsk capitulation, would quickly end the war on the western front. If that was indeed the decisive factor (as seems overwhelmingly likely), and if we agree that a stalemate on the western front would have been enough for Germany to win the war [*Lieven 2016*], we must conclude that American intervention saved the Bolshevik regime. It would not have survived for long as a satellite of a German empire in the east.

Two other aspects of the early 1918 crisis had major consequences for the course of events in that year. The disagreement over ending the war with Germany was not the first conflict within the Bolshevik party, but it was the one that came closest to a fatal split, and where Lenin's victory seems to have been mostly due to intimidation rather than persuasion. It left a traumatic legacy that in due course made it easier to enforce a ban on open debate. At the same time, the capitulation put an end to the coalition of Bolsheviks and Left Socialist-Revolutionaries; not that the Bolshevik leadership had ever intended to share the substance of power, but the Left SRs had tried to make their presence felt, and revolted against the acceptance of the German ultimatum. Their defeat and the accompanying repression deepened the estrangement between the Bolshevik regime and the socialist parties and became a prelude to their final suppression. But further developments towards

the end of 1918 put the opponents of Bolshevism at a disadvantage. The civil war began in earnest, with White armies taking control of outlying territories and the Bolsheviks holding the center. Counter-revolutionary actions led by military cadres of the old regime could neither link up with working-class resistance in the cities nor with peasant revolts (the socialist parties were involved on both counts). This was not the least of the structural factors favoring the Bolsheviks.

In short, there are good reasons to stress the decisive role of events, internal and external, during the year 1918. From that point of view, the "ten days that shook the world" look rather like a leap into the void. It was the sequel, contingent and multicausal, that shaped the impact on Russia and the world. But 1917 can also be relativized on other grounds, and they are reflected in the thematic choices of this special issue. The protagonists of the seizure of power in St. Petersburg saw themselves as heirs, revivers, and consummators of a tradition. Their acknowledged ancestors were the radicals who had briefly taken center stage in the French revolution, as well as those who – much more marginally – defended radical causes in the revolution of 1848. Lenin had no qualms about admitting his affinities with the Jacobins, not least in response to his critics, but he also believed that he possessed a theoretical guide and a historical guarantee that would make his strategy more effective and lift it to a higher social level than that of the Jacobins. The Marxist teaching about class struggle and revolution was supposed to show the way.

Given this claim to represent more advanced forces and ideas, the record of imagining Russian events through French precedents is all the more remarkable. For historians and activists who have reasoned in terms of a revolutionary tradition, the connection between these two cases has always been a basic assumption. In 1917, references to French models antedated the Bolshevik push for power; there is no doubt that the ill-fated summer offensive of the Russian army was linked to visions of a Republican mobilization against external enemies, as in France during the 1790s. With the rise of the Bolsheviks, memories of French landmarks became more emphatic. The mythologized sequence begins with the "assault" on the Winter Palace, stylized to recall the storming of the Bastille, and the Congress of Soviets, presented with a *fait accompli* by the Bolsheviks but re-imagined as a more radical pendant to the assembly convened in 1789. The Jacobin experience was a key theme, but reactions to it and the outcome of its abortive turn were also invoked. On a more serious level, the looming threat of a "Thermidor," reversing the radical course, became a standard argument of intra-party opposition to the Stalinist dictatorship, and later helped Trotsky to defend his conceptually shaky view of Stalinism as a halfway house between revolution and restoration. On the other side, the specter of Bonapartism was used against Trotsky, but that analogy was also taken up by critics of full-blown Stalinism. The vastly influential interpretation of Stalin's regime developed by Isaac Deutscher may not unfairly be described as a mixture of Jacobin, Thermidorian and Bonapartist motives.

The assimilation of the two revolutions was not limited to political uses. A broad school of thought, known as the social interpretation of the French revolution, influenced by Marxism but far from reducible to that source, drew support from the analogy with Russia. The latter, case read as an example of social forces in the struggle for political power, lent added plausibility to such views on other major transformations. But the coupling of French and Russian experiences continued even when the interpretive focus shifted away from the social aspect. Comparative studies of revolutions, increasingly distanced from

political concerns, were for obvious reasons inclined to foreground the "great revolutions," most revealing of historical patterns and underlying dynamics. The French and Russian revolutions are undisputed cases of that category; although the Chinese one is most often included, there are persistent problems with fitting it into the same framework. Its background and its roads to victory were very different from Western precedents; for one thing, it is much more difficult to distinguish a culminating phase form a longer process than in France or Russia (if the civil war is identified as such a phase, the pertinent objection is that it was, in fact, a struggle between two successor states to the Chinese empire, coming after the failure of Japanese conquest). A further problem is an unsettled outcome, not only during the twists and turns of Maoism but also in regard to the long-drawn-out re-adaptive process that began after 1976.

Notwithstanding these obstacles, the Chinese case figures alongside the French and Russian ones in the most influential studies of great revolutions. Theda Skocpol [*1979*] still referred to social revolutions, and that may have obscured the revisionist thrust of her book, but as she argues, the radical social transformations intervene between a state crisis and a rebuilding of state structures on stronger foundations. Her reluctance to admit a significant role of ideology proved hard to justify, and the path was thus cleared for a more radical version of revisionism. In any case, the emphasis on state formation and state strengthening was primarily justified by reference to the Napoleonic and Soviet states that inherited the two paradigmatic revolutions. The shift was more far-reaching than the author realized at the time. Among other things, it raises the question of relations between revolution and empire.

The idea of radical revisionism, both in regard to the French revolution and on the subject of its affinities and contrasts with the Russian one, is more often associated with François Furet than with anybody else. At the end of the twentieth century, Furet influenced public opinion and debate in France to a degree rarely achieved by historians and was widely read in other countries. His revisionist project began with a book on the French revolution [*Furet 1989a*, first published 1978], focused on the interconnected roles of ideology and politics and hence strongly critical of the social interpretation. A later book [*Furet 2000*] proposed to settle accounts with the past illusion of Communism, not least by refuting once and for all its claim to the legacy of the French revolution. That book disappointed many readers [for a thoroughgoing critique, see *Lefort 2007*] and has not retained its instant reputation. But in between, Furet had published a seminal article on 1789–1917 as a "round trip" [*Furet 1989b*]. This text now seems more relevant to our purposes. Furet wrote it in connection with the bicentennial of the French revolution, and his aim was to show that in a fundamental sense, history had returned from a Russian road to nowhere to a French point of origin. The argument may be summed up in three main points.

Furet begins by noting the necessary but paradoxical connection between two aspects of the Communist appropriation of 1789 and its legacy. Soviet Communism proposed to re-enact and surpass the French model; both the continuity and the perfectibility of the revolutionary tradition were to be safeguarded. The two claims were mutually supportive and equally necessary for the maintenance of the regime and its international reach. The invoked ancestry of 1789 and its more radical sequel served to legitimize a power born of revolution and identified with a project of fundamental change, but permanently troubled by the discrepancy beween its original programme and the situation that it sought

to master; the French connection also secured sympathies abroad, most obviously in the case of the strong French Communist party (to which Furet had once belonged, and with whose history he remained particularly concerned). The French Communists found it particularly easy to claim affinity with the radicals of the 1790s as well as those of 1917. With the demise of Communism, complete in Eastern Europe and visibly imminent in the Soviet Union in 1989, this double genealogy collapsed, but with very different implications for the two models of reference. This is Furet's second point; he argues that whereas the Soviet model has vanished and left nothing to build on, the French one is entering a new afterlife: "The Revolution [the French one, J. P. A.] is more alive than ever through its democratic message, and dead, by contrast, as a privileged modality of change" [*ibid.: 5*]. The Soviet disaster has affected the general understanding of revolutions and discredited the attempts to idealize them.

Furet's portrayal of Communism as an aberration without legacy was well attuned to prevalent Western perceptions in the 1990s. The extraordinary U-turn that has taken place since then, and given rise to a revived Cold War discourse, shows that even the most sophisticated versions of this diagnosis got something seriously wrong. Now the emphasis of mainstream opinion is all on continuity between Soviet and post-Soviet Russia, with the most extreme offshoots describing Putin as a latter-day Stalin. A legacy is thus acknowledged, certainly seen as a malign one, but no less relevant for that. This is not the place to trace the continuities and discontinuities of modern and contemporary Russian history. But the return of the question throws new light on Furet's downsizing of the idea of revolution. It is certainly no longer defensible to think of revolutions as a privileged modality of change; the idea of a project of revolution as the epitome or culmination of modernity may be presumed dead. On the other hand, revolutions do represent a recurrent, complex and still imperfectly understood form of change; the loss of faith in revolutionary alternatives has not diminished the need for a comparative history of revolutions. As for the other aspect of the French heritage, the significance of 1789 and the sequel for the history of modern democracy is indisputable, but the relationship of democratic moments and currents to the overall dynamic of the revolutionary process is controversial, and so is the identification of democratic protagonists [for recent work with original variations on these themes, see *Israel 2014*].

The last consideration takes us to Furet's third point, only foreshadowed in the of the paper: "The end of a fictitious concatenation between the two events" leads to "a rediscovery of their singularity and at the same time their contingency" [*ibid.: 16*]. This is a lesson for historians, rather than for political thought, but it converges with the more sociological work of William Sewell on the "eventness" of the French Revolution in particular and revolutions in general. The contributions to the special section in this issue are written in that spirit, although none of the authors has a particularly close connection to Furet's work (some of them refer more directly to Sewell). They all emphasize the singularity of the French Revolution as an epoch-making event, with implications and consequences irreducible to any unfolding logic of a process or a project.

David Inglis surveys the vast and ramified history of thinking about the French Revolution, from Tocqueville and Marx to later generations of classical sociologists and the criticism of traditional views variously expressed by Arendt, Furet and Wallerstein. As Inglis shows, the"revisionist" argument most closely associated with Furet's name was

not (as some of its advocates liked to think) a new and lasting paradigm for the study of events and experiences long seen through the distorting prisms of political ideologies and epochal self-images. Rather, it became the starting-point for an explosive and continuing broadening of horizons, including the problematization of boundaries between the modern and the premodern as well as the insertion of European upheavals in global history (in the context of the 1790s, the Haitian revolution is of particular importance). Eric Royal Lybeck takes off from the complicated and contradictory impact of the French Revolution on Germany. This is one of the fields arguably overshadowed by the exaggerated focus on Russian transformations of the French legacy. The interaction between France and the German political-cultural sphere was decisive for the nineteenth-century history of both countries, and thus for the destinies of Europe. Lybeck is particularly interested in the reflection of this highly conflictual encounter in new ways of thinking about history and society; the work of Friedrich Carl von Savigny is singled out for special attention. Putting the German responses to the French Revolution (and its imperial heir) into the history of sociology is not a matter of constructing a self-contained alternative to the conventional francocentric narrative, nor of resurrecting the notion of conserative origins of sociology; rather, it enriches a multilinear genealogy. Isaac Ariail Reed draws on new perspectives in cultural sociology, especially those related to performative language and its particular conflicts of interpretations. This view serves to foreground the question of sovereignty, central to all phases of the French Revolution but rarely given its due in state- or class-centred analyses. The problem is not simply the transfer of sovereignty through struggle, from kings to people and then to actors claiming to represent the latter; it also has to do with understanding and enacting the power to dominate and legitimate. Camil Francisc Roman adopts the viewpoint of political anthropology and uses it to clarify the question of religion and politics, their interaction in the French Revolution, and the significance of the outcome for modern politics. This is one of the issues that have come to the fore after the revisionist turn, e.g. in the writings of Gareth Stedman Jones, but Roman's approach differs from the hitherto most familiar ones. He places particular emphasis on the liminal situation created by the abolition of monarchy and the execution of the king, on the subsequent mutations of the sacred and their implications for the modern democratic imaginary.

This issue also contains texts more directly related to the Russian revolution. Nikolay Romanovskiy's paper discusses the progress and problems of historical sociology in post-Soviet Russia; the ups and downs of this discipline reflect broader concerns, not least the settling of accounts with the revolutionary past. The essay by Johann P. Arnason deals with problems of conceptualizing the Russian revolution, in the light of recent historical scholarship on this subject. Adam Coman's survey of the Israeli "critical historians" and their reevaluation of Zionism has a different focus; but the history of Zionism and its adversaries is not unconnected to modern revolutionary visions and experiences.

The special section on the French revolution was guest-edited by David Inglis and Eric Lybeck. The editors of the journal would like to thank them for their input and cooperation.

Finally, we publish reviews of a few recent publications, in part related to revolutionary themes.

Johann P. Arnason

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Is It Still Too Early to Tell? Rethinking Sociology's Relations to the French Revolution

DAVID INGLIS*

Je stále příliš brzy? Přehodnocení vztahů mezi sociologií a francouzskou revolucí

Abstract: It seems almost impossible today to deny the importance of the French Revolution in creating both the distinctively modern social world and sociology's characteristic responses to it. This paper takes issue with various of the standard narrations of these matters. It aims at developing fresh thinking about what the Revolution was, and what roles it may, or may not have, played in generating subsequent social phenomena and the sociology tasked with comprehending them. The claim by Robert Nisbet that the roots of sociology especially lie in Conservative responses to the Revolution are critically assessed. The potential importance of Durkheim and de Tocqueville for creating new narrations of the connections between the Revolution and sociology are considered. The manners in which the Revolution has been invoked to construct concepts of "modernity" and dramatic historical breaks with the past are reflected upon.

Keywords: Revolution; French Revolution; Sociology; History; Historical Sociology; Durkheim; de Tocqueville

Introduction

One of the great political quotations may have been falsely attributed to the Chinese Communist leader Zhou Enlai. When he was supposedly asked in the 1960s about the significance of the French Revolution, he reportedly said it was still too early to tell. Yet it seems almost impossible today to deny the importance of the French Revolution in creating both the distinctively modern social world and sociology's characteristic responses to it. School and university textbooks describe the Revolution as one of the decisive events of modern history [*Harison 2002*]. If the Revolution is accepted, as it often has been, as the archetype of most subsequent revolutions, one may either celebrate it as the start of real human emancipation, introducing potentially all human beings to democratic government [*Wagner 2012*], or instead one can denounce it as the first historical manifestation of a seemingly inevitable slide of many revolutions into first mob rule and then totalitarianism [*Nisbet 1974*]. Beyond the specifically French case [*Aron 2003*], the French Revolution seems to pose at least two major questions for the study of revolutions in general – why do they usually turn out differently from how their instigators intended, and why are peaceful and idealistic intentions so often subverted by violence [*Sztompka 1993*]?

But just as Zhou's famous quote may be fictitious, so too many widespread assumptions about the significance of the Revolution, as the instigator of modernity and as the begetter of sociology, may also be problematic. This paper, and the other papers in this

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special section take issue with various standard narrations of these matters. They do so with the aim of developing fresh thinking about what the Revolution was (or still is), and what roles it may, or may not have, played in generating subsequent social phenomena and the sociology tasked with comprehending them. Themes broached here include: the inevitability of the contingency of events, the changing nature of politics and power, the interplay of the sacred and secular, as well as the rational and irrational, and claims about the Revolution creating a radical historic break with the past, and being a crucible whereby both modernity and sociology were forged.

Thinking about the Revolution

Authors ranging through time and space have seemed, despite multiple ideological differences, to agree on the world-historical significance of the Revolution, whether more on the grounds of the philosophy of history or more based on empirical historiographical considerations [*Krejčí 2004*].

Kant, for example, read the Revolution as "a *sign* or *spectacle* revealing the potential for autonomy characteristic of the human species" [*Kouvelakis 2003: 2*]. Hegel celebrated it as a "glorious mental dawn," because a new stage of Spirit had been reached whereby humans realized that "thought ought to govern […] reality" [*Hegel 1956: 447*]. Marx regarded it as a major stepping-stone in the creation of a fully bourgeois social order, with Jacobin and Napoleonic centralization of state power working like a "gigantic broom" to sweep away the remnants of feudalism [*Nisbet 1980: 138*].

More recent students have seen the Revolution as both expression and creator of a "second Axial Age, in which a distinct cultural political and institutional programme crystallized and expanded throughout most of the world" [*Eisenstadt 2004: 49*]. The social consequences of the Revolution are seen to have set up for later generations knotty problems of liberty versus equality, of individual rights versus community and fraternity, and of class struggle versus social solidarity [*Wagner 2008*].

If the Revolution is widely thought to be so centrally a part of the making of what is conventionally called "modernity," reflection upon it involves profound questions of chronology and meaning did the "modern world" begin in 1789 [*Evans 2007*]? Does the Revolution have an end-point, or is its end "not yet in sight" [*Toynbee 1987: 294*]? Did it signify the "end of History," as some following Hegel, such as Alexandre Kojève, have maintained [*Fukuyama 1992*]?

The radical newness of the Revolution itself, of its consequences, and of the sort of society it helped forge, not just in France but around Europe and the wider world, has been widely assumed. This was done, first of all, by the revolutionaries themselves, than their critics – especially those of a Conservative bent – at the time and later, then by sociologists throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, and also by the majority of historians of sociology. Kumar [*Kumar 1986: 19, 26*] summarises the prevailing sentiments on the subject: "No other event in the history of modern times has so powerfully aroused the sentiments of novelty, transformation and the creation of a new order […] [T]here was the sense that man [*sic*] stood on the edge of one of the most momentous transformations of all his history, that in the ideas and the events around him could be seen innumerable witnesses to this fact."

This was the sort of view shared by the Revolutionaries, and those have who opposed them. The radical innovations of the Revolution were identified in the 1820s by Thomas Carlyle [*Carlyle 1980 (1829): 84*]:

> There is a deep-lying struggle in the whole fabric of society; a boundless grinding collision of the New with the Old. The French Revolution, as is now visible enough, was not the parent of this mighty movement, but its offspring. Those two hostile influences, which always exist in human things, and on the constant intercommunion of which depends their health and safety, had lain in separate masses, accumulating through generations, and France was the scene of their fiercest explosion; but the final issue was not unfolded in that country: nay, it is not yet anywhere unfolded.

Similar thoughts of a radical break with the past were expressed by Alexis de Tocqueville [*Tocqueville 2008 (1856): 19*] thirty years later:

> What had […] seemed to the rulers of Europe and the politicians an event not out of the ordinary in the life of nations, now appeared to be such a new event, in such opposition to all that happened before in the world, yet so widespread, so grotesque, so undecipherable, that the human mind looked at it with open disbelief. Some felt that this unknown power would drive human societies to their complete and terminal dissolution […] It could not be arrested by men nor could it control its momentum.

The idea of the apparently radical newness of the Revolution – in its aims, nature, and ramifications – has entered into the conceptual fabrics of political theory and sociology. The French Revolution has come to define what counts as a properly "modern" *revolution*, rather than its converse, a pre-modern *rebellion*. In Hannah Arendt's [*Arendt 1973*] influential formulation, the American and French revolutions are revolutions in unprecedented and profound ways. They are the first historical exemplars of political processes involving a specifically "modern" consciousness of time, with that consciousness being expressed in the very term "revolution" itself. Before 1776 and 1789, the word referred – as it had done since ancient times – to a return to a point in a pre-determined historical cycle, rather than referring to new beginnings. But in the late 18th century in Europe and North America, a sense arose that "the course of history suddenly begins anew, that an entirely new story, a story never known or told before, is about to unfold" [*Arendt 1973: 29*].

For Arendt, the late 18th century revolutions, and their understanding and deployment of the term "revolution" itself are radical innovations, the first "revolutions" in the modern sense, partly because they embody a wholly new "revolutionary" consciousness. Revolutionary actors, especially in France, defined the Revolution as the creation of an unprecedented future involving a cataclysmic break with past arrangements. Precisely because actors, for the first time, believed what they were doing was radically new, and involved the creation of radical innovations in social life, then analysts too must define those revolutions as thoroughly new sorts of political phenomena, with thoroughly novel consequences for social order. Arendt's definitional interventions have been influential in subsequent studies of revolution. Partly through her writings have the Revolutionary actors' sense of their own radical newness gotten into the bloodstream of academic analyses, such that their self-understanding as unprecedented innovators creating a new world has often gone unchallenged.

Relating Sociology to the French Revolution

If accepting the French Revolution as an exercise in radical, modernity-generating novelty is widespread today, so too is the idea that it was out of the responses to it by its critics, often the most hostile ones, that the very "modern" science of sociology was born. Different authors have emphasized varied aspects of that situation, but the core narrative remains the same. Friedrich Engels [*Engels 1959: 351–352*], for one, noted that "compared with the splendid promises of the Enlightenment philosophers, the social and political institutions born of the 'triumph of reason' were bitterly disappointing caricatures," and out of that sense of promises betrayed came the writings of Saint-Simon and Fourier, which would influence subsequent sociologists such as Durkheim. (For an alternative account of the effects of the Revolution in German universities and sociology, see both Lybeck and Roman, this volume.)

From a very different ideological position, Isaiah Berlin [*Berlin 2000: 109*] tells a related story. The perceived failures of the Revolution were the seedbed from which a new consciousness of society and history arose:

> Although it promised a perfect solution to human ills, being founded […] upon peaceful universalism […] [and] the doctrine of unimpeded progress […] it nevertheless did not go the way it was intended […] and therefore what it attracted attention to was not at all reason, peace, harmony, universal freedom, equality, liberty, fraternity […] but, on the contrary, violence, appalling unpredictable change in human affairs, [and] the irrationality of mobs.

One consequence was that scholars started to believe that there must be a huge amount of information about human being[s] hidden underneath the surface of social life, and social science aimed to dig those out. The failure of the Revolution to create the promised rational society suggested that both massive, invisible, uncontrollable forces and also mysterious, hitherto submerged phenomena, such as recalcitrant "human nature," had taken their revenge on the presumptuous revolutionaries. Laws of unintended consequences of human actions were now sought, in a universe that now looked more baffling, if not terrifying, than it did in the 18th century.

The notion that it was the Conservative reaction to the French Revolution that was to a major extent responsible for the genesis of sociology is especially associated with the American sociologist Robert Nisbet, who wrote on this theme and popularised it between the 1940s and 1970s. For Nisbet [*Nisbet 1952: 168*], the French Revolution had "something of the same impact upon men's [*sic*] minds that the Communist and Nazi revolutions" had in the 20th century.

Nisbet's claims in this regard were at first majorly driven by concerns about societal developments in his own time. In his first piece on such matters, Nisbet [*Nisbet 1943*] worried about the effects of World War II and its aftermath on US society, which for him included the vastly increased power of the State over social spheres, resulting atomization of the citizenry, weakening of intermediate institutions between individuals and the State, and increased potential for political despotism. All these factors had already been pointed to as consequences of the Revolution by Conservative thinkers like de Bonald and de Maistre in the years after 1789. History was in danger of repeating itself in the mid-20th

century. It seemed to Nisbet urgent to ask, in light of which roles sociology might play in post-War social reconstruction, out of which materials sociology had been created at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries. Nisbet's answer in the 1940s explicitly and self-consciously echoed the ideas of de Bonald and de Maistre: sociology studied those intermediate institutions of human groups, such as the family, religion, trade guilds and suchlike, that the Revolution had sought to destroy and that World War II was now in danger of eroding. Post-War sociology was defined by Nisbet as concerned with themes of social disorder, dislocation, and alienation, which were exactly the themes construed by the early Conservatives as the negative consequences of the Revolution.

In his wartime reflections, Nisbet argued that the Conservatism of de Bonald, de Maistre, and others yielded concepts that became the conceptual "central core" of sociology [*Nisbet 1943: 156*]. This process occurred at two levels. First, the Revolution, as an embodiment of Enlightenment thought, sought to abolish all aspects of traditional, feudal society. The radical Jacobin faction within the revolutionaries especially sought to abolish all intermediate organizations, with the state taking control of social functions previously carried out by bodies like the Catholic Church and the guilds. There was a concomitant spread across France and other parts of Europe of the new values of individualism and revolutionary nationalism. Second, the Conservatives were appalled at these innovations, which seemed to lead to the loss of all those features that make "society" stable over time, namely hierarchy, established order, and cultural tradition. Against the perceived political, moral, and more broadly "social" anarchy, the Conservative thinkers set out a counter-revolutionary programme. For Nisbet [*Nisbet 1943: 162*], "not until the range of traditional society in its plural forms suffered the destructive impact of the Revolution did a systematic interest in the social group [as such] arise," and from this situation developed the central conceptual fabric of sociology in the rest of 19th century.

In the early 1950s, Nisbet [*Nisbet 1952: 167*] elaborated on these issues:

> Such ideas as status, cohesion, adjustment, function, norm, ritual, symbol, are [C]onservative ideas not merely in the superficial sense that each has as its referent an aspect of society that is plainly concerned with the maintenance or the conserving of order but in the important sense that all these words are integral parts of the intellectual history of European Conservatism.

On this view, the Conservative thinkers discovered or created the idea of "society" as such. The perceived disastrous consequences of the Revolution revealed to them what seemed to be the true essence of the realm of the social. It "is not a mechanical aggregate of individual particles subject to whatever rearrangements may occur to the mind of the would-be reformer. It is an organic entity, with internal laws of development and with infinitely subtle personal and institutional relationships. Society cannot be created by individual reason, but it can be weakened by those unmindful of its true nature, for it has deep roots in the past" [*Nisbet 1952: 169*].

Nisbet goes on to list the list of attributes of "society" which the Conservatives identified precisely because the Revolution was in the process of apparently destroying them, all of which would become central themes in sociology: the primacy of society over the individual; the idea that society is irreducible to its various parts; the interdependence of all social phenomena; the notion that every social element, both institutions and individuals,

has a given function in the workings of the whole; social existence depends on intermediate groups and institutions, which regulate individuals in line with societal needs; the view that the individual is not *sui generis* but rather a thoroughly social product; suspicion of capitalism and urbanism as dissolving factors upon what was taken to be "social solidarity"; the claim that social order requires sacred supports, and that some form of "religion" is necessary social glue; and the idea that if social power is to be more than despotism, it requires the legitimacy of long-standing authority. All these were themes developed by the Conservative thinkers against Enlightenment themes of natural rights, individualism and rational reconstruction of society, as these were put into practice by the Revolutionaries in general, and espoused by the Jacobins in particular [*Levine 1995*].

Nisbet argued that the story of sociology's Conservative roots applied to the major French thinkers of the 19th century. According to his account, Comte took up the Conservatives' themes and – crucially for sociology – regarded the problems thrown up by the Revolution in French society as "social" in nature rather than purely political. Through Comte's influence, the "social" realm came into more explicit view, while the "problem of social order" began to become prominent as both object of analysis and policy puzzle to be solved [*Nisbet 1943: 161*]. For Nisbet, Comte more than anyone else made the themes of the Conservatives palatable to a broader public, partly by conjoining them to the rhetoric of social progress, and partly by construing them in a scientific idiom, recasting them as empirical research objects rather than as polemical categories. "The great achievement" of Comte

> was to rephrase the problem of order in such a way as to bring to the fore not only the ethical importance of the intermediate groups [religion, family, guilds, etc.] but their theoretical value in the study of man. It was precisely those areas of human association most severely treated by the Revolution which became conceptually important in sociology. The conspicuous esteem in which Comte holds religious association, the family, and the community, as well as the modes of control which these groups embody, is the source of that more dispassionate interest in these entities which has been the core of contemporary sociology [*Nisbet 1943: 162*].

Nisbet likewise emphasized how Frederic Le Play transformed Conservative themes of social disorder and break down into "a set of concrete problems calling for rigorous field investigation" [*Nisbet 1952: 173*]. But the more crucial test case was that of Durkheim, undoubtedly one of the most major figures in the history of the discipline. If his work was greatly indebted to the Conservatives, then so too must major portions of the discipline itself. Nisbet argued that Durkheim's work was indeed indebted in that way. For example, Durkheim's account of social institutions creating and constraining individual actors, as well as his view of contemporary society as suffering from the effects of social disorganization, place him "securely in the Conservative tradition" [*Nisbet 1952: 174*].

The contemporaneous socio-political reasons for Nisbet's championing of the French Conservatives' role in the constitution of sociology were clear in the war-time writing. But they are far less so in his subsequent iterations of the story [*Nisbet 1974; Nisbet 1980*]. There the story is presented as if it were free from matters of pressing political urgency or the necessary selectivity in the narration that goes along with them. The story is presented as if the essential points about the Conservative tenor of the central concepts of sociology are so certain as to be unchallengeable: that was just the way it was, with nothing more to

be said. The Conservative roots of the discipline have been subtly but surely naturalised by Nisbet in his later writings, and made to seem self-evident. So have the alleged nature of the French Revolution [an embodiment of Enlightenment thought, and essentially Jacobin], its social effects [essentially social disorder, both "real" and also as perceived by contemporary actors], and the conceptual core of sociology [essentially a science of intermediate social groups, and of the problem of the lack of social order which undermines them].

After Nisbet: Reconsidering Durkheim on the Revolution

This is clearly a very partial interpretation of all these issues. Dissatisfaction with it provoked Anthony Giddens' [*Giddens 1976*] critique of what he called the "myth of the Conservative origins of sociology." For Giddens, Nisbet does not adequately differentiate between, on the one side, the ideas an author inherits from previous thinkers in her intellectual sphere, and which she is constrained to think with (and against), and, on the other side, the uses s/he makes of them and the resulting intellectual content that comes out of the engagement. The ideas that Durkheim grappled with may have been partly Conservative in origin, but that does not make them "Conservative" as such once they have been through the transformative crucible of Durkheim's engagement with them.

For Giddens [*Giddens 1976*], Nisbet's narration relies too much on Durkheim's debt to Comte. While the latter did indeed explicitly engage with the ideas of de Bonald, de Maistre, and similar others, Durkheim rejected much of the hierarchical vision of Comte as to how society in future should be organised, because in Durkheim's view contemporary society cannot return to any idealized pre-Revolutionary past of the kind Conservatives dreamed of. Giddens notes that the Saint-Simonian socialist strain of ideas in Durkheim's thinking is too conveniently underplayed – and it too was a direct response to the social consequences of the Revolution. Nisbet's narration also fails to deal with the fact that Durkheim not only promoted moral individualism as the basis of modern social order – when any individualism was anathema to the Conservatives – but that he saw it as a positive outgrowth of long-term societal evolution, which is a very different view from the Conservative one of a post-Revolutionary lapse into societal anarchy. What Nisbet's account precludes is consideration of how a major thinker like Durkheim created sociology as an exercise in liberal or reformist, socialist Republicanism, which are themselves as much products of the Revolution as are the concepts derived from the Conservatives.

We could develop that line of reasoning by saying that, while the Conservatives saw the Revolution as a dissolving agent, undermining all that was socially beneficial, Durkheim as a committed Republican saw it more like a set of promises still to be fulfilled. While Durkheim had to deal with social phenomena in France that could be traced directly back to the Revolution [*Mazlish 1989: 200–201*], nonetheless living a century after the Revolution, he could discern certain things about it that the Conservatives could not see from their vantage point.

Already in the 1850s Tocqueville [*Tocqueville 1856*] had noted the strongly religious idiom that the Revolutionaries had operated with. Robespierre presented to the revolutionary audience the notion that everything was being done by the precepts of a Supreme Being [*Baehr 2002: 70*]. Revolutionary principles and rhetoric were not at all purely secular, or simple expressions of Enlightenment rationalist philosophy. As Arendt [*Arendt 1973: 185*]

noted, both the French and American Revolutions invoked "religious" sentiments at the very point of their apparently rendering politics decisively secular. Tocqueville stressed the religious nature of the Revolutionaries' rhetoric, the secular and the sacred being intertwined in complex ways, consideration of which later helped Durkheim to think through the religious nature of the (apparently secular) social realm, and the social nature of the (apparently ethereal) sacred realm. Tocqueville could diagnose the religious quality of the secular rhetoric as deriving from the fact that, perhaps for the first time in history, this was a revolution that aspired "to universal validity […] claim(ing) to be the way of salvation for all humanity" [*Aron 1972: 208*]. It was this messianic quality, expressed in claims that the Revolution was far from being only for the French but was universal in scope, which particularly upset Edmund Burke and other Conservative observers at the time.

By Durkheim's period, it was possible to conceive of the Revolution as an awakening of, and exercise in, civil religion, which was ambivalently pitched between secular and sacred principles, abolishing traditional religion while still being recognizably "religious" in nature. If the contents of Christian belief had been removed, the structural form of religion – a strong conception of the division between sacred and profane, and collective, public rituals – remained and was forcefully given new contents by the Revolutionaries. This reworking of religion in the Revolution had already informed Comte's system, where sociology was fused with a religion of "humanity," the nature of which was ironically revealed by T. H. Huxley's quip that it was essentially "Catholicism without Christianity."

For Durkheim the "religion" of the Revolution was not the atheistic dissolving of belief that contemporary Conservatives had abhorred, but was, in fact, a variant of the overall species of "religion" that their thinking had in fact adulated, being just as much as Christianity a combination of beliefs and practices which bind human groups together. The value for Durkheim of considering the Revolution is that it reveals phenomena rarely so clearly visible in human affairs:

> We can see society and its essential ideas become the object of an actual cult directly […] Society's capacity to set itself up as a god or to create gods was nowhere more visible than in the first years of the Revolution. In the general enthusiasm of that period, things that were purely secular in nature were transformed by public opinion into sacred things: homeland, liberty, and reason. A religion propelled by its own momentum was established with its dogma, symbols, altars and holidays [*Durkheim 1912: 161*].

The Revolutionary principles of liberty, equality and fraternity were themselves articles of *faith*, as Durkheim noted [*Goldberg 2011*]. For him they were expressions of socially-oriented moral individualism, not the selfish, atomizing individualism loathed by the Conservatives. The Revolutionary principles were intended to become the moral foundations that could keep post-Revolutionary society bound together. It was not only Conservatives who realized that some sort of moral system had to be created to avoid total anarchy. The Revolutionary leaders themselves were aware of such considerations – an issue underplayed in Nisbet's account. From early on in the revolutionary process, they sought to control the crowds in Paris and the provinces through festivals and public rituals [*Censer – Hunt 2005*].

How subsequent European sociological thinkers dealt with the revolutionary crowds fits well enough with Nisbet's narration. For example, Le Bon's infamous reflections on the irrationality of crowds are very much centered upon a negative construal of the

revolutionary waves between 1789 and 1793, leading him to conclude that all revolutions are nothing but irrational crowds with demagogic heads leading them – exactly what the contemporaneous Conservatives thought [*Martindale 1967*]. But if we look at the revolutionary masses through the eyes of more sympathetic observers, or through the eyes of the Revolutionary actors themselves, a different picture emerges. Heilbron [*Heilbron 1995: 117*] captures the sense of possibility well:

> For a while, it looked as if the whole world could be reshaped. Forms of address were changed, and everyone had to say *tu* or *toi*. Streets and cities were given new names, people solemnly shed the names with which they had been baptized, churches were turned into assembly halls or stables […] and there was now a new calendar with ten days to the week and new names for the months. Everything (apparently) reminiscent of the Catholic and feudal past was eradicated. With new names for time and place, the world looked very different indeed.

It is this sense of the Revolutionary crowds that Durkheim [*Durkheim 1912*] found inspiration in. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* weaves together in a complex way Australian aboriginal life and the early days of the Revolution. The common denominator in both is their alleged capacity to reveal the essential components of human social life *per se*. The Revolution is for Durkheim a naturally-occurring experiment in how all societies work.

It may be a time when "people live differently and more intensely than in normal times," such as when "the most mediocre and inoffensive burgher is transformed into a hero or an executioner" [*Durkheim 1912: 158*]. But it also teaches us about the normal functioning of social life too. For example, consideration of the actions of the Revolutionary crowds reveals how "all parties […] deliberately hold periodic meetings in which their members may renew their common faith by some collective demonstration" [*ibid.*]. Durkheim has in mind the oratory of the Revolutionary leaders when he theorizes about the dynamics of group formation and collective effervescence: think of "the special attitude of the man who speaks to a crowd – if he has managed to enter into communion with it […] He feels filled to overflowing with an overabundance of forces that spill out around him […] He is no longer a simple individual speaking, he is a group incarnate" [*ibid.*].

Durkheim also focuses on how the Revolutionary process seeks to do away with the old social coordinates and put new ones in their place. Time, for example, is de-naturalized and made subject to human agency by being revealed to the Revolutionaries – and then to the analyst who studies them – as a social institution, which needs to be reformed through a new calendar with novel time categorizations and new names for them. The old cloak of naturalness is flung off, as a new mode of constructing, then re-naturalizing, time is put into practice: "The divisions into days, weeks, months, years and so on correspond to the recurring cycle of rituals, holidays and public ceremonies. A calendar expresses the rhythm of collective activity while ensuring its regularity" [*Durkheim 1912: 12*].

If Durkheim's sense of "society" (structures, functions, solidarity, etc.) partly comes out of Conservative thought's reaction to the Revolution, as Nisbet says, then his sense of the social creation of the categories by and through which societies operate is directly influenced by the Revolution itself, in its destruction of the old contents of categories like time, and the invention of new contents to fill them up anew. For all the apparent newness of the Revolutionary calendar, and the other social and cultural features and consequences

of the Revolution, they are only novel as *contents*. They do not change the fact that such categories are trans-historical and universal. The Revolution shows that all social and cultural innovations are at the level of cultural content, not social form. The same formal categories (time, space, etc.) and social substances (rituals, collective effervescence, etc.) exist in all societies, and cannot be "revolutionized" *per se*. Only the contents can be radically changed, as the events after 1789 attest. All of the key features of society remain in place – rituals, worship, collective effervescence – even if the contents and objects of those have changed from medieval Christianity and the divine right of Kings, to the new cult of the Citizen Perhaps this is a more deeply "conservative" thought than that held about the Revolution by the Conservatives. They envisaged a disastrous but fundamental and substantive change from the *ancien regime* to the revolutionary society, assuming a radical break between the two. Durkheim, by contrast, seems to discern a fundamental change in the cultural contents of categories before and after 1789, but for him, post-Revolutionary society still has all the same formal properties of pre-revolutionary society. People still worship entities that are thoroughly social in nature and in orientation, they still come together in collective rituals, they still find their bearings through categories like time, the contents of which are socially created, and so on. "Modern" society is *formally* no different from that which pertained in the pre-Revolutionary past, or indeed in Aboriginal Australia. The "break" of 1789 is radical in one way (i.e., culturally), but not at all radical in another (at the level of society's essential properties).

On Continuities, Not Breaks

It is feasible that Durkheim's thinking in this vein was influenced by Tocqueville's [*Tocqueville 2008*] arguments about what he regarded as the *real* nature and consequences of the Revolution. There he offered what was perhaps the first full-blown sociological explanation of the historical events leading up to the Revolution and its aftermath, examining the class relations and structural conditions which together created the conditions of possibility for the Revolution. According to Tocqueville [*Tocqueville 2008: 7*], no nation

> has devoted more effort than the French in 1789 […] to create a gulf between what they had been up to that point, and what they sought to be from then on […] [T]hey adopted all kinds of precautions to avoid carrying anything of their past into the new state […] so as to form an identity quite different from that of their forefathers. […] they neglected nothing, so as to make themselves unrecognizable.

The Revolutionary actors expended much effort to convince themselves that the society they were creating was totally different from the one that the Revolution had supposedly abolished. And yet "unintentionally, they exploited the remnants of the old order to erect the structure of the new order" [*ibid*.]. While invoking the name of liberty, the Revolution led to massive centralization and the great expansion of the State apparatus of the *ancien regime*. This in Tocqueville's view leads to precisely the sort of social atomization and the potential for State despotism which preoccupied Nisbet in the 1940s. A revolt against governmental power thus led to a form of administrative centralization that massively strengthened it. Tocqueville and Durkheim seem to gesture towards a similar point: the Revolution was intended by its leaders to create a radical break with the previous social

order, but it did not. Instead, it greatly expanded elements of the previous society, even if the similarities were denied or ignored by them and their descendants. The issue of *continuities* across time, rather than a massive break between one social order and another, will be returned to below.

According to Aron [*Aron 1972: 206–207*], Tocqueville was also concerned to discern the limits of sociological explanations of the Revolution: "Great events are explained by great causes but […] the details of events are simply events […] not deducible from the structural facts of the society in question." As Moore [*Moore 1966: 108*] put it, "the whole process could have worked itself out very differently." This theme has been taken up again in recent years by Sewell [*Sewel 1999*], who has sought to use the French Revolution as a test case for elaborating "eventful" sociology, which avoids reducing shorter-term events to grand, macro-level structural causes.

It has also been taken up by the French historian Francois Furet [*Furet 1981*; *Furet 1988*], whose work has challenged standard historical accounts of the Revolution, especially Marxist ones, and in so doing has considerable potential for rethinking the French Revolution's relations to sociology. Furet's critical fire is concentrated on the Marxist understanding of the French Revolution as a "bourgeois revolution." This robs the events of the period of their specificity and "eventfulness," and of the possibility of being any different from how they happened to have turned out. The Revolution is reduced to being simply the inevitable conquest of state power by a bourgeoisie already in *de facto* control of French society, which is a radical simplification of the actual, much more complex situation.

For Furet, the Marxist conception also indicates that Marx arbitrarily refused to countenance – in his analysis of the Revolution, and more generally – the possibility of the autonomy of politics from socio-economic structures and the class contradictions of developing capitalism. As MacVarish [*MacVarish 2005: 494*] summarises Furet's points, the notion of "bourgeois revolution" as "an objective break in the continuity of history" reproduces the "subjective" discourse of the Revolution itself. It "makes the Revolution speak the task that history has assigned it […] the task of ushering in capitalism through the agency of the bourgeoisie."

Marx's thinking here bears clear debts to Hegel's understanding of the Revolution as a key staging-post in the unfolding History of the Spirit [*Marcuse 1963*]. For Furet, Marx very unhelpfully conjoins a grand socio-economic account of the causes and consequences of the Revolution, in which its assigned task is to foment the transition from feudalism to capitalism, together with a political narrative of specific and potentially contingent events. The Marxist conception of the Revolution tries to pass off both levels, or modes of narration, as coterminous and parts of the same overall explanatory schema. For Furet, this conflation is precisely what should be avoided. This is not just because the "eventfulness" of events must be rescued from the grand teleological narrative. It is also because the political narrative is faulty too: it is wholly caught up in the Revolution's self-understanding, reflecting the various positions taken by the actors in the events themselves. Rather oddly, the Marxist account of the Revolution as an objective break in history, from feudalism to capitalism, takes the Revolutionaries' self-understandings, centered on creating a wholly new social order, at face value. Their "subjective" apprehension of the radical newness of Revolutionary society is displaced onto, and implicitly made to justify, the alleged newness of the society that Marxism assumes the Revolution has "objectively" created.

Bruno Latour [*Latour 1993*] in the polemical book *We Have Never Been Modern,* which partly takes inspiration from Furet's skepticism about historical breaks, glosses Furet's point thus: the "actors and chroniclers of 1789 used the notion of revolution to understand what was happening to them, and to influence their own fate […] the idea of Revolution led the revolutionaries to take irreversible decisions that they would not have dared take without it." Then, in the 19th and 20th centuries, "the revolutionary reading of the French Revolution […] [was] added to the events of that time […] and has organized historiography since 1789" [*Latour 1993: 41*].

To escape from these various conceptual confusions, Furet recommends developing a "conceptual history" of the Revolution. For Furet, this was already pioneered by Tocqueville, who asked the question which potentially gets us out of these various conceptual muddles: "What if the discourse of a radical break reflects no more than the *illusion* of change?" Or, in Latour's terms, what if the "events of 1789 were no more 'revolutionary' than the modern world has been 'modern'?" [*ibid.*].

Revolution and Conceptual Conflation

A similar note of scepticism is expressed by Wallerstein [*Wallerstein 1987: 320*] when he takes aim at what he regards as the simplistic assumption, widely spread in sociology, that the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries "represent a crucial turning point in the history of the world, in that the capitalists finally achieved state societal power in the key states" of France and England. Wallerstein criticises how too often in sociology simplistic conceptualizations of events called "the French Revolution" and "the Industrial Revolution" (taken to be an "English" innovation) are invoked and then yoked together. The conjunction is itself based on a further assumption, akin to that which Furet had criticised in Marxism: "That capitalism (or its surrogate, individual freedom) had in some sense to 'triumph' at some point within particular states" [*Wallerstein 1987: 321*].

It is assumed, rather than demonstrated, that the two so-called "Revolutions" involved the overcoming of a mismatch between the bourgeoisie's economic dominance and its lack of state power, with the French Revolution solving the problem by making possible and expressing bourgeois capture of State mechanisms, thus creating a new entity, the capitalist state. For Wallerstein, "a remarkably large proportion of world history (writing) has been devoted to these two 'events'," which are in fact dubious concepts rather than real entities or processes, while "an even larger proportion has been devoted to analysing other 'situations' in terms of how they measure up to those two 'events'" [*ibid.*].

This is unsatisfactory for Wallerstein because the terms "French Revolution" (FR) and "Industrial Revolution" (IR) are themselves at best markedly simplifying and are certainly open to question. Their deployment leads to overly schematic formulations, such as: *IR necessitates FR,* and *IR is the consequence of FR* (or *vice versa*), which have unfortunately informed disciplinary common-sense. Confusion develops further when one remembers that the initial term "Industrial Revolution" in turn begat multiple spin-off concepts, such as industrialization as a general process, take-off periods, and suchlike terms, all of which are assumed to be connected to the French Revolution in one way or another, however unclearly specified.

In a similar skeptical vein, Kumar [*Kumar 1986: 46*] reminds us that it was the French thinkers of the early 19th century, such as Saint-Simon, who, "by analogy with their own Revolution of 1789, were the first to hail the [...] (economic) changes (in England) as an 'Industrial Revolution' and to make the influential bracketing of the two as a single, all-embracing, world-historical phenomenon." In other words, what later would be called "modernity" was generated by first inventing the concepts of the two Revolutions, one socio-economic and the other political (but with wide-ranging social consequences), and then conjoining the two, in the process creating a thoroughly "modern" totality of politics, economics and social relations. This was assumed to indicate and embody a thorough break with all elements of the pre-Revolutionary past.

Following Kumar, we can say that this conceptual "invention of modernity" was deeply problematic at various levels. Once socio-economic and political-social processes were rendered into the concepts "French Revolution" and "Industrial Revolution," they were "taken out of the realm of history proper and equipped with the mantle of ideology, or myth [...] (becoming) a rallying cry, a programme for action, a justification" rather than neutral or reliable social scientific categories [*Kumar 1986: 47*]. As a result, the "French Revolution" began to be "seen as but one expression of an overall transforming tendency affecting *all* European societies. It belonged [...] not just to France, but to Europe and indeed the whole world." English socio-economic conditions were likewise transformed into the concept of "Industrial Revolution," which then mutated into the more general term "industrialization" that led in turn to the generic notion "industrial society," and that eventually transmogrified into the even more general term "modern society" [*Kumar 1986: 5–55*].

A further series of conflations were hidden in such generic concepts, while simultaneously making them possible. First, it was often assumed that the apparent egalitarian democracy of the "French Revolution" was "naturally" fitted with the Industrial economic order. This assumption was made because [what were taken to be] the two "Revolutions" were thought to have happened at roughly the same time as each other. But no such connection is either logically or empirically inevitable [*Kumar 1986: 88–89*].

Second, the separable – if empirically interconnected – histories of England (or the UK) and France were initially created as archetypes of each Revolution, and then conjoined in the "modern society" concept. Engels' famous footnote to the *Communist Manifesto* is just one expression of a much broader tendency that renders England paradigmatic of Industrial Revolution and France paradigmatic of Political revolution: "*Generally speaking, for the economic development* of the bourgeoisie, England is taken here as the typical country; for its political development, France.*"

When in both Marxist and non-Marxist forms of sociology, the two archetypes were conjoined, "an ideal bourgeois industrial order" was created. This concept was both unequivocal and ambiguous at the same time. It declared modern society's complete break with a feudal past. Yet, while "modern society" seemed to be expressed "with various degrees of strength and clarity in actual historical societies," it could not "be held to be coterminous with any one society or any precise tract of historical time." It figured rather as "a stage of social evolution, which finds embodiment in particular societies but embraces them just as it itself is comprehended (only) by the overall sequence and logic" of humankind's unfolding general history [*Kumar 1986: 121*]. So, as in the historical schemes of Kant, Hegel, and Marx, the French Revolution came to signify *something else*, something much

bigger and broader than it, usually referred to using a concept involving capital letters, be it Human Reason, the Dialectics of Spirit, the Bourgeois Revolution, or Modern Society.

As Arnason [*Arnason 1989*] has noted, the French Revolution is the most potent symbol of one of the two different imaginaries that were conflated in the idea of "modern society," namely capitalism and industrialism abstracted from the English case, and political changes leading to democratic government, abstracted from the French case. Contemporary social theory and historical sociology have been faced with the choice of unpicking the conflation of the two imaginaries that was carried out in the 19th century. That unpicking can be done in at least two ways. First, by regarding each element as irreducible to the other, but seeing them as inexorably conjoined, such that "modernity" can be defined as involving the tension between the two. Or, second, one might regard each element as totally different from the other, with greatly differing histories [*Wood 1999*], and thus purely contingently related to each other [*Wagner 2008: 80*].

Conclusion

The controversies above will continue to be debated for some time. More generally we can say that the French Revolution has clearly been "good to think with" for intellectuals and polemicists for the last two centuries. Every generation has found in it differing forms of significance. Standard narrations of its significance – including for sociology – spring up and then harden into dogma or common-sense. Therefore, each new generation must challenge those narrations, which is what this paper and the others in this special section have sought to do.

One way to pursue such matters is to follow the lead of James [*James 1939*], which Reed [this volume] alludes to. This involves further developing accounts of how non-white actors from the French Caribbean colonies were actually more centrally and directly involved in the direction of the Revolution than was previously thought. The indirect agency of the rebelling slaves in Haiti, working together with the direct political pressure, regarding the extension of citizen rights to all people regardless of skin colour, exercised on the Parisian revolutionaries by the freed African slaves (*gens de couleur*), meant that the universalization of rights in the early 1790s was as much a "colonial" achievement as one emanating from the metropole [*Go 2013: 47*; *Dubois 2000*]. Recognition of this productively problematizes Eurocentric narrations not only of the Revolution but also of how and by whom sociology was created [*Krause 2016*].

More generally, it seems to me that, in light of what has been surveyed above, that the following questions should be posed in, and to, sociology at the present time:

Has sociology problematically constructed a historical break, between pre-modernity and modernity, which it sees as created – in significant part – by the Revolution? Has such a break taken the French Revolutionaries' claims of the radical newness of the society they were seeking to create at face value? What are we to make of the possible continuities stretching from before to after the Revolution, not just in France but elsewhere in so-called "modernity"? Is the break between "pre-modernity" and "modernity," which the Revolution supposedly signifies and partly makes possible, actually not as dramatically novel as it is often supposed to be?

Interesting answers to those questions are pointed to by the other papers in this special section. Taken together with this paper, they contribute to the current debate about the

need to transcend simplifying "epochal" thinking in sociology, in order to gain more subtle accounts both of what we think "modernity" may be, and of what sociology's multiple relations to its prime analytical object may be [*Inglis 2015*]. It is not too early to tell that the French Revolution continues to be good to think with for those purposes, especially if one thinks against the grain of previously dominant interpretations.

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The French Revolution in Germany and the Origins of Sociology

ERIC R. LYBECK*

Francouzská revoluce v Německu a počátky sociologie

Abstract: The French Revolution was central to the emergence of modern society, and by extension, modern social science. However, not only French scientists contributed to the invention of sociology, nor for that matter did sciences necessarily begin by emulating natural science. Instead, this paper argues for a different origin of sociology from the professional faculty of Law. This trajectory emerged in early nineteenth century Germany, not in emulation of the French Revolution, but as part of a broader conservative reaction to French rationalism and imperial hypocrisy. Understanding these origins not only help us better understand the familiar sociology of Max Weber, or even Marx and Durkheim who were trained in this legal scientific tradition; this historical understanding reveals an important relationship between sociology and the State as well as conservative politics.

Keywords: Germany; Sociology; Law; Legal Science; Civil Service; Weber; Savigny

Introduction

The French Revolution is undoubtedly a central event in the history of modern society, and, consequently, within sociology, the academic discipline occupied with studying modern societies. As Krause [*2016*] notes, the revolution remains one of many "privileged research objects" within the Western sociological canon, particularly within comparative-historical studies of radical social change [*Skocpol 1979*; *Sewell 1985*; *Tilly 1968*; *Moore 1966*]. Particularly in the wake of the Atlanticist historical tradition that emerged in the postwar era [*Palmer 2014*; *Black 2001*; *Haller 2007*], the revolution figures as the origin of several constitutional elements of modern society: popular elections; meritocracy and the removal of inherited privileges; nationalism; and rational, specialized administration.

The French Revolution is also important in sociology's self-conception insofar as sociologists believe sociology was founded as a "science of society" in France [*Nisbet 1952*].[1] In the image of the natural sciences, Auguste Comte claimed to have developed a means of controlling the further progress of society while avoiding the dangers and chaos of the revolution. As Gouldner [*1970*], Therborn [*1976*] and others have suggested, this

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[1] This applies in particular to sociologists in the English-speaking world, or those affected by the Atlanticist redrafting of history, which positioned Germany as having taken a "special path" to *modernity* [*Blackbourn – Eley 1984*]. The same characterization of assumptions may not apply beyond the Anglophone world, as, indeed, the history of German law and German social science is well known and learned in Central Europe, Scandinavia and elsewhere.

positivist vision articulated with the ameliorist agendas of bourgeois, welfare-state capital-ism. Thus, sociology is believed to have been a) born in France, b) modeled on the natural sciences and c) reflective of a bourgeois, progressive ideology.

This paper will suggest that this origin story is only one piece of a more multi-linear story. While the French Revolution undoubtedly triggered the emergence of social science, the result was not necessarily progressive, nor particularly modeled on natural science. For it was within the German professional faculty of Law that the first recognizable science of society was developed in a context of the conservative reaction to the French Revolution.

The French Revolution in Germany

German Hometowns and the Struggle for Jurisdiction

Often non-Germanist scholars assume a rearview projection of what Imperial Ger-many had become by the end of the nineteenth century – chauvinist, statist, and power-ful – and assume this character existed at the beginning of the century. In fact, in 1800, even Prussia could be described as a weak state with a strong bureaucratic military. In Mann's [*2008*] terminology, German states lacked "infrastructural power." Little connec-tion existed between the aristocratic state bureaucracy and the people scattered across the German-speaking lands, including the considerable proportion living within the medi-um-sized "hometowns." Walker [*1998*] recovered the idiosyncrasy of these towns of no more than 10,000 denizens, which stood somewhere between the urban "*Gesellschaft*" and village "*Gemeinschaft*" later denoted by Tönnies [*1988*]. The majority of the Ger-man-speaking population in Central Europe lived in such medium-sized towns.

What the hometowns shared in common was their utter idiosyncrasy and variation, serving as "incubators" for a wide range of local customs, practices, and norms. Legal juris-diction over them was vague, and constantly in flux. Indeed, jurisdiction was the central concern across the Holy Roman Empire. As Crosby notes, "the tradition of local jurisdic-tion had produced immeasurable legal variety in the secular laws of the Empire," consist-ing of overlapping canon law, common law, imperial *ius commune* and local regulations and procedures [*Crosby 2008: 44*]. The professional responsibility of jurists was mainly to know where to find the right jurisdictional authority and the rules through which, for example, Roman law was invoked over imperial law or *vice versa*.

For most of the first half of the second millennium, the application was haphazard and particularistic. During the sixteenth century, however, the lawyer's guilds began asserting the authority of jurists which contributed to an affirmation of Roman law, in particular, the *usus modernus pandectarum* ("modern application of the Roman pandects"), which they were taught in university. In the next century, inspired by the natural law philoso-phies of Johann von Justi and Christian Wolff, who abstractly deduced ideal systems of governance within a logic of "the possible," Enlightened despots in Germany envisaged their kingdoms as interlocking wholes, which could be *organized* as a body politic. This reorientation necessitated greater delegation to civil servants. At Halle and Frankfurt an der Oder (Viadrina), the first chairs of *Kameralwissenschaft* (administrative science) were established in 1727 [*Lindenfeld 1997*; *Tribe 1988*]. Cameralism amounted to Germany's contribution to the modernist shift Marc Raeff has called "the well-ordered police state":

"What emerged into the open in the eighteenth [century] in most of Western and Central Europe is society's conscious desire to maximize all its resources and to use this new potential dynamically for the enlargement and improvement of its way of life" [*Raeff 1975: 1222*].

The results of Cameralist discourse traveled in two directions: first, an observable shift from "*Recht*" to "*Gesetz*," that is: questions of "Right" vs. "Law," capturing a distinction not present in the single English word: "Law." *Gesetz*, in contrast to sovereign Right, was the "lawyer's law" developed by trained jurists to reflect the holistic regulation of the national organism. This led to a second differentiation insofar as *Gesetz* came to refer to the "positive law" of a territory, distinguishable from the earlier conceptualization of *Recht* as derived from the principles of "natural law" (contract), or in earlier periods, "divine right." These important shifts toward lawyer's law and positive law prefigured the more substantial reformulation offered by the historical school after the Revolution but *did not encounter actually-existing societies*.

Rather, the new administrative science encouraged the production of legal "codes," such as the *Allgemeines Landrecht für die Preußischen Staaten* (1794) and the *Allgemeines Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch* (1811) enacted by personalist decree in Prussia and Austria respectively. Codes so derived were quickly deemed inadequate in the face of the diverse range of jurisdictions crisscrossing the Holy Roman Empire. Though a substantial start in the direction of modern jurisprudence, rarely did these decreed codes penetrate the local practices of townsmen in the Holy Roman Empire. This all changed with France's invasion of the Rhineland and the enforced enactment of the Napoleonic Code across the European continent beginning in 1804 with the *Code civil des Français* (1804), followed by the *Code de Procédure civile* (1806), *Code de Commerce* (1807), *Code pénal* (1810) and *Code d'Instruction Criminelle* (1811).

The French Invasion

By the flash of cannon fire, the diverse incubators of the idiosyncratic hometowns now held a single experience in common: imperial domination. Over the course of 10–20 years, burghers choked on the yoke of arbitrary French Rule across the geographic expression that would become a unified Germany. Without adequate military power of their own, unable to resist in the short term, the Germans waited and chafed under new institutions and foreign expectations. Their local reactions filtered up into a common national identity defined against the formalistic coded law of the "enlightened" Revolutionaries.

The earliest German territory to confront the French was the Left Bank of the Rhineland, invaded in 1792 following the battle of Valmy. Formal annexation would follow in 1795, under the geopolitical premise that France needed a territorial buffer between herself and her enemies. Though the French Revolution professed the ideals *liberté, égalité, et fraternité*, the military occupation produced a contradiction between these ideals and the practice of a military occupation. Lack of finances led to the order for militaries to live off the land, which led to enforced payments by levy and the requisition of food and livestock. Soldiers, especially officers who demanded luxuries in a time of scarcity, engaged in various abuses that could not be controlled remotely by the Paris authorities. Corruption and economic disruption led the region into deprivation. As Blanning notes, "during that

terrible decade (1792–1801), monetary chaos, military expropriation, commercial disruption, and deindustrialization wiped out the considerable advances of the previous three or four decades" [*Blanning 1983: 165–166*].

While twentieth-century historiography highlighted the vigorous welcome the "German Jacobins" expressed upon hearing of the storming of the Bastille, as Blanning put it, "if a state as repellent as National Socialist Germany could find quislings to do its evil work, it is not surprising that revolutionary France should have attracted collaborators" [*Blanning 1983: 13*]. In fact, the overwhelming majority of Germans detested the French incursion, especially as religion became threatened. As the French expropriated Church lands, they directly interfered with religious doctrine. The clergy and laity soon began active resistance to the "godless" French. The German Jacobins realized their ideals diverged from French propaganda declaring participatory politics, egalitarianism, and collectivism when they were themselves ostracised and repressed by the French authorities. This reactionary fervor bled into a novel, emergent nationalism – a sense of being German in contradistinction to the French. People did not necessarily want a German state; they just did not want a French one.

French rule in the Rhineland soon led to the collapse of law and order. Criminals such as Schinderhannes, the "Slicer," and the goatriders (*Bockreiter*) preyed on Jews and others while squatting in the Left Bank woods, stealing much-needed firewood. These German Robin Hoods demonstrated to the French that the intruders were incapable of governing. The early atrocities and mismanagement under the protectorate cleared the way for toleration of a lesser evil when Napoleon ascended to the head of state, reinstating certain *ancien regime* values and estate categories. The acute struggle between the French, German Jacobins, and Rhenish counter-revolution in the 1790s was followed by an earnest attempt to integrate the Rhineland into the French Empire through a give-and-take process [*Rowe 2003*]. This led to a synthesis between the traditional layers of jurisdiction characteristic of the pre-Revolutionary period, with accommodation to the French on the matters that mattered most to the Empire: conscription and taxation.

Rather than attempt to "Frenchify" the Rhineland through language and education, Napoleon introduced festivals and heraldry valorizing "the Empire" rather than "France" and encourage a Bonaparte personality cult. By the end of the empire, the Rhineland had not only accommodated imperial institutions but learned to depend on them in their next struggle against the incursion of Prussia domination following the Congress of Vienna in 1814.

German Nationalism

Just as French officials sent by the early provisional government to the Rhineland were not taken seriously until they proved they were a power that was going to stick, the Prussians needed to demonstrate their durability and willingness to adapt to local environments. The structure of centralized bureaucracy inhibited this very interaction since the incoming official sent from Paris or Berlin was unfamiliar with local customs. The need to simplify regulations for administrative purposes – what Chancellor Hardenberg called "purification" – necessitated stripping the complex particularity of the alien territory into centrally recognized categories [*Walker 1998: 200*].

Yet, this was precisely what the hometown men sought to preserve, for they regulated and defended their jurisdictional sovereignty through this traditional, customary order. Just as they had always done within the Holy Roman Empire, burghers slowed the processes of change down to adapt to the new language and expectations of the incoming regime. In the Rhineland, ironically, this meant affirmation of the Napoleonic Code and French imperial institutions against the Prussians, for they had already survived twenty years of accommodation and negotiation to one "enlightened" despotism and were in no mood for a second course.

The French Revolution and the Napoleonic rule also greatly affected Germany beyond the Rhineland, especially following the rearrangement of territory which abolished the Holy Roman Empire and reduced member states from 360 to 36. Relative to the annexed Rhenish Left Bank, French exploitation throughout the Confederation was less direct but still substantial. There were three major aspects of French exactions: provisions, money, and men. Imperial demands forced many regions to industrialize under pressure, and German states had to update antiquated political structures through radical, top-down reform enacted by elites. Corporate privileges were attacked, and bureaucracies bulged, asserting state sovereignty within their borders through administrative centralization, division by departments, and hierarchical chains of command. Though always partial, these measures curbed local autonomy while undermining the foundations of the old order.

Following the humiliating defeat at Jena in 1806, Prussian generals were the first to reorganize themselves, even as the monarch, Frederick William III retreated to Königsberg and submitted to Napoleon's dictates. The young officer, Clausewitz, observed the French had channeled the nationalist fervor of an entire society into the war, producing not only the largest military fielded in Europe up to that time but better soldiers and a new cult of military personality [*Black 2009*]. To succeed in future conflicts, the German states must respond in kind, mustering the strength and passion of the Nation.

Clausewitz' superiors included the like-minded generals Gneisenau and Scharnhorst who recommended military strategies which recognized and defended the *Volk* as being distinct from the skittish monarch. The Prussian king soon conceded to the emerging nationalist spirit, recognizing the utility of the language of freedom and unity injected by France into Continental discourse. On the other hand, he personally sympathized with the forces of reaction emanating from Austria in the post-Napoleonic era. Under Metternich, Austria would restore the Old Regime monarchies and quell all traces of nationalist and radical political agitation. Prussia came to embody the new German spirit of nationalism, in part due to the greater efforts of civil servants to modernize the state, while channeling the emerging public consciousness. An axial tension would develop, which pitted notions of a smaller "*Kleindeutsch*" Germany containing Protestant Prussia and the so-called "third Germany," consisting of the states rolled over from the Confederation of the Rhine to the German Confederation, against the "*Grossdeutsch*" solution which would include the German-speaking parts of the multi-ethnic, majority Catholic Habsburg Empire.

The German national spirit emerged as a common response to the arbitrary rule of the French Empire in the ex-Holy Roman Empire, inspired by the resistance of local heroes, wilful generals and the Romantic Idealism of Herder, Hegel, Fichte, and their compatriots. But, only to the extent this vague Romantic vision was institutionalized within the Prussian state bureaucracy did the movement to position Germany as the leader of global

civilization become manifest. As will be seen, the "bourgeois aristocratic" ethic of ministers Stein, Hardenberg, Humbolt, Gneisenau and their peers drew upon an earlier political philosophy scattered across Immanuel Kant's writings.

The Birth of the Modern University

The Conflict of the Faculties

Kant's political vision connected philosophical idealism to the interests of the modernizing state reformers. Levinger describes this as follows:

> Kant was an advocate of the tutelary state: he believed that the government had a duty to educate its people for citizenship. He considered monarchy to be an imperfect form of government but one that would serve to represent the interests of the people until such time as the people had shed the shackles of irrationality and subservience [*Levinger 2000: 35*].

The German response to the rupture of the French Revolution was a reformist one, "top-down" only to the extent that the people were presently immature and unready to become autonomous. At the same time, to combat the French in the future, the nation must modernize and channel the productive strength of the nation, just as the cameralists recommended. The solution to this problem was education [*Loader – Kettler 2002: 7–46*].

Kant's "third way" between radical democratic revolution and monarchist reaction is rarely sufficiently understood by social scientists and historians, who attribute Germany's "special path" to modernity to a retrenched, backward estate-led "feudalization" [*Blackbourn – Eley 1984*; *Steinmetz 1997*]. However, to suggest the German people were preconditioned to arbitrary, centralized rule presupposes that a) centralized rule actually succeeded, and that b) the people and the state did not intentionally preserve medieval institutions because these were deemed more suited for social development.

In fact, the central institution rallied in support of the civil service reform "from above" was not the military or the industrial factory – though each had their parts to play. Rather, according to Kant's formula, the institution which would lead the German people and the human race toward perpetual peace and the pinnacle of civilization was the medieval guild *par excellence*: the university.

In the thirteenth century, medieval universities emerged out of guilds of students and teachers and were training centers for clergy, separated into three professional, or "higher" faculties of Theology, Law, and Medicine [*Burke 2000: 82–99*]. As the only literate society, the university-trained clergy became advisors to the leaders of the secular powers, and tutors to their children. By the eighteenth century, the medieval status differentiation of the three professional faculties remained, with Theology at the top, followed by Law, then Medicine. The philosophical faculty of liberal arts taught the lower *trivium* of grammar, logic, and rhetoric, and the higher *quadrivium* consisting of arithmetic (number), geometry (number in space), music (number in time) and astronomy (number in space and time) [*Durkheim 2013*]. Teaching in the liberal arts was of a lower order, and philosophers remained on the level with Masters of Music. On the one hand, this meant that philosophers indeed covered "all parts of human knowledge," as Kant would claim. However, unlike scholars in Law, Theology or Medicine, philosophers were not allowed the title of

"Doctor." This meant that attempts to innovate in the realm of philosophy – moral, natural or political – were regularly censored by the Legal and Theological faculties.

Kant's "anthropological" texts were denied publication in this way, leading the philosopher to write *Der Streit der Fakultäten* (The Conflict of the Faculties), an appeal addressed directly to the monarch in the hopes of circumventing the censorship of the higher faculties [*Kant 1992*]. He argued that, unlike the "businessmen" (*Geschäftsleute*) of the higher faculties, philosophy was unconstrained by practical interests. Unbound by the directives of external power, philosophers were able to criticize the higher faculties according to the free judgment of "Reason." The university and state should recognize this value and give the philosophical faculty the autonomy to fulfill its critical mission:

> The jurist, as an authority on the text, does not look to his reason for the laws that secure the Mine and Thine, but to the code of laws that has been publicly promulgated and sanctioned by the highest authority (if, as he should, he acts as a civil servant). To require him to prove the truth of these laws and their conformity with right, or to defend them against reason's objections, would be unfair. For these decrees first determine what is right, and the jurist must straightaway dismiss as nonsense the further question of whether the decrees themselves are right [*Kant 1992: 40–42*].

Philosophers could look beyond the law of the land as it is, to address what it *could* be in the future. The future holds the promise of cosmopolitan freedom – the end of the war – provided a reasoned constitution was constructed and ethically embodied in civic action [*Kant 1784, 1939*].

But, at present, we could only know that the law was being followed, not whether the law was infused with conscious moral spirit. Until we can be sure the people were properly educated, these constitutional reforms should be "from top to bottom" rather than "from bottom to top" [*Kant 1992: 167*]. Since the masses could hardly read at this stage, philosophy needn't address the "public" in its publications. Rather, the "free professors of law" in philosophy should resolve conflicts between the three higher faculties (by which Kant meant conflicts between Theology and Law, since his critique of Medicine involved only his eyeglass prescription). This did not imply freedom of speech for all, but rather a retrenchment of the authority of professors to interpret natural and social rights according to the principles of republican government, treating "the people according to the principles which are commensurate with the spirit of libertarian laws […] although they would not be literally canvassed for their consent" [*Kant 1992: 165*].

The ascendance of the more "bourgeois" Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm III in 1797 enabled the publication of Kant's tract, but it was not until the king sought counsel from his enlightened ministers, Stein and Hardenberg, that Kant's vision of philosophical autonomy was institutionalized at the University of Berlin in 1810, the first institution to award a Ph.D. in philosophy. The Stein and Hardenberg Reforms, as they are collectively known, responded to the pressures emanating from, or in reaction to Napoleon's Continental System. This necessitated flexibility in terms of both the natural law and theological justifications for the existing legal framework. According to Kant's planned outline for a new faculty consisting of "free professors of law," a counterweight to the entrenched authority of jurists could be drawn upon without disrupting the authority of education the ministers themselves drew upon to gain the king's confidence. In other words, the ascendance of the

philosophical faculty to the rank of "doctor" should be understood, in context, as *a demotion of the legal and theological faculties.*

Toward an Educated Civil Service

Drawing on their cameralist pedigree, the aristocratic ministers encouraged legislation that would eliminate inefficient privileges and monopolies. These initial reforms were culminations of goals set during the absolutist period; however, their rapid unfurling in the context of the French imperial domination invoked a severe reaction of the traditional estates. Over time, however, nobles learned to translate their particularistic concerns into the emerging language of German nationalism – a discursive achievement which turned Prussian Junkers and their military into the bedrock of the German nation. Indeed, the military was the one realm of the civil service in which the traditional aristocracy preserved its autonomous authority. Their military academies contributed to the rapid remobilization and expansive armament and rationalization of the Prussian army in the coming century. As a sign of their independence, aristocratic military academies were the only educational institution training civil servants not contained within the new university.

It is striking that as guild privileges were dismantled across Germany, the medieval institution of the university retained its position, even as France established the specialized schools that became the *grandes écoles.* The French Revolution in Germany had dismantled and expropriated Church property, which removed the fiscal and authoritative basis for universities. So why did the State opt to revive, restore, and reform these decaying medieval husks?

Initially, German states could not afford to construct new institutions on the scale of the French écoles from scratch while paying reparations to Pari*s* [*Anderson 2004*]. The convenient solution was a resuscitation of the dismantled and/or decadent universities, which had buildings, faculties, libraries, and so forth; and, being broke, the universities would welcome the resources the state offered in exchange for preservation of academic guild privileges and cash salaries. Salaries and legal titles made professors bureaucratic appointees of the State and replaced the hand-to-mouth household economies academics scraped from church property and their right to collect tutorial fees from students in their homes [*Clark 2006*].

But why recommit to the "unity of knowledge" and the medieval values of the academic guild? Ben-David suggests that scholars themselves recommitted to the "Humboldtian ideals" of student and academic freedom, stating: "occupational groups aspiring to professional status played no role in the movement" to reform universities [*Ben-David 1977: 19*]. This analysis only applies if one excludes the state civil service as a non-professional group. In fact, the bureaucrat, Stein, appointed the independently wealthy philologist, Humboldt, to the first directorship of the *Ministerium der geistlichen, Unterrichts- und Medizinalangelegenheiten* (Department of Spiritual, Education and Medicinal Affairs) in 1808. Humboldt never taught at the university, and his role was as administrator.

Beyond the civil service, precisely due to the rapid abolition of all other guild privileges, every German burgher was thrown into the same situation aristocrats had slowly adapted to during the previous century of bureaucratic reform [*Hintze 1975*; *Rosenberg 1958*]. That is, to preserve one's privileged position in society, one now had to demonstrate one's

superior technical, moral and historical knowledge. The only route of access for burghers seeking status recognition was via the State, achievable either through military service or higher education. In this way, education became a marker of distinction in general, as, indeed, remained the case in Germany until well into the twentieth century [*Münch 1992*].

After the *Freiheitskrieg*, university graduates enjoyed special privileges, including deferral of military conscription from the infantry to the reserve (*Landwehr*) [*Frevert 2004*]. Professors became civil servants, and state bureaucracies began requiring passage of examinations, especially within Law, which necessitated increasingly advanced university education. Soon a discernible "*Bildungsbürgertum*" (educated bourgeoisie) became visible. As Kaschuba writes, "on the one hand, there was the narrower interest in educational and career qualification; but there was also a recognition of the special value of the 'culture of the educated' which functioned as a kind of bourgeois *passe-partout*, the absence of which could not be fully compensated for by either wealth or career qualifications" [*Kocka – Mitchell 1993: 410*].

Indeed, the educated middle class was *the ultimate goal* of modernizing reformers in early nineteenth century Germany. Just as Gneisenau and Scharnhorst sought to capture the nationalist spirit of the people to maximize the power of the state, so did the Prussian civil service seek to channel and engender a spirit of nationalism within the public, especially the bureaucracy itself. As Nipperdey explains,

> the Prussian reform movement was deeply influenced by philosophy; it was an idealistic and moralistic movement. This went beyond rhetoric, tone or superstructure, it also characterized its concrete goals […] In the realm of political ideas and morality, reform centers on autonomy and responsibility; it seeks a neuer Mensch, a "reborn," a "refined" human being. This new man was not only the goal of the reforms; he was needed to carry them out. In this respect, it was much more than an institutional reform; it was, in the widest sense, an educational reform [*Nipperdey 1998: 22*].

In sum: the Kantian "third way" between revolution (France) and reaction (Old Regime) was political reform *via* education (*Bildung*).

The pinnacle of this modern system of education was the new University of Berlin: the fount of this *neuer Mensch* through which the German nation would become united in *Geist*, *Kultur*, and *Bildung*. Most historians agree that Stein and Hardenberg's "revolution from above" was at best "incomplete" or "stalled" after Waterloo and the immediate need for reform subsided. Yet, the University of Berlin remained an enduring legacy of the Kantian vision of advanced scholarship informing the modernizing civil service. As the first to offer the doctorate in philosophy, the university directed scholars toward basic research, dissertation writing, and the pursuit of "excellence." Many, though not all German universities, strove to replicate the Berlin model. In Prussia, Baden, Bavaria, Hanover, Hesse, Austria, and other Central European states, universities became admired institutions. The commitment of the *Bildungsbürgertum* likewise grew, creating a considerable market for academic publications, which further supplemented modern professors' stable incomes. Soon, Germany would lead the world in scientific and philosophical knowledge.

Undoubtedly the first conferral of the doctorate of philosophy at the University was an important, indeed, a pivotal step contributing to the emergence of the modern academic profession. However, Kant's struggle against the higher faculties was by no means settled with the stroke of a pen. Rather, the professional faculties continued to evolve in response

to the new threat posed by philosophical knowledge and the epistemological turn. This reaction, however, was not rooted in the rationalist Enlightenment vision of Kant's original formulation; rather, all four faculties, including Philosophy, opted instead for the Romantic historicism of Herder, Hegel, Schelling, and Möser. The institutional structure remained, and doctorates of philosophy continued to be conferred. But, in practice, the progressive, Enlightenment vision of a tutelary state composed of enlightened civil ministers advising philosopher kings became sublimated into a conservative historicism: the reestablishment of authority within the new language of education, nationalism, and duty.

The Institutionalization of Historical Legal Science

Historicism and Anti-codification

Though only 24 years old in 1804, Friedrich Carl von Savigny had already secured his reputation with his 500-page volume, *Das Recht des Besitzes* (The Law of Possession), published the previous year [*Savigny 1848*]. A technical treatise on the differences between possession and property, in both Law and Fact, the text was an application of Savigny's developing a three-fold methodological approach to jurisprudence: as interpretation, history, and system. Savigny moved beyond the theoreticians of natural law, but equally transcended the practical juridical work of scholars who tracked down existing statutes in this or that Roman code to apply to a particular case and move on. In developing a mode of study which actually looked at original manuscripts and documents, while at the same time developing a consciousness of the entire period, Savigny was participating in a new, realistic legal science as recommended by the likes of Möser and Hugo [*Mannheim 1986*; *Reimann 1989*].

When Stein and Humboldt constructed the new University of Berlin in 1810, desiring the best researchers to steer the country into modernity, they called upon Savigny to lead the legal faculty. He agreed, provided training would cover Roman law and explicitly not the new Prussian legal code (ALR). The first cohort of chairs, which included Savigny in law, Niebuhr in history, Schleiermacher in theology, and Hufeland and Reil in medicine, would go on to become standard bearers in their respective disciplines. Each organized themselves around the new historicism [*Ziolkowski 2004*]. Though twentieth-century social theorists tend to credit Hegel with expressing the conservative spirit of 1810 [*King – Szelenyi 2004*; *Marcuse 1941*], this misrecognition results from the relative similarity of the historicist tradition developed by Savigny, Niebuhr, Schleiermacher, and others at the University of Berlin. The common origin was, in fact, Herder's conception of the *Volksgeist* [*Iggers 1983*; *Lybeck 2015*].

Importantly, since the legal faculty was responsible for the professional education of the civil service, Savigny's historicism was directly engendered in practice. The new German legal scientists came to distrust the abstract philosophy of natural law, which they saw embodied in the Hegelian school of philosophy – armchair philosophers, talking about history without performing the necessary labor of digging through archival manuscripts. Of the two Berlin academics, the jurist and the philosopher, Savigny offered a more radical *methodological* break with Enlightenment trends toward natural law, pointing instead to the necessity of historical research and particularistic, empirical observation.

The novelty of Savigny's approach – paradoxically "modern" despite reaffirming the pedantic study of Roman antiquities – was that as he professed, in order to understand the *usus modernus*, the Roman Law as it is applied today, we must first understand the Roman law in its original context. Then, we must understand the centuries through which the Roman law has traveled and been adapted. Hence, his magnum opus is titled "The Roman Law *in the Middle Ages.*" The Emperor Justinian and his jurists organized the Codex for particular purposes and codified existing practices at the time of writing, circa 530 CE. Meanwhile, in the course of the Law's development, these statutes have been adapted to newer needs of the Germanic peoples during the feudal, absolutist, and now, revolutionary periods. To adequately understand the significance of contemporary law, the jurist must understand its original basis as well as the particular, historical adaptations wherein those original bases no longer apply in whole.

> A twofold spirit is indispensable to the jurist; the historical, to seize with readiness the peculiarities of every age and every form of law; and the systematic, to view every notion and every rule in lively connection and cooperation with the whole, that is, in the only true and natural relation [*Savigny 1831: 64*].

Savigny thus distinguishes two ontological entities: the "system" and the "*Geist*" of the people (*Volk*). A single true and natural relation exists organically between the two. The discursive effect, on the one hand, grounds the authority, back of the law, in the people and tradition.

> In the earliest times to which authentic history extends, the law will be found to have already attained a fixed character, peculiar to the people, like their language, manners, and constitution. Nay, these phenomena have no separate existence […] That which binds them into one whole is the common conviction of the people, the kindred consciousness of an inward necessity, excluding all notions of an accidental and arbitrary origin [*Savigny 1831: 24*].

However, there are many instances in which superficial understandings and the manifold nature of Law converted truth into error and *vice versa*, when "the error merely consists in the concrete being conceived too generally, or the really general too concretely" [*Savigny 1867: xviii*]. The role of the legal sciences was, therefore, to engender a professional analytic capacity within the student – especially judges, but also civil servants.

To train these jurists effectively, Savigny developed a stage model of successive Ages to explain the emergence of an autonomous legal system and thereby to encourage recognition of the role of jurisprudence in society. In its early, primitive forms, the law was the product of the customs of the people, working through "silently operating powers." As these become more complex, a stratum emerges to simplify the relationships between legal principles and case particulars, including sovereign rules. The law comes to exhibit two elements, one "political" – that is, the retained *Geist* of the people – and a second "technical" dimension emerges from the work of the educated jurists. In this more advanced stage, the law becomes that of experts trained in legal science.

> The jurists now become more and more a distinct class of this kind; law perfects its language, takes a scientific direction, and, as formerly it existed in the consciousness of the community, it now devolves upon the jurists, who thus, in this department, represent the community. Law is

henceforth more artificial and complex since it has a twofold life; first as part of the aggregate existence of the community […], and secondly, as a distinct branch of knowledge in the hands of jurists [*Savigny 1831: 29*].

Recognizing the actual role of jurisprudence in the social process contributed to Savigny's criticism of hasty legal codification, both the French civil codes and the ones now proposed by Germans, most prominently Anton Friedrich Thibaut. Savigny's short pamphlet *Vom Beruf unserer Zeit für Gesetzgebung and Rechtswissenschaft* (On the Vocation of our Age for Legislation) was written in 1814 as a response to Thibaut's "philosophical school," which sought to identify a "law of reason" based on deductive logic. In contrast to the formalism of Thibaut's proposed new categorization, identification, and codification of positive law into a single logical system, Savigny insisted that not enough was known of the cultural "spirit" of the German people. Without precluding the possibility of codification in the future, the task of realistic historical jurisprudence managed by trained legal scientists was a necessary precondition for successful legislation.

Savigny distinguishes two potential sources of legal change: first, legislation and second, simplification of the complexity of existing custom. The new codes seek to impose by decree a holistic replacement, a gapless system constructed according to rational deduction, without reference to existing custom. He cites the hated Napoleonic Code, which annihilated a great part of the law from "a blind impulse against everything established, and with extravagant senseless expectations of an undefined future" [*Savigny 1831: 71*]. The code was neoclassically modeled on the ambition of the Roman code but filled in with new revolutionary principles. The code was not developed through legislation; rather the articles were largely consolidated out of the textbooks of a single jurist: Robert Joseph Pothier, whose contribution Savigny estimates to be at least three-fourths. This means the selection of subjects the code touched upon were those reflected in out-moded jurisprudential teaching, leading to substantial defects when the taken-for-granted detail of, for example, Roman property regulation was simplified and left without description – a "dead spiritless mode of treating the law" [*Savigny 1831: 41*]. Thus, perhaps the most important everyday legal needs, including property and marital law, were barely addressed by the new code, meaning most legal concerns were pushed onto the arbitrary discretion of judges. In other words, the procedure paradoxically produced the opposite of clarification, because it failed to adequately address the mechanisms and practices through which legal principles translate into judgments.

Savigny's critique of French codes echoed the emergent conservative critique of knowledgeable elites from a more elitist position. Problems in society and politics were not the inefficiency or unjustness of the *status quo*, but the meddling of know-it-alls without adequate experience to wield sovereignty. Burke, for example, chided the French National Assembly by noting the overwhelming membership of common lawyers, "the inferior, unlearned, mechanical, merely instrumental members of the profession."

It must evidently produce the consequences of supreme authority placed in the hands of men not taught to habitually respect themselves, who had no previous fortune in character at stake; who could not be expected to bear with moderation, or to conduct with discretion, a power which they themselves, more than any others, must be surprised [*sic*] to find in their hands [*Burke 1982: 130*].

Savigny extended this condescending observation to the whole of European civilization, Germany notwithstanding. Citing Bacon's recommendation that codes should not be undertaken unless a civilization's culture and knowledge surpasses that of the previous epoch, he noted that few ages meet these standards. Only during the "middle period" of a Nation's history – the summit of its civilization – should jurists try to pull off a code. Yet, this high watermark is precisely when no code is necessary. Even the great Roman code only became necessary during the fall of the Empire amidst corruption and intellectual death. Many inadequate codes were produced then, including the Edict of Theoderic, the Breviarium of Alaric, the Responsiones of Papiani (*Lex Romana Burgundionum*), and so on. The Justinian code was retained since it alone reflected the high standards of jurists trained in Roman legal science passed down since the Republic. Rooted in Republican freedom, the Justinian code retained the flexibility to allow a progressive element in organic unity with the permanent. This judicious spirit was embodied in the Codex, carrying it through many iterations and adaptations during the Middle Ages. Meanwhile, in the present era, French orators proclaim the Justinian Code obsolete and their own prefabricated expression to be perfect.

Thibaut, in Germany, now sought to do the same. Yet, "if we consider our actual condition, we find ourselves in the midst of an immense mass of juridical notions and theories which have descended, and been multiplied, from generation to generation. At present, we do not possess and master this matter but are controlled and mastered by it, whether we will see it or not" [*Savigny 1831: 131*]. The Germans could not begin a Code from scratch until the jurists cleared themselves of existing legal impressions. Even the suggestion that we could begin from scratch is absurd.

What, then, is to be done? In his appendix to the pamphlet, Savigny does not deny the possibility of legal codification many, many decades from now – perhaps, when Germany has fulfilled its promise as the new leader of Western civilization. For now, all scholars should do is prepare the way, ensuring that their knowledge of historical material and means of interpretation were sufficient. German jurists could generate a comprehensive manual (*Handbuch*), consisting of Positive Law, as well as History, Science, Literature, Theories, and Speculations. No individual jurist could be capable of producing this alone, so the project would require the cooperation of all "who have an inward call (*Beruf*) for the undertaking" [*Savigny 1831: 184*].

The significance of Savigny's vision was not limited to the legal faculties, however, if we recall the Kantian structure of the University of Berlin, where philosophers would contribute as "free professors of law," criticizing and updating the law in accordance with libertarian and cosmopolitan principles. Savigny, with one hand, denies this possibility and *reasserts the authority of jurists*. With the other, he extends the cooperative possibility of participation in a nation-building project – a *Handbuch* which will gather all the relevant material upon which the coming high point of civilization will rely. One can observe a delegation of a function, especially to the historical and philological faculties – with Niebuhr representing the former, and Buttmann, the grammarian, representing the latter at the University of Berlin. Meanwhile, as the Berlin university model was rapidly adopted across the German Confederation, novel disciplinary emergences in the fields of archaeology, Classics, and the earliest iterations of social science became visible in the work of the Germanist faction of the historical school Savigny called into being.

Germanists and Romanists

Savigny's 1814 pamphlet demolished the codification project from the ground up; a project that would not resume for several decades. In the wake of his anti-codification triumph – which, like conservative agendas, in general, had the practical advantage of compelling subjects not to change – Savigny summoned the German historical school into existence. In 1815, with Karl Eichhorn and Johann Göschen, he founded the *Zeitschrift für geschichtliche Rechtswissenschaft* (ZGR), the journal which would become the institutional locus of the school. In addition to the founders, Jacob Grimm, Savigny's assistant, who had by then established his reputation as the leading scholar in German legal antiquarianism, was a frequent contributor.

Nearly as soon the journal was founded, a split developed between the so-called "Germanists" and "Romanists." The division reflected a dual partitioning; on the one hand, as a matter of technical need: one group of scholars dug deeper and deeper into the Roman history Niebuhr and his disciples uncovered year by year. Another group, represented by Grimm, Eichhorn and the Germanists, dedicated their attention to the particularities of the German "*Gemeinwesen*" (Commonwealth). The term referred to an ideal civil community, which supposedly actually existed at some point in the German past. Their task was to uncover the scattered, fragmentary evidence of what this traditional, medieval, ideal community consisted. Their results, incidentally, mirrored the constitution of the bygone hometowns, and the image of the *Gemeinwesen* emphasized a republican form of self-government consisting of equal *bürgerliche* citizens, contrasted against the absolutist centralized state.

The emphasis on municipal self-governance points to a second important distinction splitting the German historical school according to politics, which did not necessarily map directly onto the division of labor between Germanists and Romanists. In fact, each preferred "republican" to "imperial" topics, representing the latter in a negative light. The Germanist tradition focused on private law, and, in particular, a historical reformulation of property law according to the municipal constitutions of the Hanse cities, with the goal of maximizing the public freedom of citizens (and capital).

Yet, as Crosby [*Crosby 2008: 116*] notes, this commonwealth of equals was limited exclusively to property-holding men and excluded women who had previously participated and were legally recognized across many German lands. Similarly, outgroups, especially Jews, were deemed disqualified from suffrage and full legal rights due to their historic exclusion in the German *Gemeinwesen*, in spite of (or, more precisely, *because* of) the recent partial emancipation of Jewish citizens from 1812–1815.

The politicized dimension of the historical school incorporated a selective use of history to justify present interests. The Germanists' proto-racialized, anti-Semitism connected with the nationalist egalitarianism of Father Jahn and the *Turnbewegung* as well as the reaction of the hometown men to the liquidation of traditional rights. Though retaining the rhetoric of Hugo's "value-neutral" description of historical facts, the historical school justified their own contemporary political goals. By 1819, the political agenda of national liberalism was drawn squarely into the legal scholarship published in the ZGR due to a new wave of censorship.

In the early days of the nineteenth century, nationalism was certainly not the ideology of conservative reactionaries; academics were heavily censored following the Carlsbad Decrees of 1819. The ascendant Romantic national liberalism, rooting freedom in history, rather than progress, struggled against the absolutist reactionaries led by Metternich and enforced by state police. Governments isolated the threat to order in the university, especially the nationalistic student societies.

Intensive censorship meant that the blooming national Republican political ideals of the revolutionary generation – which had ten years prior, been encouraged by the enlightened reforms seeking to modernize the state – now had to be smuggled into the arcana of Roman and German history [*Ohles 1992*]. Since censorship applied to works under a certain length, the voluminous texts produced by jurists often read as though they were intentionally boring; then, 250 pages or so in, the authors would begin radically charged assertions about the way Germany has always been "free" and will become so again. Only those aware of the internal conversation occurring within the legal, scientific disciplines realized the extent to which jurists were not only studying the law of the Roman Republic and speculating over the customary law of the German moot in the mists of the Black Forest; *they were constructing a new constitutional framework*.

Consider the Grimm Brothers' work on fairy tales: early on, the brothers turned from Savigny's study of Roman texts toward the more promising realm of Epics and *Märchen* (Fairy Tales). The Grimms invested themselves in the latent spirit of the people, which disclosed itself upon analytic elimination of cultural particularities. Only the artificial separation of the political boundaries across German-speaking states limited this recognition. For, the spirit is already present, the common folk have learned the same fundamental principles since the beginning of history from sagas, poetry and fairy tales. This common spirit provided the unity upon which a new legal order would be established.

Their project became increasingly philological, drawing on Herder and Humboldt's theories regarding the formative effect of language on human consciousness. Yet, the connection to Savigny's legal science remained. By examining the language and myth of the *Volk*, the Grimm brothers directly encountered the original source of the law. Understanding the morals of children's stories provided access to the morality of the people from which laws and customs emerged historically. For example, Grimm traced the legal concept of *Lösegeld* (compensation in tort claims) to the archaic form of the word "otter," thereby connecting to a story of a hunter who infringes upon the property rights of a farmer whose son had transformed into an otter [*Crosby 2008: 112*]. Similarly, the familiar Cinderella story of the glass slipper should be understood in terms of the custom of the groom fitting a shoe on his virgin bride as a symbol of property ownership exhibited before the community. In the context of anti-liberal censorship, Grimm and his legal, scientific colleagues sought enshrinement of these traditional customs in the rapidly rationalizing German legal apparatus, which they perceived as venal and arbitrary in contrast to the organic unity of the common German national spirit.

However, by 1848, amongst educated radical youth, Savigny and the Romanist school were considered the pinnacle of conservative thought. These were the sycophantic civil servants justifying the non-development of Prussian state and the continued fragmentation of the German nation. This tension played itself out within the Germanist jurisprudential

literature. Georg Beseler, for example, wrote in 1836, that Roman law was constructed by an empire without freedom, whereas German law stood for liberty and the common good.

> Equal, individual, free Germans, as members of an association (Genossenschaft), a family, had built the system through the complete public nature of the assemblies and courts. […] The people were the sole source of their laws, and judges and lay judges constituted living control of the justice system. The German law was the law of the people (Volksrecht) in the fullest sense of the word, applied through the natural organ of the public people's courts, whereas Roman law was derived from a monarchy in the hands of the Emperor and his jurists! [*Crosby 2008: 122*].

By the thirties, one can see the hated forces of reaction projected onto the Romans (and Catholics). By extension, this denunciation adhered to the Romanist school of Savigny and his disciplines. The "Emperor" became a stand-in for the Habsburg nexus of European reaction in Vienna; freedom came to be embodied in the Germanist jurists retaining the customary law.

At the same time, the philological theories and comparative linguistics of Grimm, Schlegel, Bopp, and others marked a historical distinction which set the course for nineteenth-century anthropology, political science, law, and literature. Prior to the early nineteenth century, scholars assumed that all human languages derived from the original human tongue: Hebrew. But archaeological, historical and philological discoveries led to the identification of two distinct grammatical structures: Semitic and Indo-Aryan. Soon, the linguistic identification of Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, Persian, Germanic and Celtic languages was connected to a geographic origin in modern day Iran. The first linguistic "law," called "Grimm's Law," noted a non-trivial change in consonants that distinguished proto-Germanic languages from Romance languages.

At this time, the connection led to an affirmation of Christianity via the Western European Church and an Orientalist externalization of Jewish, Arabic and non-Vedic Asians. However, by the end of the century, racial theorists ascribed "Semitic" influence to "Roman" Catholicism, resulting in a purified conception of German blood, language, religion, and Nation [*Field 1981*]. The identification of language with the law was essential to the racist nationalism that would reach fevered pitch during the coming Age of Empire. As Jurasinski notes:

> The emergence of two new sciences in the nineteenth century – comparative philology and evolutionary biology – permitted the belief in immemorial custom to be articulated in ways that emphasized its supposed basis in historical and scientific fact. […] more reliable and scientific than ever before, scholars interested in the development of the law no longer had to locate the origins of legal customs in the proverbial "time out of mind" or in the era of Brutus [*Jurasinski 2006: 7–8*].

Once scholars realized that an Indo-Aryan language had been spoken from India to Norway, they could not resist the notion that common law and institutions had spread throughout the same territories, while retaining its identity, like language. The insight – grounded ostensibly in fact – amounted to a wholesale conversion in the conceptualization of the law as an institution rooted in language, and by extension, race.

The seeds of future German race nationalism were set within collaborative research into the historical origins of law. Savigny's example, seeking the underlying systemic

structure underlying cultural particularities, rooted the true national *Geist* in history. The project mutated discursively under the duress of political censorship and was projected into the accumulating collections of historical, archaeological and linguistic facts. At the same time, as noted by Osterhammel [*2009*], states began producing archives themselves on a massive scale, which along with newspapers, statistics and other media contributed to new forms of "second-order observation." Data began to accumulate to justify coming unified Germany – particularly in its non-Austrian *Kleindeutsch* variant. Indeed, one need consider but one of Savigny's students, Otto von Bismarck, to recognize the direct ideological bearing legal scientific discourse engendered among the ruling classes. By the time the Iron Chancellor arrived, the state envisioned by the pan-Germanists was taking shape. The triumph was experienced as progress, but also as a return to the natural unity of a common *Volk* sharing a common spirit.

Conclusion

This paper has presented an alternative historical origin for modern social science which is neglected in contemporary self-understandings of sociology. Rather than viewing modern society and sociology as being rooted in the French Revolution, the history of the institutionalization of historical legal science suggests that a more precise point of origin occurred within the German *reaction* to the French Revolution. While space prohibits further exploration of the trajectories of this tradition once established and embodied in the Prussian civil service), we can nonetheless see a) the first systematic research into the *actual* culture, norms and laws of people began in Germany, not French salons; b) natural science was of little significance in establishing social science, as, indeed, academic social science was established first in the professional faculty of law; and c) early social science was not reflective of bourgeois ideology; but rather that of the conservative reaction to such hasty modernization.

This does not simply mean Savigny and the historical school represented a return to the Old Regime, as their sublimated conflict with imperial Austria reveals. Rather, Mannheim explained that Savigny's aristocratic origins must be taken into account to the extent his organization of legal science reflected a general aristocratic orientation of the time.

> [This] can be more easily derived from the nobility's positionally determined opposition to absolutism than from their formal need for distinction. […] the disguised particularistic, estate-oriented argument, a self-justification hiding behind the totality of the nation can be explained by reference to the situation of the nobility at that time and by its collective sociologically determined designs [*Mannheim 1986: 169*].

In other words, Savigny articulated a discourse which, once publicized, earned elective affinity with the leading conservative impulses of his time – in particular the estates reacting to rapid changes in legislation. Mannheim further noted that the organicist, historical perspective that came to the fore after 1814, was present *prior* to Savigny's arrival at the University of Berlin as the first professor of Law, in the work of Hugo, Möser, and many others.

The articulation of Savigny's ideas must, therefore, be understood in terms of the broader social changes taken place around him. Only following the initial opening up

of liminal space during the French Revolution, the resented experience of codified law imposed from abroad, and the subsequent expulsion of the Empire during the wars of liberation; only then did Savigny's re-articulation of a jurisprudence grounded in history become a discursive practice through which a new, modern German state would gradually come into being.

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Power and the French Revolution: Toward a Sociology of Sovereignty

ISAAC ARIAIL REED*

Moc a francouzská revoluce: K sociologii suverenity

Abstract: In what sense was the French Revolution exceptional – a moment of potential liberation both unique and uncertain? "Exceptionality" has a specific meaning in political philosophy, and, using this meaning as a departure point, this paper develops a specifically sociological typology of states of exception – *enunciative, reciprocal*, and *structural* – grounded in a Hegelian sociology of power. The schema is useful for parsing and interpreting several of Robespierre's most important speeches during the Revolution. This analysis leads to retheorization of modernity in the French Revolution, with specific attention to the interpretation, in Paris, of the revolution in Saint Domingue.

Keywords: state of exception; Robespierre; Haitian revolution; sociology of revolutions; G. W. F. Hegel

On May 26, 1794, Maximilien Robespierre, president of the National Convention, gave the speech, "On the Enemies of the Nation." It is an articulation of the utility and necessity of violence to defend the republic under siege inside (civil war) and outside (the international coalition against revolutionary France), and it is an "either you are with us or against us" speech. In it, Robespierre argues that *assassination* is the remaining tool of the counterrevolutionaries. He then works the binaries: on the one hand, he explains, there is "the mass of citizens, pure, simple, thirsting for justice and friends of liberty," and, on the other, "a mass of the ambitious and intriguers […] who abuse the learning that the advantages of the *ancien régime* gave them in order to fool public opinion." The implication is that steel must be met with steel in defense of the republic, and that revolutionary sacrifice is glory in posterity: "To make war on crime is the path to the tomb and to immorality; to favor crime is the path to the throne and the scaffold" [*Robespierre 2004 (1794)*].

The speech is similar in rhetorical structure to his more famous speeches, including the one that advocated the execution of the King. However, in the middle of this particular speech, Robespierre pauses briefly for a reflection that is out of the character with the rest of the speech: "The moment in which we find ourselves is favorable, but it is perhaps unique. In the state of equilibrium in which things are it is easy to consolidate liberty, and it is easy to lose it." He then quickly returns to his invective. But for a few spoken lines, he meditates on the meaning of what is taking place as an event in the history of the world, and as a social crisis uncertain in its direction. Perhaps, one even senses that he finds the event somewhat opaque to those whose decisions would determine it.

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In what sense was the French Revolution exceptional [*Jourdan 2011*] – a moment of potential liberation both unique and uncertain? There are many everyday, philosophical and historical meanings of the term "exception." But the meaning which is the most revealing about the Revolution – and Robespierre's speech acts within it – is the meaning we have in social and political theory. Therein, exceptionality has meaning in relation to sovereignty. The decision to suspend the law in exceptional circumstances, or to determine if the law applies to the intentional death of a person or persons, or to determine who is included and who is excluded ("excepted") from the collective decision-making we call politics – these are the exceptions that constitute sovereignty.

Sociologists did less well with sovereignty than they might have done in the 20th century, despite the clear hints in their adored forefather Max Weber [*Adams – Steinmetz 2015: 269–285*]. But to understand the crises of the twenty-first century – the refugee crisis in Europe, the political crisis in the United States, the environmental crisis – and thus to provide a new vantage point from which to view the trajectories of modernity, it may be necessary to take up this concept. Herein, I do so by elaborating a three-fold, sociological typology of exceptionality. This typology is elaborated via an interpretation of the French revolution, and the use and abuse of power and violence within it. In particular, the typology allows a fresh vantage point from which to understand key parts of Robespierre's speeches. I conclude by arguing that our working understanding of the French revolution in social theory, reinterpreted from the vantage point of the sociology of sovereignty, suggests a different set of questions for social theory than those that dominated the 20th century.

The French Revolution and Social Theory

Though social theory understands itself as general in its capacities to explain the structure of society and the types of action that take place within it, its battles are frequently fought out on the specific terrain of French Revolutionary history. In the historiography of the revolution that emerged from France, England, and the USA, the most prominent strand of the theoretical argument of the 20th century was structured by Marxism and its discontents. Were the events of the 1780s and 1790s in France comprehensible as revolutions of, first, the nobility, second, the liberals and/or bourgeoisie (variously defined), and then finally, third, of the *sans-culottes* and their leaders espousing populist, and perhaps socialist, ideals [*Lefebvre 2005*]? In this Marxist narrative, Thermidor is the revanche that sets the stage for the class conflicts of the 19th century, the "social question," and thus 1848, 1871 … and 1917. In this view, the events of the French Revolution contained within themselves the class conflict that, in various expressions, is constitutive of modern history [*Soboul 1964, 1988*; *Rudé 1972*; *Hobsbawm 1990*].

Or were those events that began in 1789, rather, a crisis of a corrupt ancien régime and its chaotic replacement by a group of scribes and lawyers, an irruption against venality [*Doyle 1996*]? In this view, the Revolution was not a socio-economic turning of the wheel (from feudal to capitalist society), but rather the advent of public opinion, a different political culture, and vastly different cultural horizons structured by a different phenomenology of reading [*Chartier 1991*; *Darnton 1996*]. The classics of the cultural history of the French revolution – including the somewhat different linguistic turn/post-structural

readings [*Baker 1990*] – have been augmented in recent years by careful studies of materiality, as the pendulum of interest has swung from publics and their interpretation to printing and its circulation [*Jones 1996*] and everyday objects [*Auslander 2005*]. Speaking somewhat speculatively, we could hypothesize that in a very general way, the turn to "culture" emerged in the key spaces left by those historians who, having looked closely at *who* led the revolution, objected to the *ancien régime*, or actually ruled France between 1789 and 1800, concluded that the Marxist interpretation could not hold empirically [*Taylor 1964*; *Cobban 1999*; *Tackett 2014*; *Shapiro 1998*]. Effectively, they showed that large property owners did not lead the "liberal" portion of the revolution. They did less well disputing the importance of the sans-culottes to the radical phases of the revolution, and the Terror remains a point of extreme historiographical debate. But it was the gap that opened up about revolutionaries and their relationship to the people and the public, that allowed the question of "revolutionary culture" and the ideational causes of the Revolution to take (for a while) center stage.

In American historical sociology, this debate was less inflicted by Karl Marx and more by Alexis de Tocqueville. The neo-Tocquevillian argument emphasized not only the social revolution but also the centralization of state power, which the revolution was understood to accelerate significantly, to the point of installing a new "modern" regime [*Skocpol 1979*]. To paraphrase Tocqueville himself, the revolution happened before the actual revolution took place. For Tocqueville, the truly modernizing project was undertaken by the monarchy, the benefits of which accrued the revolutionaries. This has affinities with Steven Pincus' argument about the Glorious Revolution in England, wherein, he argues, the revolutionaries replaced one modernizing project with another, a rich and evocative hypothesis that he then posits as the basis for a more general theory of revolution [*Pincus 2007, 2014*]. The state centralization thesis fits nicely with an international focus on pre-revolutionary pressures and post-revolutionary wars [*Goldstone 1980*; *Skocpol 1994*]. And so the Jacobins and Napoleon were wheeled out to provide evidence of a classic generalized social science hypothesis: "states make war and war make states" [*Tilly 1985*].

Meanwhile, the response in American sociology to the state theorists of the revolution mirrored previous responses by British, French, and American history to Marxist theory, but instead of opposing culture to socioeconomics, culture was opposed to the instrumentalist view of state-society relations (e.g. that strategic state elites negotiate with staff and populace, whose likeliness to revolt or resist is a more-or-less rational calculation). The towering figures here are Lynn Hunt and William Sewell, Jr. [*Hunt 2004, 2013*; *Sewell 1985: 57–85*; *2005a*; *2005b: 250–251*; *1994, 1980*]. Sewell and Hunt both insisted upon the importance of cultural schemas for understanding the "structural" origins of the revolution; this came, for Sewell, as a combination with his turn to eventful temporality in the study of the Revolution. These two arguments (for culture and for "eventness") are often mentioned in the same breath, but they have different logics and different implications. The argument for the importance of culture is effectively one about "cultural structures" (Baker would say "discourse") – e.g., enlightenment ideologies, corporate understandings of work and workers, gendered understandings of power – and their application to various social processes and problems. In contrast, the argument about eventness is ontological rather than causal. It concerns, first, the irruptive nature of the French Revolution as an event that dislocates the structure of social causality itself, and, second, the dependence of this event on the

interpretations of occurrences made by actors in the thick of it – e.g. the *conceptualization* of the violence of the storming of the Bastille as a justified irruption of the people in the name of their rights, that is, *as a revolution.* So, while Sewell's arguments about cultural schemas add to our repertoires of social structures *with which we explain,* his arguments about eventness introduce something like Heisenberg's uncertainty principle into the study of the Revolution. The connection between the two is *interpretation* – the structural arguments rely on ingrained habits of interpretation to make their case when they narrate the revolution, while the eventful arguments emphasize creative interpretation instead. Nonetheless, the difference is significant, since the emphasis on *uncertainty* is so much stronger in the eventful argument. As we will see, it is the eventful argument that becomes vital for understanding the revolutionary *crisis* in terms of a social theory of power.

However, it must also be said that a larger set of concerns structure these debates, giving them great connotational significance beyond the usual denotative problems of inference from historical sources. Haunted by the Marxist understanding of social revolution and the history of Communism in the 20th century, the debate about the French Revolution *as we have taken it up in social theory* has avoided the question of sovereignty. Busy articulating the anatomies of biopower in liberal democracies after 1800, and responding to liberal critics with regard to the pathologies of the Terror, radical social theory has avoided the question over which conservative commentators on the revolution obsessed [*Burke 1890*; *Carlyle 1888*], and, which was, in the historiography of the Revolution, clearly taken up by François Furet and his collaborators. That is the question of *who is legitimately in charge in both state and society*, and in particular, who makes decisions and how they are implemented when the divine justification for the rule is violently removed. To be sure, we know much about the rhetoric of "the public," "public opinion," and "the people" as it emerged before and during the French Revolution as a way to conceptualize the purpose of government [*Baker 1990*]. And we know much about the degree to which actual people were or were not able to access the state, gain material advantages or lose them, before, during, and after the Revolution. Pierre Rosanvallon has studied voting and elections during the Revolution, for example, and articulated the importance of this for political philosophy [*Rosanvallon 2015*]. But the spectacular beheading of the King and Queen sits uneasily in the social-theoretical imagination of modernity, and the spectacles of revolution and the luminous memory of their violence cannot be easily squared with the left-Weberian understanding of the modern state that dominates historical sociology, according to which the accomplishment of the revolution was to centralize a form of organizational power that was mundane, bureaucratic, and boring. One might also suggest that these residues from 20th century debates make it hard to synthesize in social theory the efflorescence of feminist, postcolonial, and affective histories of the Revolution [*Landes 1988, 2003*; *Tackett 2015*].

The silence about sovereignty and the dominance of the social question in the 20th-century historiography also helps us make sense of the "present absence" of the Revolution in the work of two thinkers at the Collège de France: Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault. Aspects of the emphasis on the enhancement of state capacity in the age of revolutions via the adoption of bureaucratic regularity, scientific mapping, and conscription were echoed – if faintly – in their work, which has been so central to social theory over the last two generations. Though Bourdieu and Foucault assiduously avoided explaining and

interpreting the Revolution itself, their luminous texts on the replacement of the King's household with the logic of the civil service, and power obtained and reproduced *via* the education system [*Bourdieu 1994*; *Bourdieu 2014: 264–265*], or on the replacement of the spectacular murder of a regicide with the "docile bodies" of modern prisons [*Foucault 2012*], gestured towards the enhancement of state capacity, and the development of the state-society-self troika as the basic anatomy of modern society. They also obliquely raised the problematic of sovereignty in the figure of the King, while avoiding discussing sovereignty in the republics that replaced him. This may be a privilege we can no longer afford.

As a spectacular populist politics rises in power in Europe and the USA, and the violent exclusion of racialized others combines with neo-traditionalist gender politics in such movements, we face a set of questions that unsettle certain basic understandings how capitalist liberal democracies work. In such a moment, it is perhaps time to seriously consider the question of sovereignty in the French Revolution. For, the emergence on the world-historical scene of various "strong men" at the head of modern state apparatuses demands that a critical theory of modernity confront not only the ravages of capitalism, but also the question of what, exactly, replaces the King's household, the King's (or Queen's) two bodies, and the body of the condemned regicide in the lifeworlds and myths of liberal democracies. Here both Sewell and Hunt are tremendously evocative because their work concerns the meanings and myths that *came to be* through the Revolution. This is fertile terrain, in other words, to address the question of how the *language* of democratic republicanism relates to the actual practice of rule [*Baker 2011*]. As we will see, by engaging the question of who rules and how, we can create a framework for accessing how revolutionary situations simultaneously include and exclude, and thus for comprehending transitions to modernity.

Comprehending Power at the Hinge of Modernity

When Robespierre demanded the execution of the King, he counterposed a republic to an aristocracy and insisted on the revolution as the hinge between the two. In this, at least, thinkers conservative, liberal and radical have followed the lawyer from Arras. The Revolution is still understood as the breaking point, the gap between the world of sacred tradition and modernity, whichever of the various interdependent meanings of those terms obtains [*Brooks 1976*]. And in this sense, at least, contemporary sociology is deeply connected to classical social theory, for the French revolution remains for us, as it was for Emile Durkheim and Karl Marx, an event in which the fundamental rules for power and its legitimation changed [*Sewell 1990*].

Yet precisely for the reason that the French Revolution is taken as the world-historical hinge of the modern, it can be difficult to discuss simultaneously 1) what is on either side of the French Revolution and also 2) the Revolution itself. For, the magnitude of the change (or alternately, the irony of an account that claims that not much changed at all) militates against the use of a single academic language to describe it before, during and after. This is the challenge that faces us when we attempt to interpret Robespierre's speeches. What kind of language enables us to render social and political life before and after the revolution as *commensurable enough* that we can coherently grasp the transformations wrought by the revolution? One can see Durkheim struggling with this in the key passages on the revolution in the *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* [*Durkheim 1995: 209–214*].

For the question of sovereignty, we need a language that can, in comprehending these transformations, comprehend the relationship between power as the capacity to dominate and power as the capacity to legitimate said domination. For a variety of reasons both philosophical and political, the language of the young Hegel appears promising [*Smith 1989*].[1]

In Hegel, power is understood as a hierarchical relationship of rule *via* the dialectic of *Lord* and *Bondsman.* Bondsman labors for Lord, completing various projects in the world so as to meet Lord's needs and desires. Bondsman thus becomes Lord's *agent* in an instrumental sense – as Judith Butler explains, Bondsman becomes the "instrumental body" for Lord, differentiating his potential existence as a free human actor from the *acting-as-agent* according to which agency accrues to Lord.[2] Furthermore, Bondsman's work on the world is repeatedly effaced*,* not only in the sense that Lord consumes the (alienated) fruits of his labor, but also in the sense that Bondsman's signature – his claim to authorship, to self-representation in the world as the creator of an object, text, law or rule – is removed via the dialectic.

Hegel's moral psychology of Lord and Bondsman is often understood as dyadic. But the interpretations of Hegel – especially the psychoanalytically inflected interpretation of Franz Fanon – that have focused on the consistent threat of dehumanization that attends *Herrschaft and Knechtschaft* make clear (as does Simmel's sociology and the contemporary German sociology of violence) that the Hegelian model should, in fact, be understood in *triadic* terms, particularly in so far as "Bondsman" is (mis)recognized as a (lower status) human subject, yet also consistently threatened with dehumanization [*Fanon 2008*; *Simmel 1950*; *Beck 2011*]. A dialectical model of power should consist of three dynamically interacting subject-positions: *rector*, *actor*, and *other*. When the subject to which power accrues brings an ally into his projects and does so via negotiation, understanding, partial recognition, compromise and exchange, a power relation obtains between rector and actor. But rector and actor both (together and each of them individually) relate to other in a different way. Other is scapegoated, ignored, dehumanized, violently excluded, in the way, or a stranger. If rector, actor and other are all three engaged in a "struggle for recognition" [*Kojève 1980*] such a struggle is differently distributed among them. Rector struggles to communicate to the actor the legitimacy and superiority of his projects in the world. Actor struggles with rector to be recognized rather than misrecognized*,* and to perhaps use the relation to the rector to pursue (some of) actor's own projects. Finally, other (may) struggle to get *into the arena* of (mis)recognition that rector and actor occupy – to transform into an actor or even into rector.

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[1]   Steven Smith argues that Hegel provides a philosophical framework for thinking about the French Revolution that navigates between the radical break posited by the revolutionaries themselves and Edmund Burke's reaction to the Revolution, on the one hand, and the continuity posited by Alexis de Tocqueville, on the other. He works off Hegel's discussion of the Revolution in *Philosophy of History,* as well as an early letter to Schelling. Smith's concern is a hermeneutic, contextualized approach to rights, and thus a critique of the natural rights tradition in political philosophy. Herein, I am concerned less with Hegel's discussion of revolutionary heroes and how we should understand the great men of history, as Smith is, than with the relationship of the Revolution to power. Thus, I draw on the classic passages on Lordship and Bondage from *Phenomenology of Spirit* [*Smith 1989: 233–261*].

[2]   I am using "agency" here, not as Giddens does, but in a way that syntheses semiotics and principal-agent theory, a well-known part of rational choice sociology. Agency is the ability to send an agent to work on your behalf. See *Reed 2017*.

Rector's projects in the world, in so far as he makes actor his agent, become attached to a meta-project which is *Herrschaft* – the maintenance of rule. Meanwhile, the world is full of actors with plans – to be human is to act, for oneself, for other people, with other people, against other people. (Even emperors have the experience of acting on behalf of the divine, heredity, or posterity.) But in so far as actors abdicate some of their projects so as to act as the extension of another, they become *agents* for rectors – and thus agency accrues to the rector. Finally, other's capacity to *get into the game of misrecognition* is extremely limited and may require "irruptive" struggle.

In the terms of historical sociology, the cultural rendering of class struggle in 19th century England, according to which the English working class struggled for recognition and access to the levers of political power, and did so as members of the English or British "nation," could be considered a struggle between a collective rector (property owners, noble and common) and a collective actor (the industrial working class) [*Somers 1992*]. In contrast, the Haitian revolution, about which Hegel read when composing *Phenomenology of Spirit*, could be considered a revolt of *others* (enslaved) against both rectors (les grand blancs) and actors who had become their agents (les petits blancs), complicated by a small set of partially recognized actors (gens de couleur) [*James 2001*].

However, the very disputability of these two one-sentence accounts of Manchester and Port-au-Prince reveals that relations of power have to be understood as consisting in part and formed in part by *representations*, variously distributed and believed, of who should be rector, who should be an actor, and who should be other. Indeed, the struggle over the interpretation of Hegel's written work – and its development, in later iterations, into a racist teleology of European superiority – is in a sense a replication, in the halls of philosophy and social thought, of the real world cultural struggles over the representation of the right to rule. Thus, through chains of rectors, actors, and others flow not only tasks and violence, but signs. It is in these terms – chains of rectors, actors, and others, through which flow projects-in-the-world as well as representations of the division of the world into rectors, actors, and others – that we can parse sociologically the often undifferentiated, frequently slightly mystical, concept of *sovereignty*.

States of Exception: Towards a Sociology of Sovereignty *via* an Interpretation of Robespierre

A well-known arc of political philosophy has made Carl Schmitt's definition, "sovereign is he who decides on the state of exception," a *cliché*. The innovation of Giorgio Agamben was to connect the question of sovereign authority – the decisionism of the rector in any setting in which both power and rules operate – to the exceptional treatment of certain persons who, stripped of political personhood, could be killed with impunity but not sacrificed. Thus, in Agamben, the *ban* – the zone of life outside of the legibility of licit/illicit which reveals why law without sovereignty is impossible – is connected to a longstanding possibility of treating certain persons as not persons but as "bare life" – *homo sacer*. This move appears to allow Agamben to render an understanding of Auschwitz in terms *simultaneously* biopolitical and sovereign. Hence in Agamben and others who have applied and elaborated this theoretical logic, the dark side of modernity can be cleverly theorized as of a piece with both Foucault's dystopia and Schmitt's racial project.

However, the concept of the "state of exception" remains strangely undifferentiated beyond the intellectual history that opposes the original Schmittian dictatorial version (concerned with emergency powers, constitutions, and leadership) to the post-Foucauldian version of *distributed* power over life and death (biopolitics/thanatopolitics) [*Agamben 2005*; *Erlenbusch 2013*; *Nasir 2017*]. To remedy this, I propose a differentiation of states of exception into *three* types. Each of these types of exception refers to a different subject position in the triadic schema of power presented in the previous section. They are enunciative (rector), reciprocal (actor), and structural (other). I define and elaborate each type below, first in general and drawing on a variety of historical examples, and then with specific reference to Robespierre's trajectory through the Revolution.

1. Enunciative State of Exception

The enunciative state of exception corresponds to the position of *rector*, in that it is often within the power of those legitimated *as powerful* to call for – and achieve – a suspension of agreed-upon rules or laws, and to use this suspension to accomplish a specific project or end-in-view. When liberal-democratic constitutions and legal frameworks incorporate the idea of "emergency powers" that can be called upon by the executive, the writers of such constitutions are struggling with the problem of the enunciative state of exception. That problem – as both Schmitt and Agamben were aware – is one of circularity in logic, and thus of performativity. For example, when George Washington used the Militia Act to suspend the judicial resolution of conflict so as to order 12,500 troops to crush violent tax resistance in Pennsylvania in 1794, his justification for so doing referred to the reasoning of a judge, *but also to his own judgment that a judge should be asked to give reason to suspend the judiciary* [*Reed 2016*]. This circularity was enunciated by Washington in a public speech, which effectively, qua speech act, helped bring into being the very "emergency" to which it claimed to respond. With regard to the current era, Agamben's discussion of George W. Bush and the war on terror notes Bush's verbal tendency to repeatedly remind television viewers and journalists of his status as "Commander in Chief," thus premising the pursuit of terrorists and the use of the exceptional space of Guantanamo Bay on his use of his position as sovereign [*Agamben 2005: 22*]. The point herein is that the enunciative state of exception can match the word with space, and space with violence, in a way that was indeed predicted rather precisely by Agamben.

The enunciative state of exception plays a central role in the French revolution, and in Robespierre's role in it, in so far as the named emergencies of external wars and suspected aristocratic counterrevolutionary plots were linked via political semiosis to the justification of the use of terror as the policy of the revolutionary state. In Robespierre's speeches, the external threat of war from (non-republican) nation states is repeatedly connected to the *internal* threat of aristocrats who, he claims, wish nothing but ill for republican France, despite the fact that they "wear the mask of patriotism." It is this connection – between "foreign plots" and internal enemies – that perhaps stands as the central rhetorical accomplishment of Robespierre and Saint-Just [*Palmer 1989: 112–114*]. It amounted, in the context of the struggle over governance in Paris, to the performative moment that unleashed the dynamic of denunciation that, in contemporary parlance, is sometimes termed a "witch hunt." I will return to this classic question about the Terror below.

Robespierre and Washington had in common a representational difficulty in announcing the state of exception – their enunciations were made *in the name of* the people. Qua executive powers, their possession of sovereignty was positioned differently, at least *in the imagination* of many political elites and parts of the populace. In the *ancien régime*, it was the King and his "two bodies" [*Kantorowicz 2016*], placed within his household (literally and metaphorically understood), who announced an exception. In practice, this meant that the King was the location of the official and final decision, while power at court was, correspondingly, a matter of *influence* [*Landes 1988*]. Aristocratic actors helped form an opinion in salons with the goal of influencing the King and his ministers. Robespierre was forced, in contrast, to grapple with the more difficult matter *representing* sovereignty. The people are a great idea, but a difficult performative prop to muster. Hence Robespierre, in his speech against granting the King a trial, finds his thoughts entangled:

> How should the people be concerned about the wretched person of the last of our kings? Representatives, what concerns them, and what concerns you, is that you should carry out the duties that their confidence imposes on you. You have proclaimed the Republic, but have you given it substance? We have not yet enacted a single law that is worthy of that name; we have not yet remedied a single abuse inherited from despotism. Remove the names, and tyranny is still entirely with us; moreover, we have factions more vile and charlatans more immoral, and we are threatened by new outbreaks of disorder and civil war. We are a Republic, and Louis still lives! and you still place the person of the King between ourselves and liberty! [*Rudé 1967: 27*].

The speech is a dream come true for Edmund Burke. For what does it mean, really, to insist *in the name of the people* that the King should not be *tried* for treason but executed, because in the judgment of "the people" *right now* there is an emergency? Robespierre, to be sure, was both clever and compelling: "Insurrection is the real trial of a tyrant. His sentence is the end of his power, and his sentence is whatever the people's liberty requires." The difficulty (discussed extensively by Eric Santner [*2012*] in his book-length meditation on "The People's Two Bodies") is that the body politic is no longer embodied in a person who can utter "this is an exception because I judge it to be an emergency." And so, exceptionality is subject to problems of representation, and representation invites the *conflict of interpretations.* Is it really an emergency? Would a trial for the King really lead to a counterrevolution? And so it goes … But then, the precise power of an enunciative state of exception is its ability to end debate, short-circuit interpretation, and communicate the "final" interpretation *via* violence, rather than discourse – if it is a successful performance. Kings, of course, had to perform as well; but the denotations and connotations they performed within came from different semiotics. And what was the French Court but a magnificent material and aesthetic apparatus for the performance of royal power [*Mukerji 2012*]? Robespierre,[3] then, struggled with the problem of emergency powers as possessed by an executive in a republic, and the relationship of these powers to the people as the ultimate source of the right to rule.

Of course, Robespierre was a rather special kind of executive; he led a "revolutionary" government – as were most actors at the center of power starting in 1789. This involves

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[3]   Not only Robespierre struggled with this; a more elaborate reading would consider Robespierre's relationships with Danton and Saint Just, and the influence of Marat's writing on his speeches.

us in further problems of interpretation. To understand them, we have to understand the second state of exception and its relationship to the enunciative.

2. Reciprocal State of Exception

The essence of Sewell's interpretation of the revolution is his recognition of it as a time of tremendous social and political *uncertainty*:

> Dislocation of structures, I have tried to suggest, produces in actors a deep sense of insecurity, a real uncertainty about how to get on with life. I think that this uncertainty is a necessary condition for the kind of collective creativity that characterizes so many great historical events. In times of structural dislocation, ordinary routines of social life are open to doubt, the sanctions of existing power relations are uncertain or suspended, and new possibilities are thinkable […] in times of dislocation, like the spring and summer of 1789, resources are up for grabs, cultural logics are elaborated more freely and applied to new circumstances, and models of power are extended to unforeseen social fields [*Sewell 2005: 250–251*].

The reciprocal state of exception is one in which *uncertainty* in the horizontal communication between actors creates a crisis which is interpreted as exceptional, and within which the interpretation of other actors' interpretations of the situation as an uncertain one becomes part of the experience of the exception. Uncertainty is a property of a social situation, and it is thus the provenance of *actors,* engaged in a plurality of crisscrossing projects.

In the reciprocal state of exception, the circularity of exceptionality applies not (or not only) to the judgment of rector (indeed actors may not know who rector is), but rather to the reciprocity between actors. Its classic location is the problem of collective action, which has repeatedly been used in the sociology of revolutions in the following way. Suppose the likelihood that actor goes into the street to revolt tomorrow (instead of going to his or her place of work) depends upon actor's perception of the likelihood that neighbors will do the same. This creates a uniquely ambiguous situation, *especially* when even signaling that one will do one or the other is itself significant for matters of life and death, humane or inhumane treatment, etc. To revolt in the street is to risk state repression and death … until to stay inside is itself risky … and so on [*Kurzman 2009*].

In everyday life conducted within and through established rules, the reciprocal state of exception has faint echoes not in the privilege of assumed hierarchy, but in the uncertainty of the inchoate situation. Two or more persons shuffling through "what is going on here" (a flirtation? a helpful neighbor? prelude to a fistfight?) recognize the uncertainty itself as constitutive and not normal, particularly in so far as it extends in time and space to other persons and other interactions. This could be said to be the phenomenological basis, in human consciousness and interaction, of "crisis." When a crisis is widespread and concerns the basic accouterments of the rule (courts, police, imprisonment, legitimated murder), it is a *revolutionary situation* [*Reed 2016*].

There may be, at the quasi-metaphysical level of potentiality, something democratic about reciprocal states of exception – "I and thou" find themselves confronting each other in a kind of rough equality of non-knowledge about how to proceed. But they are generally *not* what we recognize as *institutionalized* democratic procedure. What they do allow us to capture in social theory is that *emergencies* are not only, or not always, just a question

of naming. They can also be widely experienced and felt (though how widely is a difficult empirical question). In so far as they are so experienced, the naming of emergency can connect, in a deep and meaningful way, with the experience of uncertainty, so eloquently described in the paragraph from Sewell, above.

This kind of rhetorical evocation of the experience of uncertainty was central to Robespierre's performative brilliance. By doing so, he was able in his speeches to unify seemingly contradictory aspects of his trajectory through the revolution. It forms the basis for his repeated use of what was perhaps his most debated distinction – between revolutionary and constitutional government.[4]

What is often taken to be Robespierre's "socialism" (to apply a nineteenth-century word to a late eighteenth-century actor) was developed with reference to the reciprocal state of exception. In arguing for government control of grain circulation and pricing, and in disparaging monopolists in a way that foreshadows Marx and Engels, Robespierre actually justifies his position via reference to "revolutionary times." The problem with the advocates of "freedom of commerce" that defend the property of monopolists, he says, is that they have not taken account of

> the stormy circumstances brought about by revolutions, and if their vague theory were good in ordinary times it would find no application in the rapid measures that moments of crisis demand of us. They have counted for much the profits of merchants and landowners, and for almost nothing the lives of men. And why? It was the great, the ministers, the rich who wrote, who governed. If it had been the people, it's probably that the system would have received a few modifications! [*Robespierre 2007a (1792): 50–51*].

The *people* and the *republic* would, of course, become Robespierre's constant companions. In particular, they would become the basis for all other binaries:

> We want in our country to substitute […] merit for intrigue, genius for fine wit, truth for brilliance, the charm of happiness for boredom of luxury, the greatness of man for the pettiness of great mean, a magnanimous, powerful, happy people for an amiable, frivolous and miserable people; in short all the virtues and miracles of the Republic for all the vices and absurdities of monarchy [*Robespierre 2007b (1794): 110*].

What meanings underwrite this working of the binaries? A holistic reading of his speeches suggests that it is the idea of a *group of actors thrown together in a turbulent time* (and granted an opportunity for reason and freedom).[5] (The difficulty of the denotation is, in a sense, the point – these actors were either "French citizens" or their representatives in the Assembly/Convention or the assembled at the Jacobin club.) This was the basis of his argument about revolutionary government, and it was almost always via reference

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4   Interestingly, at a speech at the Constituent Assembly on June 22, 1791, Robespierre referenced uncertainty in a republic without referencing uncertainty, in his invective against the death penalty. He argued that human judgments "are never certain enough" to justify "dealing death to another man." And so, in a republic, the death penalty should disappear, because it is only in a society constituted by the "monstrous union of ignorance and despotism" such that insulting a monarch could result in death, that would have such a penalty. Only in a society with an ultimate rector, he argues, could anti-humanism prevail. Because the revolution creates a society of *equal actors*, it will found a society without the death penalty.

5   This, then, touches on the evocation of "circumstances" as a justification for the Terror. For the most recent historiographical debates about the Terror, see Edelstein [*2009*]; Jones [*2014*]; Tackett [*2015*]; Spang [*2017*].

to the experience of revolution that Robespierre would justify his own *enunciative* states of exception. For Robespierre, such reciprocal exceptionality was consistently *rhetorically configured* as a solidaristic "we," opposed to those others – the opponents of the revolution.

3. On the Complex Relationship between Reciprocal and Enunciative States of Exception

The exception to this seemingly endless series of references to "we," "the people," and "the republic," in justifying his executive decisions to arrest and execute the accused came at the moment of greatest stress for Robespierre – the speech given after the arrest of Danton. Therein the singular "I" (in)famously appears, as he addresses the fear in the room:

> Men talk to you of the despotism of the committees, as if the confidence which the people have bestowed on you, and which you have transferred to these committees, were not a sure guarantee of their patriotism. They affect doubts; but I tell you, whoever trembles at this moment is guilty, for innocence never dreads the public surveillance. (Speech given to the Convention on March 31, 1794, quoted in [*Thiers 1842: 448*].)

The fear both played upon and enhanced herein, *via reference to fear*, again reveals the performativity of states of exception. But when we unpack this, what we see is that reciprocal states of exception create *very different conditions for sovereign enunciation* than when they are absent. Radical uncertainty about how to proceed, about who is in charge, and about what the rules are, create situations that give tremendous importance to performative power. Indeed, the key to analysis may be to recognize the drama at the heart of sovereign "performativity."

Robespierre's virtuosity as a performer of virtue is well-documented; this is not an accident in the history of the French Revolution. Even at the height of his powers, he could not just announce a state of exception, an emergency, an arrest. He had to creatively act out the emergency and his response to it as the drama of the Republic fighting for survival. In so doing, he had to create the impression of narrative structure (that the good republic was going somewhere – to a better place, calmer and less threatened by aristocratic plots), as well as communicate the meaning of good and evil in times of chaos. He had to "perform the binaries," and his success or failure depended upon the felicity of this performance. The revolution was, among many other things, a social drama subjected to contending interpretations [*Friedland 2002*; *Mazeau 2015*].

To be sure, sovereigns and executives in more stable times perform as well. But in so far as the rule states in which people follow orders as a matter of routine and habit, they tend to have at their disposal a vast organizational machine for advancing their performances. In the midst of a reciprocal state of exception, however, the material conditions for performative success become much more volatile and unpredictable, as do the interpretations of various audiences, precisely because widespread uncertainty has released the actors involved from their routine order-following behaviors. This means that a reciprocal state of exception throws any would-be rectors into a dialogic, call-and-response relationship with the actors they propose to rule. Revolutionary conditions create the possibility for actors to become rectors, but precisely because they make what was impossible available, they require much more, dramatically speaking, from the rectors. Robespierre, for quite a while in '93 and '94, did not disappoint.

One of the most enchanting aspects of Robespierre's speeches from this time – it still enchants parts of the left today – was his rendering of the "part which has no part" [*Rancière 1999*] as constituting *the primary actors in the drama of reciprocity*. Robespierre's binaries were always supple (and, in part, drawn from Marat's enchanting imagination) – suggesting that the downtrodden and the abused, the robbed and the forsaken, had risen in the revolution to their rightful place as virtuosic republican actors in the drama of human progress. Apocalyptic in tone, it was these *former others* that Robespierre endlessly elevated to the highest moral standing, and thus opposed to, the inauthentic, vapid, and venal aristocracy and to Louis XVI qua "criminal against humanity." But it turns out that *otherness* in the French revolution is a much more complicated issue that the Marxian theorists of the *sans-culottes* of Paris (and their cultural historian critics) imagined it to be. To understand it, we have to introduce the third type of state of exception.

4. Structural State of Exception

In a structural state of exception, a group of people is rendered extraneous and thus subject to violence that is not answerable to the social mechanisms of judgment that are taken to embody the morality of an imagined collectivity. As such they are exceptional in the sense that these persons are neither inside nor outside the body politic in its standard definitions, nor can they be criminals in the sense of persons who were once part of the community but then punished as criminals. The structural state of exception corresponds with the position of *other* in chains of power and their representation.

The two most obvious locations for structural states of exception in the modern world are, first, the plantation, and second, the concentration camp. Despite their many differences, these burning examples of inhumanity reveal something essential about the structural state of exception – it involves robbing persons of personhood itself. Whatever the differences between their philosophies, Hannah Arendt and Giorgio Agamben both argue that the very capacity *to be a person* is what was under attack in Auschwitz.[6] Meanwhile, despite the manifest utility of slave labor in early modern capitalism, it generally remained the case that in so far as enslaved persons were categorized as property, they were subject to social death and thus a loss of personhood [*Patterson 1982*]; as such they could also be killed with impunity (though the murderer would incur a monetary debt to *the owner* of the enslaved). Both the plantation and the concentration camp thus connect the *organization and supervision of massive amounts of persons* to the impunity with which said persons could be killed; they represent the systematic *production* of otherness in modernity. Such systematic othering, in symbol and in social relation, requires an elaborate *apparatus* of highly patterned speech and action – hence the moniker "structural." This apparatus should be understood as institutionalizing a rule of difference [*Chatterjee 2010*]. Such a rule renders certain persons "a world apart," from the political transactions of rectors and actors.

But what is personhood? For Arendt, it was embodied in the very ability *to be political*, in the sense of representing oneself in a mutual space of decision-making and access to power. During the radical years of the French Revolution, many of the radically

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6   Alvaro Santana-Acuña has pointed out to me that this similarity is likely traceable to influence of Primo Levi on both thinkers.

disenfranchised of Paris forced themselves onto the political scene repeatedly; in so far as they succeeded in grasping at some modicum of political power, even in the crude sense of mob demands on revolutionary leaders, they transformed themselves from *others* into *actors* on the stage of politics. This is the essence of the Revolution's volatile radicality. But there were limits to this, which I will now explore directly.

In the course of the French Revolution, those who seized the state apparatus centered in Paris engaged the question of slavery, and the anti-slave revolution in the periphery (of which they received news in October 1791) in a series of ways which, though they are immensely complicated, can nonetheless be described as 1) fundamentally contradictory in a way that eerily plays out the concept of a structural state of exception, 2) shows even the most "radical" leaders of the French revolution (the Mountain, the Jacobin Club, the Committee of Public Safety, the Convention) as repeatedly ambivalent about, unwilling to execute, and radically untrustworthy with regards to the cause of abolition. This is important to understand because this ambivalence reveals an essential connection between a world of democratic actors-and-rectors (the "people" in whom sovereignty is located), and the production of a world of others, who are somehow simultaneously both recognized as people and robbed of this personhood.

The crux of the issue began early when representatives from the colony engaged in politics in 1789 to be represented in the French state.[7] These slave-owning *grand blancs* had dreams of colonial autonomy, which they undercut precisely by joining the new state – they were thus horrified that, having made Saint Domingue "part of France," the declaration of the rights of man and citizen might apply there, thus ending the slave system that was a source of status and profits. However, a series of adaptations and workarounds were designed, and, in particular, the successive governments in Paris insisted on ruling Saint Domingue by the appointment of *commissioners* who were granted broad powers, effectively making, several times over, the colony a kind of state of exception in the sense of being subject to a dictator the persons therein had not elected. In essence, the government in Paris applied the (various) Constitutions to bring Saint Domingue under its power and then suspended said Constitutions for the purposes of government. They thus separated "free soil" France from slavery on the island, and made space a part of the legal definition of a structural state of exception [*Spieler 2009: 365–408, 374, 379*]. The (liberal, constitutional, rights-oriented) law silenced itself for the sword (and the whip) in Saint Domingue [*Spieler 2009: 381*].

The commissioners adorned as the *actors on behalf of the national state* arrived in full *tricouleur* to govern the colony in June 1792, with powers granted to them that "exceeded those of the legislature and the king" [*Spieler 2009: 387*]. But they arrived at a scene of a successful slave revolt that had led to civil war inflicted by several different imperial powers. Thus the commissioner Sonthonax was forced to abolish slavery to gain an army with which to fight the British and French armies. Meanwhile, back in Paris, the abolitionists were not well received by the Jacobin club, and their demands were suppressed by the

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[7]   The study of the French Revolution in the colonies, and the Haitian Revolution's connection to the French Revolution, is now a vast arena of scholarship. Space considerations in this article – intended as a theoretical provocation – have caused me to rely primarily on Miranda Spieler's work. But see Popkin [*2007, 2010, 2012*]; Dubois [*2005*]; Williams [*2004*].

Journal de Montaigne [*Spieler 2009: 391*]. These were the complex conditions under which the abolition of slavery occurred in 1794.

That abolition cannot be understood without comprehending the intersection of all three sociological types of the state of exception. The National Convention *enunciated a decree ending slavery in the Colonies.* It was empowered to do so as an emergency government amidst radical uncertainty – a reciprocal state of exception. Finally, in doing, it inserted language that referred to the previous year's Constitution and to the sovereignty of the Committee of Public Safety simultaneously.[8] However, as Miranda Spieler points out, *the Constitution referenced therein had been suspended.* Furthermore, as the Terror proceeded, the Committee of Public Safety continued its accusations against the commissioners in Saint Domingue who had abolished slavery. And so Spieler explains, "the circumstances that enabled the abolition of slavery to reveal the paradox of emergency power as a lever of transformation, which expanded liberty as well as destroying it, sometimes at the same time, during the French Revolution" [*Spieler 2009: 392*]. As the Terror, Thermidor, and royalist counter-revolutionary efforts proceeded, the colonies were repeatedly left as blank spaces on the French imperial map, partially liberated, but without any institutions with which to support the maintenance of rights, and thus ultimately subject to the authoritarian rule. They were, thus, lands with bodies in a structural state of exception. Eventually, Napoleon reinstated slavery; and about this Spieler can write provocatively that "revolutionaries furnished Bonaparte with a template for a colonial rule that he raised to the status of a new norm" [*Spieler 2009: 408*].

The structural state of exception of slavery on the sugar plantations of Saint Domingue complicates significantly both the history and the philosophical interpretation of the French Revolution. In particular, the overarching humanist narrative of the Revolution, which often centers on the debate about Immanuel Kant's reaction to events in Paris, is rendered insufficient. Most trenchantly, Louis Sala-Molins insists upon reading the enlightenment philosophy of the 18th century, which was centered in Paris, alongside the *Code Noir.* The *Code Noir* excluded slaves from being *subjects* of the King – and thus from legal status. But it was rewritten by revolutionaries in 1793 – they replaced the branding of slaves with the Fleur-de-Lis with a "V" (voleur) or an "M" ("Maroon") [*Spieler 2009: 388*].

The following question then presses down upon the documents of the French Revolution that sing in humanistic and universal phrases. When transforming the legal status of *subjects* into *citizens* – indeed, in removing the King's head from his body and thus removing the King from the head position in the state – what was to become of those *persons* who had been robbed of *legal personhood* under the old regime? Having not even been worthy of being a *subject*, the position that the revolutionaries detested to the point of violence, would they, too, be elevated to the status of a citizen? Sala-Molins argues, in particular, that the "men" referred to in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen are *only those men understood to be part of the social body,* and as such the enslaved, understood as property and not as social beings, were not included (and thus he argues that it is a radically anachronistic mistake to pretend that they somehow were). The negro, Sala-Molins argues,

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8   "The National convention declares the slavery of the *nègres* to be abolished in all the colonies. In consequence, it decrees that all men without distinction of color, who are domiciled in the colonies, are French Citizens, and will enjoy all the rights guaranteed by the Constitution. This decree is referred to the Committee of Public Safety, which will report immediately on measures for its execution" [cited in *Spieler 2009: 393*].

appears *only* in Article 2 when *property* is mentioned. And so, Sala-Molins concludes, "the Negro sits enthroned in the property. He does not possess it […] Ontologically, legally, specifically, exclusively, he is property" [*Sala-Molins 2005: 62*].

The structural state of exception represented by slavery, and the revolt against it represented by the Haitian revolution, significantly changes our understanding of a central theme of the French Revolution itself: the relationship of *others* to sovereign power.[9] And it is this question of otherness that, we shall see, is woven through the utterances of Robespierre.

From the moment that Abbe Sieyes penned "what is the third estate?," the question of the relationship of otherness to power was central to the activities in Paris, in France, and within the empire. It is from here that the idea of a "part that has no part," but which is, in fact, the *sacred center of, or somehow the entirety of, "the nation"* begins to influence events. In Robespierre, the signifier became, not the "third estate," but *the people* (*le peuple*). Indeed, the rhetoric of his speeches repeatedly draws its energy and melodrama from the great inversion represented by the revolution. It is precisely in so far as "the people" *had been othered,* which is to say, left out of the political game of influence, that "the people" are judged by Robespierre to be free of corruption, and capable of taking the sacred destiny of the nation in their hands. Since it is the way in which his binaries *develop* energy that is particularly rhetorically powerful, it is worth quoting a passage at length:

> Nature's law is that any physical and moral entity must provide for its own preservation; crime murders innocence to reign, and innocence in the hands of crime struggles with all its might. Let tyranny reign for a single day; the next day, not a patriot will remain. For how long will the rage of despots be called justice, and the people's justice be called barbarity or rebellion? How tender one is towards oppressors and how inexorable towards the oppressed! Nothing could be more natural: who does not hate crime cannot love virtue. One or the other must succumb, however. Indulgence for the royalists, cry certain people. Mercy for scoundrels! No: mercy for the innocent, mercy for the weak, mercy for the unfortunate, mercy for humanity! Social protection is due only to peaceful citizens; there are no citizens but republicans in the Republic. Royalists and conspirators are foreign to it, or rather they are enemies [*Robespierre 2007b: 115*].

The conclusion to the passage quoted should now be familiar – the good/evil distinction is mapped onto "republicans" and "royalists." But note the chain of signification in the middle that moves from "the innocent, 'to' the weak, 'to' the unfortunate, 'to' humanity." This is the core of Robespierre's *compassionate universalism.* And it is founded on the idea that those who *were radically excluded* will, via revolution, come to rule (in some sense of the word). The last shall be first, and other shall rule rector.

Robespierre's apocalyptic language of revolution can be easily mocked (or, if you are Slavoj Žižek [*2007*], defended) for its Orwellian nature (e.g., "The revolution's government is the despotism of liberty over tyranny" [*Robespierre 2007b: 115*]). But something very important is happening in this overheated language which was used to justify the Terror:

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[9]   For contention over gender, the othering of women from the status of citizen, and the attempt by women to organize politically to grasp power *via* citizenship, see Joan Landes' study of the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women [*Landes 1988: 13–151*].

a claim is being made on behalf of the radically dispossessed, those whose *needs to achieve bare life* were decimated by grain monopolists, a greedy government, and so on.

Hannah Arendt interpreted this moment in the French Revolution as the irruption of the social (the world of needs) into the political (the world of freedom), and thus traced the Terror to the radical compassion and romanticism that Rousseau and Robespierre had for the hungry of Paris [*Arendt 1990: 86–96*].[10] And she noted that the elites of the American revolution were not confronted with the same problem, in part because of the presence of slave labor in their midst. The American founders' declarations, she argued, though possessed of a "certain weightlessness" thus maintained at least the *possibility* of political freedom. How can we interpret these complex issues?

It would appear that the advent of a reciprocal state of exception, and the emergency powers that emerged performatively within it, allowed certain others – those reduced to a kind of day-to-day uncertainty and hunger, the poor of Paris – to access political person-hood; to become actors and demand something of rectors like Robespierre. They *exited their structural state of exception during the revolution.* This is what, in the end, interests radical political philosophy so much about the sans-culottes.

But there were still other others; relegated in the body and in space to a continuation of the structural state of exception. *Via* their *assembled presence in Paris* and their *bodies as signifiers*, the sans-culottes could perform themselves, via a politics of assembly [*Butler 2015*], into always already status as part of the modern French "nation" qua social body. Robespierre's rhetorical fireworks had, for the public life of Paris, a clear and present ref-erent, a set of people indexically available for him to point to when he made an executive decision. For reasons geographical, legal, and interpretive, the formerly enslaved revolu-tionaries in Saint Domingue did not have this accession to the role of an actor available. The revolutionaries in Saint Domingue could not manifest *en masse* in Paris, using their bodies as indexical signs. But there *were blacks in Paris*, who demanded abolition for the enslaved in the colonies. But those persons were excluded *qua bodies* via the interpretation of the sign of skin color, which was *interpreted in Paris as if it were an indexical mark of inferiority.* Thus the enslaved *nègres* had been, through years of power and violence, placed outside of the social "body" that "experienced" the revolution. And this meant that they were not *others in whose name rectorship could be carried out.* Rather than the part that had no part, the enslaved persons of Saint Domingue were no part at all. There is thus a longer arc of liberty and slavery with which we must interpret the modern, and modern revolutions.

This longer arc explains why Robespierre's early speech against the enshrinement of legal slavery focused mostly on how such a move by the Assembly would be used against it by Counterrevolutionaries. It also explains why the metaphor of slavery was, perhaps, more important to Robespierre than slavery itself. In the utopian imagination of the "Heavenly City" of the enlightenment philosophers, the "dark side of the light" was not Haiti and colonialism but the religious superstitions of the *ancien régime* [*Becker 2003*]. The USA, in which the use, abuse, and terrorization of enslaved persons were part of the day-to-day lives of the men who ran the Federal Government, the performative situation was radically

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[10] The potential elective affinities and significant differences between Arendt's argument and Furet's intervention in *Penser la Revolution Francaise* will be considered as part of a work in progress with the philosopher Michael Weinman. In this and the next paragraph, the reader will surely hear echoes of Furet.

different; this setting gives a very different meaning to the idea of "modernity disavowed" [*Fischer 2004*]. It is well known that, in the early years of the new American republic, much of politics pitted those who sympathized with Britain against those who sympathized with the Revolutionary French. What is perhaps less appreciated is how terrified American elites were, not of the French, but of the Haitian revolution; it was not the murder of the King, but the murder of plantation owners, that panicked the rectors of the USA.

In a crisis, the reciprocal state of exception between actors and their rectors creates the conditions in which certain others can *enter the scene* and transform themselves into actors. In the lawyer from Arras, the hungry of Paris indeed found an advocate. His virtuoso rhetorical performance consisted of a demand to make the last first and the first last. This was a project pursued with violence and terror. But Robespierre's use of the language of otherness to perform and justify the Terror depended fundamentally on the *assembled presence* of the sans-culottes upon the stage of the Revolution, and it mobilized longstanding enlightenment discourses, many of which explicitly excluded blacks and women from full personhood.

This history, furthermore, thematizes something very important about the difference between a reciprocal state of exception and a structural state of exception. Both involve actors who experience radical uncertainty about what tomorrow will bring – including the sheer terror of not knowing what the rules are, who governs, and from where violence will emerge. But the essence of a reciprocal state of exception is that for those who participate in as actors, their uncertainty *is socially recognized, and indeed thematized as the central experience of "society."* In contrast, for those trapped in a structural state of exception, it is precisely the non-recognition of the experience of terror that is constitutive.

5. Reinterpreting the Interpretation of the Terror

In the speeches of Robespierre, one can see the tensions that result from making "the people" sovereign in a democratic revolution, and thus also of the problem of *speaking for* the people [*Livesey 2001*]. How the people are actually represented in speech and argument, and how they are then *symbolically enacted in performance,* by a state that claims to represent them, is the question of modern democratic republics. This question became particularly acute (and devastating in its violent "resolution") during the Terror, and upon delving into that maelstrom we find, in its midst, and indeed in its supposedly proudest moment – the abolition of slavery – the key to the production of otherness in modernity.

These tensions between rectors, actors, and others, concerning representation, which was central to the actual struggle for power in 1793 and 1794 in Paris, is represented in the historiography of the Terror, and in the theoretical debate about sovereignty and exceptionality. The historiography oscillates, sometimes wildly, sometimes with a view towards synthesis, between 1) an explanation (usually "progressive") that the terror was a result of *circumstances*, and thus derailing of what was an assertion of the rights of the people, and 2) an explanation (usually "conservative") that the Terror was always already contained in the logic of the violent overthrow of the *ancien régime;* most recently the question of emotionality has suffused these debates with a new energy [*Tackett 2015*; *Jones 2014*; *Shank 2009*; *Mason 2015*]. Similarly, the debate about sovereignty and liberal modernity in political philosophy, in so far as it takes up the history of liberal democracies of the west over

the last 200 years, sometimes manifests as a debate about whether 1) liberal democratic modernity progressively supersedes the era of *lèse-majesté,* or whether 2) sovereign power lives on in modernity underneath the facade of liberal democracy, and is perhaps distributed in a perniciously capillary way [*Hardt – Dumm 2000*; *Agamben 2012*].

Yet both of these debates fundamentally underestimate the tremendous *contest of interpretation* that was central to accessing and using violence during the Terror, a point that Bonnie Honig has made very carefully about the complexities of democratic sovereignty and its performative interpretation [*Honig 2009*]. It is not enough to point out, with Schmitt and Agamben by one's side, that there was a circular aspect to the *arguments* of the Revolution's lawyers-become-rulers [*Bell 1994*].

I suspect most historians and political philosophers would agree with the idea that, on some level, the French Revolution was a "dramatic" series of events. But what has been underestimated is the strange political alchemy that results from intense social drama being staged during moments of radical political uncertainty, which is to say, during a reciprocal state of exception. The outpouring of speech and writing – of what François Furet identified as the "ideological" moment in the revolution – was not an accident. It was a product of how uncertainty privileges performative power. Progressive historians of the Terror look for its efficient cause in the circumstances. Conservative historians of the Terror interpret it as the final cause of the revolution of 1789. But in fact the reciprocal state of exception of the revolution demanded actors to give it form and thus to mean; meaning-making happens, in social life, *via* performance.

Modern Sovereignty: A World of Many Rectors and the Production of Others

From the perspective of the sociology of sovereignty set out here, the French Revolution looks different than it did to Marxists, neo-Tocquevillians, and their cultural opponents. Rather, following but extending Sewell, it appears as an *event* in which a crisis of rule opened onto representational struggles for inclusion in, and definition of, a new political game. The revolution destroyed with violence and speech – and paperwork [*Kafka 1994*] – a system in which the *enunciative* state of exception and the structural state of exception were combined propitiously to create a kind of equilibrium. The aristocratic order had a single rector, a very restricted world of actors (centered on the "influence" of aristocrats at the French Court and the surrounding salons), and a vast world of others who were not in the game of political power (these others differed tremendously in their access to economic and cultural power). The irruption of the others into this order, brought on by the war in North America, the financial crisis that it created, and the calling of the Estates General became, through a sequence of events, a reciprocal state of exception – the uncertainty of a revolutionary situation. Into this uncertainty, certain persons highly influenced by enlightenment discourse stepped, and as such, they became performers of the crisis.

These public performers of the French revolution became rulers confronted with an extraordinary set of circumstances – war with rest of Europe, counterrevolution in the countryside, and eventually, revolution and war in Saint Domingue. The leaders, however, who had "invented revolution" in their interpretation of the Bastille, confronted these circumstances, not "as they were," but rather via schemas of interpretation that contained republican understandings of the right rule and racist understandings of personhood.

These schemas also had lacunae and unexpected difficulties. In particular, as Robespierre quickly discovered, even the most "routine" emergency for the government would require justification in terms that would point, not to his own judgment, but to an interpretation of the needs of "the people" that he would have to perform for an audience – the Jacobin Club, the Assembly, or the Convention. He used this ambiguity very much to his own advantage as (temporary, partial) sovereign, until it was used against him in his arrest.

Yet in this very ambiguity that we associate with the emotional intensity of the Terror and the birth of the modern "witch hunt," we also find the possibility of democratic pluralism. The difficulty of representation that, when rhetorically navigated, took Robespierre from "the innocent" to "the weak" to "the unfortunate" to "humanity" was indeed partially unleashed for the world by the "emergency thinking" that took place during the French Revolution. For what the revolutionaries struggled to comprehend was how to *use* politics – politics in the sense of appearance before one's fellow citizens, and the ability to *act together* that emerges from the speech that occurs in this situation – to create a social order in which power accrued, in a partial way, to a larger mass of rectors. The struggle of the French Revolution was indeed the struggle to create a society in which many, many individuals, *qua human persons* (rather than as holders of this or that status or office)*,* had access to sovereign decision-making.

This was a radical revaluation of values, for it made actors-in-society responsible for the basic acts of sovereignty – to decide exceptions, and say what was inside and what was outside the law. In the long arc of history, the French revolution left a tremendous legacy – it was a revolution to create many rectors. In its self-justification, its humanist language argued that the criteria for inclusion in sovereignty should be the existential fact of being a person.

Yet this project simultaneously overproduced others who were robbed of personhood. It could not admit women to the new public sphere, for fear of sexual chaos. It could not abolish slavery, and when the abolition of slavery was forced upon it, it retained a concept of racial hierarchy as the basis for who would be allowed into the utopia of the modern. These exclusions were justified via reference to fitness to rule, to "do politics." It thus set the stage for modernity's horrifying history of structural states of exception. My argument herein is that these aspects of modernity should be understood in terms of a question that haunted the men who led the French revolution: who rules?

This question haunts social theory today, as it attempts to comprehend the relationship between the ambitions of democracy and the realities of global inequality, violence, and the refugee crisis. In *Dark Side of the Light,* Sala-Molins laments the exclusions on display at the bicentennial of the French Revolution in 1989. He holds out hope that, when the history of the Revolution is written in 2089, the voices of those muzzled by the Code Noir will finally be heard; Toussaint will be brought into the Panthéon [*2005: 14–150*]. It is, I think, a call for a history of the French Revolution without exceptions. One might imagine a similar call for social and political theory; but it would be, instead, for a new and different solution to the problems of sovereignty bequeathed to us by modern politics. Even if such a discourse could be created "in theory" – and I am not sure at all that it can be – it may take a measure of creativity comparable to that on display in late eighteenth-century Paris to make such an intellectual ambition a part of the actual politics of the world. But the impossible has been accomplished before, as we know from the history of the French Revolution.

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The French Revolution and the Craft of the Liminal Void: From the Sanctity of Power to the Political Power of the Limitless Sacred

CAMIL FRANCISC ROMAN*

Francouzská revoluce a tvorba liminální prázdnoty: Od svátosti moci k politické síle bezmezného posvátna

Abstract: This paper argues for a political anthropological approach to the study of the French revolution. Looking at the revolution as a moment of liminality, it substantiates two interconnected points. The first is that a proper understanding of the revolutionary dynamic and its lasting effects have to engage closely with the transformation of the sacred and its relation to the existential void. Situated in post-Durkheimian sociology and post-Kantian philosophy, this argument advocates the methodological normalization of metaphysics, drawing attention to the fact that faith belongs to the symbolic, existential and representational realities of any political order, and hence also of its underlying knowledge systems. The second point argues that through the sacrifice of Louis XVI, the French revolution consecrated the ritual and existential sacrifice of the Christian Father. This historical experience is conceptualized as the people's third body, and the new configuration of the sacred to which it gives birth is interpreted in terms of the liminal void. In this way, the French revolution is shown to constitute the transition from a political order of embodiment – participation in the divine, symbolized by the sacred royal body to a political order of bodies; participation in the liminal void, symbolized by the sacred empty place of the power of the modern democratic imagination.

Keywords: French revolution; liminality; genealogy; sacred; post-Kantianism; modern democracy; the third body of the people; secularization

Introduction: From Political Embodiment to Political Bodies

In this paper, I draw a large bow around the methodological assumptions underlying by far the largest part of the scholarly work on the French revolution. Inasmuch as the revolution was about the social overcoming of the sacred monarchy and of a political power that explicitly assumed Christian metaphysical participation in reality, the analysis and interpretation of this event must bring clarity into the problematic of the sacred and its relation to power and political order. Even more, it has to be able to deal with the concrete person of Louis XVI as the embodiment of the royal sacred and as a Christian prince trying to make sense of the world around him and acting (and non-acting) accordingly. Yet, puzzling as it is, this is exactly not what the enormous literature on the French revolution achieves. Instead, the interpretation and analysis of the revolution focuses almost exclusively on the implicit or explicit secular narrative of progressive versus non-progressive

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forces, the yardstick for understanding the revolutionary change and modern democratic power being given by the dynamic between the three programmatic values of the revolution: freedom, equality, and brotherhood. The result is a dominant discourse that overstates the case of various social, economic, and political forms of rationalism. On the rare and cursory occasions when the sacred is addressed, it is reduced in Durkheimian fashion to a mere social construct of varying importance and the previous (Christian) "religious" relegated to a regressive logic of history or an epistemological "misrecognition."

Rather than taking this status quo for granted, this must be problematized and hence understanding the methodological underpinnings of the modernist literature becomes necessary. As I will show in this paper, at stake is nothing less but that which constitutes human experience itself. In order to grasp the experiential level of the revolutionary dynamic, I take a political anthropological approach to the subject matter. Political anthropology refers not simply to the concern with political power, but also with overcoming the methodological opposition between the individual and the state, and the social and the political. It is aiming at retrieving the link between political order and constitutive historical experience, connecting them to the existential elements of personhood [*Szakolczai 2008*; *Lefort 1988*; *Wydra 2012*]. This existential dimension underscores processes of meaning formation, and the way symbols allow members of society to represent themselves and experience society as of their human essence. Accordingly, every political order in history reflects exactly the type of men of which it is composed [*Voegelin 1987: 27–106*]. The consequence of such a perspective is that the sacred has to be brought back into the analysis, not along the lines of a Durkheimian reductionism [*Durkheim 1967*; *Alexander – Giesen – Mast 2006*] but in the full recognition that there is an ontological-metaphysical dimension to reality – we are not simply bodies, but also embodiments – that cannot be controlled or purified by the modern scientific method and philosophy (moderno-centrism). In the present context, this means that the paper departs from both (Neo-)Kantian/liberal theorizing and (Neo-)Marxist/socialist diagnosticating, both of them being in fact closely intertwined via "critique."

The way I propose to overcome moderno-centrism at the conceptual level is by using the approach of liminality and looking at the revolution essentially as a ritual event gone "mad." With this move, I am able to substantiate two points. The first is that a key part of the revolutionary dynamic and the transformation of the sacred therein was the presence of the liminal or existential void. "Eventifying" history on a methodological level [*Nietzsche 1967*; *Weber 2016*; *Foucault 1979*; *Foucault 1984*; *Sewell 2005*] involves not only breaking down any "mechanism" into a process of social change, but also recognizing the underlying emotional charges with the void on a substantive/ontological level, providing the link between two distinct forms. The second point is that the historical mediation for the transformation of the sacred is what I call the "*people's third body*," or in other words, the symbolic and existential sacrifice of the Christian Father through the ritual sacrifice of Louis XVI. This new sacred form ordering the world-view and sociological reality of the people became symbolized by the empty democratic place of power and is interpreted here in terms of the liminal void. In this way, the French revolution is shown to mark the threshold of the movement from a political order of embodiment – which provides for a participatory ontology within a Christian metaphysical world-view, and which is symbolized by the sacred royal body – to a political order of bodies providing for a participatory

ontology in the liminal void, and which is symbolized by the sacred empty place of power. With this transition, political power lost its former characteristic of sanctity, becoming attached to a type of the sacred that in its concrete manifestation can encompass – because of itself essentially formless – any immanent category of human existence. Contrary to common presumptions, this makes the sacred not a thing of the past, but rather shows its potentially limitless nature in secularized modernity. This claim cannot be pursued here any further but has to be already stated as such and also connected as a conjecture with the modern tendency to limitless conflict and perpetual crisis.

Outline of the Argument

In the following I start by introducing the concept of liminality, explaining how to understand its methodological application to the French revolution. Next, I trace the experiential source of moderno-centrist interpretations of the revolution to the liminal void – the point of existential suspension – that, if taken as an all-encircling reality, leads to a kind of metaphysics and scientific discourse that annihilates the truth and actuality of any concrete mode of experience in history. I identify the source of this kind of reasoning in Kant's natural and critical philosophy, Kant being also the exact contemporary of the French revolution. In a subsequent step, I link Kantianism as a symbol of knowledge standing for modernist philosophy more generally, to the historical literature of the French revolution, highlighting its shortcomings. After this and given the constraints of a paper, rather than going into the details of the events of the French revolution and tracking down the symbolic and existential disincorporation of the royal sacred,[1] I follow here a different route and discuss the revolution by taking to aid Harald Wydra's work on the liminal origins of democracy and Claude Lefort's idea of the "empty place of power." This allows me to show how to understand the transformation of the sacred in terms of the liminal void that – *via* the "*people's third body*" – became a constitutive part of modern democratic power and imagination. Finally, I conclude by bringing together the potential methodological and substantive contributions of my paper to the field of the French revolution, historical sociology, and the human sciences more generally.

Thinking the French Revolution with Liminality

Liminality was first used in order to grasp the threshold situation in which communities found themselves while going through a *rite of passage* [*Gennep 1960 (1909)*]. After a rather long dry spell in which the concept was marginalized,[2] Victor Turner's anthropology of experience [*1969, 1985*] picked up the hints provided by Gennep and suggested the use of the concept for the study of large-scale societies. From that moment scholars across disciplines used its theoretical and methodological propositions to study transformative

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[1] For a comprehensive political anthropological analysis and interpretation of the French revolution, see my doctoral thesis [*Roman 2017*], currently in preparation as a research monograph for *Routledge*.

[2] For a highly insightful and comprehensive conceptual history of liminality, outlining in the same time the concept's analytic purchase and boundaries, see Thomassen [*2014: 1–110*].

periods involving modern societies and whole epochs [*Eisenstadt 1995*; *Szakolczai 2000, 2015*; *Horvath – Thomassen – Wydra 2015*; *Roman 2018*].[3]

Yet what is at stake in liminality? The frequent failure to address such crisis moments like revolutions and wars is closely linked to the difficulty of grasping the unsystematizable, unquantifiable and irrational of historical experience itself. In this context, liminality is well placed to provide not simply a valuable key, but maybe the key to the problem. This is so because liminality is not yet another un-reflexive theory invented by the transcendental mind, but potentially the closest the social sciences have ever come to a universal "living fact."[4] This is the discovery that moments of personal and collective transition are organized and controlled socially through a ritual passage that can be divided into three parts: rites of separation, rites of transition and rites of incorporation [*Gennep 1960*]. Making the junction between Gennep's work and Dilthey's philosophy of life, between liminality and experience, Turner and Szakolczai recognized that the tripartite ritual process of the rites of passage describes nothing less than the structure of lived experience [*Thomassen 2014: 88*].[5] In other words, liminality refers to an event in which we go through something; it is the process of a concrete spatial and emotional crossing of boundaries. As such, it brings into focus how people behave in relation to any in-between situation or object, any in-between place or moment [*Thomassen 2014: 1–7*].

From this follows four interconnected and highly significant points. The first is the recognition that liminality allows us to approach revolutions, and indeed any moment of radical uncertainty, not from a cause-outcome perspective but by emphasizing the transformative power of the situations which are lived through in such events [*Wydra 2007: 32*]. This can be done not simply by relegating the analysis to a discursivity of cultural change as established *ex post facto*, overloading the newly created reality with justifying rationality, but by actually highlighting what is hidden or implied behind such discursivity. In this sense, liminality provides the conceptual tools for nothing short of a methodology of social change. It links up with genealogy and with approaches that eventify history, but also goes beyond them, grounding them methodologically.

The second point is that revolutions have to be analyzed as ritual events [*Thomassen 2012*]. Revolutions as events resemble rituals precisely because the ritual process provides the structure of human experience. Therefore, liminality suggests that the analysis concerning political power and the specific outlook of a political order has to be brought in connection with the way the ritual process is imagined, enacted, represented or broken. By the same token, the dissolution of political order during a revolution is primarily a breakdown of the social boundaries established by the ritual process underlying the manifestation of power. Seen from such an angle, the "discovery" of liminality necessitates nothing less than "re-writing" the very foundations of political anthropology.[6]

The third point is that liminality offers one possible way of overcoming moderno-centrist perspectives that are rather too closely entangled with the conditions that they are supposed to explain. The reason behind this is that liminality refers to ritual passages, or in

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3 This list of works only provides a guide to the ways in which liminality is deployed here.
4 The expression belongs to van Gennep.
5 For experience as a formative event, or a transformation in the mode of being, see also the works of Eric Voegelin and Michel Foucault.
6 Indeed, such an attempt is currently under way [*Wydra – Thomassen*, forthcoming].

other words, to "experience" as the crossing of existential boundaries, itself an inescapable given across cultures and times. In addition, the anthropologists developing the concept of liminality were working in non-modern contexts and responding precisely to the conceptual deficiencies that they noticed in their (moderno-centric) formation when dealing with their "material" on the ground.

Finally, liminality draws attention to the point of existential suspension marked by radical confusion and contingency, emptying reality of existential content while also giving it a new form. It is the emotional charges with the void characteristic of crises situations that remain entirely un-noticed and un-theorized in moderno-centric approaches to the French revolution. As I will show below, this is the case precisely because the liminal void has become the experiential source of modern political order and of its associated and supportive knowledge systems. It is within the context of the liminal void that the metaphysical, faith-based dimension of human life is purified out of reality. As a consequence, the sacred as the concern with the divine is entirely neglected in the interpretation of the revolution, and the transformation of the sacred achieved by the revolution is reduced to a mere social construct without any broader epistemological meaning.

Moving Beyond Methodological Moderno-Centrism

In his first 1983 lecture at the *Collège de France*, an inspired Foucault brought together two key texts by Kant, *Was ist Aufklärung*? [1784] – the famous essay taking up the question of what is the Enlightenment, and *Der Streit der Fakultäten* [1798] – a text that deals in addition to other things, also with the question of what is the Revolution. Among the many interesting points made by Foucault, two are of particular importance, both pertaining to Kant's effort of understanding his age. The first is that for Kant the "Revolution is actually the completion and continuation of the very process of *Aufklärung*" [*Foucault 2010: 18*], the reason for this being very simple: as Kant aims to demonstrate in his second text, the Revolution is a sign and proof of the continuous progress of humanity. The second significant observation regards the common underlying thread of the two texts: the "public" is singled out as the key marker enabling us to recognize the reality of Enlightenment and of progress [*Foucault 2010: 7–21*]. The basis for this theory is Kant's demonstration that, in order to understand the revolution's meaning as an event in history, its content is entirely irrelevant: what counts as the sign and proof of progress is "the sympathy of aspiration which borders on enthusiasm" of the spectators of the revolution, i.e. of those not directly involved in it as actors. From such premises, Kant constructs a "secular" progressive philosophy of history, modeling the entire existence of humans as a *Theatrum Mundi*, as a world reduced to an arena shared by actors and spectators, with the critics in the position of gods [*Szakolczai 2012*].

There are two reasons why this is important for my paper. For once, the argument that what happens inside the revolution is of no significance for understanding its meaning is as much a peculiar as it as a sociologically and historically absurd claim. Therefore, by following the spirit of genealogy [*Nietzsche 1967*; *Weber 2016*; *Foucault 1979*; *Foucault 1984*], this paper makes the reverse methodological argument: in order to grasp the meaning/transformation of the revolution and its lasting effects (including in the field of knowledge forms), its events are exactly what we have to look at. Now, while this should seem like a

normal, even trivial statement, it is not quite so as things get more complicated. The historical consequences of Kant taking his stance in the way he did have left deep marks on our methodological treatment of the revolution. With this, I am coming to my second point.

Between 1784 and 1798, the fourteen years time span lying between the two texts, Kant had the most productive years of his life, also providing for the philosophical and epistemological justification of his positions on the French revolution. In this way, he was at the "origin" of some of the most important subsequent philosophical developments: modern critical philosophy as a preoccupation with truth claims to ensue ultimately into modern scientific discourse in the human sciences, and the specifically modern answer regarding the direction of history, making the secular progressive philosophy of history something like a dogma. As I will show below, on an experiential basis, both of these are achieved by Kant by essentially purifying historical events of their intrinsic meaning and reality, or in other words, by looking at life through the lenses of the liminal void. With this new field of experience emerging and claiming a central place in reality, the thought of politics and its praxeology became the management and organization of bodies, or chaos theory. Putting it differently, modernist philosophy and politics became the concern with the aporia-ridden organization of symmetric relations between bodies along the axis of "liberté, égalité, fraternité," making the often forgotten second part of that motto – "ou la mort" – the (hidden) constitutive element of a sacrificial logic of the future.

Kant and the Craft of the Liminal Void

Right at the outset of the revolution, Immanuel Kant published his *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788) with a paragraph containing one of the most famous sentences of his entire career: "Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the more often and steadily we reflect upon them: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me." This pronouncement, however, is not just famous but can stay in place as motto for Kant's virtually entire philosophical work [*Guyer – Wood 1998: 1–2*] and in my view, it constitutes the key for grasping the way in which modern interpretations of the revolution overlook the presence of the existential void in the transformation of revolutionary power and are also unable to deal analytically with the sacred.

Since times immemorial up until the dawn of modernity, the vision of the sky has produced feelings evoking majestic beauty and an awe-inspiring connection to the eternal. Unsurprisingly, the sense of rapture produced by the vision of the sky was one of the most fundamental possibilities of discovering the divine element in the human soul and experiencing a life with meaning [*O'Connor 2014*]. In this regard, Kant did what human beings have always done: he connected the vision of the sky (the starry heavens) with meaning (the moral law). Yet despite apparent similarities, Kant's sky was exactly *not* the place of the encounter with the divine. With the advent of the scientific revolution in the 17th century, a new image of the skies emerged, one dominated by modern astronomy and science, of which Kant was one of the most prolific actors [*Schönfeld 2014*].

In this new cosmological vision, Newtonian physics are credited with the most decisive modern introduction of the void as an empty space filled with bodies and forces. Not the forms and their inherent powers, but the void is now the founding principle and substance of the world, at once putting everything in motion and also nullifying each body and its

identity through infinite decomposition and transmutability [*Horvath 2013: 87–107*]. Yet, while Newton never reached the vision of a purely mechanical cosmos deprived of the divine [*Rynasiewicz 2014*; *Sallis 2012: 259–263*], in Kant's natural philosophy the self-sufficient mechanics of colliding (creative) forces and bodies takes over, human beings and intelligent life, in general, becoming henceforth problems of understanding "matter density" [*Schönfeld 2014*]. As such, the "starry heavens" of Kant was not the place of divine order and harmony to participate in through the experience of serene beauty and almightiness. Rather, Kant was looking at the skies as a spectator in awe before the infinite and irrational play of forces of attraction and repulsion creating the cosmological chaos. In the face of such a cosmos, human life is literally nullified, becoming meaningless, even pointless. In this sense, the modern cosmological vision makes possible the experience of the ultimate liminal void, an encounter with the plainly "irrational" as the lack of measure, proportion, balance or harmony.[7] Kant's natural philosophy has internalized and "rationalized" this irrational cosmos at a heavy price: now human experience itself is fragile and meaningless, in great need of a new anchor.

It is here that the critical project comes into play. Suggestively, Kant's intellectual effort is captured by Andrew Fiala in his introduction to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* in the following terms*:* "Kant's life is best described as heroic struggle to discover order within chaos or, better, an effort to fix human thought and behaviour within its proper limits" [*2004: vii*]. This striking sentence illustrates the fundamental continuity of spirit between Kant's pre-critical period, concerned as it was with the effort of bringing "rational" order into the cosmological chaos, and his critical period in which he attempted to ground the problem of human life and experience within "new" limits. While recent philosophical literature has come to recognize a greater level of continuity in Kant's entire work (pre-critical, critical, and post-critical) than assumed previously [*Edwards 2000*], my point regards not the question of establishing connections between different substantive arguments based on their internal analytics, but continuity between two very different types of works (pre-critical and critical) based on a common experiential source [*Voegelin 1974, 1987, 1990*]. And here the crown jewel of his critical period – the method of the transcendental argument – is also the one to link Kant's experience of the liminal void present in his natural philosophy, to what has come to be known as his critical philosophical and political work.

This connection is realized in two steps. First, by enquiring into the *a priori* conditions for the possibility of human experience, Kant's transcendental philosophy deals with people as "bodies," standardizing them along with the ontology of the other bodies of the universe.[8] Second and following from the first, once the epistemologically policed human subjects have been established as bodies, the transcendental argument is followed and expanded in a series of writings to engulf all human affairs, from politics to morality, religion, history, and law [*Kant 1987, 1991, 2001, 2002*]. By this, I mean that Kant constructs a discourse of knowledge that claims to be ontologically valid/true only in so far as it is independent of any substantive references to historically and/or empirically grounded

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7   This use of the term "irrational" is deduced from the Latin etymology of *ratio*. *Ratio* refers to something that has the right proportions, is harmonic and in balance.

8   "I call all cognition transcendental that is occupied not so much with objects but rather with our a priori concepts of objects in general. A system of such concepts would be called transcendental philosophy" [*Kant 1998, B 25 – A 12; 133*].

experience. In this way, it is clear that Kant looks at human life from a point in cosmos – the place of the ultimate void where the divine is absent and human experience is completely nullified and irrelevant for making ontologically real claims about the world. From this privileged standpoint – "the starry heavens above me" – he proceeds to formulate a "rationalist"/ "idealist" metaphysics – "the moral law within me" – to organize the chaos of colliding human bodies whose main characteristic now is the (noumenal) "free will," i.e., the ability to move the body outside of absolute determinism.

This interpretation finds an explicit support in a passage of Kant that makes the connection between the void in the sky (the place of infinite transmutability) and the liminal void on earth (the place of existential chaos and suspension) fully transparent: "But so long as they do not have the force of certainty, I cannot exchange my duty (as a *liquidum*) for a rule of expediency which says that I ought not to attempt the impracticable (i.e., an *illiquidum*, since it is purely hypothetical)" [*Kant 1991*: 89].[9] In this crucial but often overlooked passage, Kant argues that it is the moral categories of pure reason (the moral duty and the moral law) that can say something about the real nature of (historical) reality. As Kant confesses, it is the liquidum that is the source and expression of such categories; it is the place where the self has to situate itself in order to see the truth about history and how to achieve history's desirable ends. Accordingly, everything that has form is unreal and *hypothetical*, while everything that is formless (liquid) is real and absolutely true. I take this to be the clearest confession of the metaphysics of the liminal void in Kant's work.

In regard to the modernist interpretations of the French revolution, it is precisely this successful rationalization of the void in the sky and of the void on earth that makes Kant's transcendental philosophy so appealing and also in important ways misleading. In his political writings, Kant's transcendental reasoning produced a human ontology and philosophy of history built around the concepts of progress, cosmopolitan republicanism, universal right and a "pure" rational/moral religion [*2001*; *1991*]. By following the basic assumptions of this meta-historical language, modernist interpretations and analyses of the revolution remain blind to the experiential source of their own narrative (the liminal void), and consequently, they cannot integrate the sacred as the concern with the divine into the discussion on the transformation of political order, nor can they grasp the specific symbolization of the sacred as void in the modern understanding of power. The obvious problem here is that human experience is not solely about establishing the objective limits of our bodies following the precepts of the transcendental mind, but also about the spiritually transformative crossing of existential limits [*Szakolczai 2015*; *Dilthey 1988*]. Accordingly, Kant simply fails to see that the "limit" is not just a mental tool to establish objective conditions of knowledge, but also a real-life possibility, a situation of being "at the limit" that in turn must have implications for the very idea of knowledge/for epistemology.[10] This is to say that the reality of human embodiment creates a history that brings with itself an ontological-metaphysical dimension to human life that must be made a part of the social scientific analysis. It is to recognize that faith belongs to the symbolic and representational realities of any political and knowledge regime and that this, in turn,

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9   The sentence was published in September 1793. It will be remembered that this is the moment at which the revolution was already inside the quasi-apocalyptic phase of civil war, all out international war and the reign of terror.
10   See on this point also the late Wittgenstein [*2002*].

requires of social scientific practices of knowledge production the methodological normalization of metaphysics.

The French Revolution between Historic Melancholy and the Narrative of Social, Economic, and Political Rationalism

While attempting to capture the main narrative dimensions of the enormous cross-disciplinary scholarship on the French revolution, the following will only focus on historiography. There are two reasons behind this "reductionism." The first is that historians provide the narratives upon which more theoretical and social scientific studies operate. The second refers to the fact that the latter studies work mostly well within the methodological premises of the historians' narratives, an unsurprising situation given that academic boundaries across the human sciences are largely artificially constructed.

To start with, the historical discussions can be grouped into four broad stages of development.[11] The first begins with the revolution itself stretching through most of the 19th century. This could be termed, paraphrasing the work of Peter Fritzsche [*2004*], the stage of the melancholy of history in which the political and religious dimensions of the revolution were fully recognized, prompting that many existential tribulations to fill the "void" left behind by a broken society [*Orr 1990*; *Dunn 1994*; *Goldhammer 2005*]. After this first stage came the advent of socialist and Marxist accounts. The narrative of social, economic determinants of the revolution took thus over and became the orthodoxy of the first half of the 20th century, up until the mid-1970s [*Sewell 1994: 22–25*]. The strand of literature that questioned these Marxist and socialist assumptions and marking the third stage in the development came to be known as revisionism. This emphasized the political dimension of the revolution [*Furet 1971*] and also produced a series of studies steeped into the analytical category of culture broadly defined [*Hunt 1984*; *Ozouf 1988*; *Furet 1997*]. The revolution – its causes, processes, and consequences – became the playing ground for political identity – building through collective action and discursive and ritual practices. Finally, the latest development points towards what some have called the "neoliberal" or the "post-revisionist" trend. Common to this trend is a renewed emphasis on social conflicts and the re-immersion of the revolution in the array of concrete social and political interests and antagonisms to be found across the French society [*Kates 2001*; *Popkin 2002*]. Social classes refer now simply to the capacity of groups to define their interests in extraordinary circumstances.

What are we to make of all these narratives on the French revolution? From the perspective of my methodological argument, there are two aspects that have to be highlighted.[12] To start with, the Marxist/socialist, revisionist and post-revisionist or "neoliberal" directions of research mentioned above follow a narrative that does not move beyond the philosophical underpinnings of moderno-centrism. They hence reify a rationalist language that – following the Kantian method of the "condition of possibility" – reduces the problem

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[11] For good and comprehensive reviews of the 20th century historiography of the French Revolution, see *Stone 2002: 1–13*; *Doyle 1999: 5–42*; *Popkin 2002*; *Kates 2001*; *Sewell 1994: 22–33*.

[12] Here I am skipping over the first stage as it cannot be situated within a scientific discourse strictly speaking. However, its narrative of the "religious" nature of the French revolution is important as it connects neatly with the problem of the sacred discussed later.

of human experience to one of its constitutive parts and its measurement [*Taylor 1995*]. Since metaphysics as a vertical axis reaching for the divine has been scientifically outlawed, what remains in the open is a metaphysics that can only look down, breaking reality in ever "smaller" constitutive parts [*Tyson 2015*]. One of the upshots of this development is that "objectivity" across the human and social sciences follows the 19th-century evolutions of modern philosophy regarding the dichotomies between subject/object, agency/structure, and philosophical materialism/philosophical idealism [*Szakolczai 2004*]. In such a situation, the battle for scientific "objectivity" regards defining the element of reality that constitutes *prima causa* in the explanatory framework and is often grasped as a field of exclusion/combination between such dichotomies.

In this respect, my argument is that the discussion of "political ideas/culture/discourses" versus "individual interests and group factors" versus "material socio-economic determinants" underlying the scholarly debates between orthodox, revisionist and neoliberal/post-revisionist historians of the French revolution, has led unavoidably to a narrative and theoretical deadlock. This is so because the three main positions on the revolution run in a circle and they can do so endlessly. Instead, what we need is an analytical shift in terms of the problem. Having their experiential source in the liminal void of transcendental philosophy, the presented narratives miss the fact that in our quality as embodiments, human beings can remain suspended in an existential void. In other words, moderno-centrist approaches cannot grasp that part of the revolutionary dynamic were emotional charges with the void, the state of existential suspension and its symbolization in actual reality. Further, the problem of the sacred as the concern with the divine is in this way also entirely purified out of the reality of the revolution, and therefore also from the process of understanding it.

To conclude, this is to acknowledge that any social scientific attempt to explain historical phenomena must refer the underlying social processes back to human spirituality, i.e. to the problem of human beings and the experience of life specifically as the crossing of ontological limits, with all that this implies in the emergence of human difference and of new practices of existence out of the boundlessness of historical events. The purpose of social scientific inquiry cannot be reduced to the Kantian understanding of "objectivity" along the mentioned dichotomies, while the "real" world out there cannot be couched exclusively in terms of a philosophy of history circumscribed by the symbol of Kantianism. This means that unless one postulates the liminal void as a point of absolute knowledge, one cannot analyze and interpret the French revolution simply as a struggle between progressive and non-progressive forces, nor frame this discussion within a rationalist-utilitarian conception of human beings characteristic of Marxist/socialist and liberal (r)evolutionism.

The French Revolution and the Modern Democratic Imagination: The People's Two Bodies – or, The Passage from Sanctity to the Sacred

The remainder of this paper is devoted to capturing the ordering principle of reality that emerged on an experiential level during the French revolution and thus establishing its lasting consequences. To this purpose, I am building on the works of Harald Wydra and Claude Lefort, the former providing the most consistent and systematic attempt of

the last decade to construct a political anthropology of modern democracy [*Wydra 2007, 2012, 2015a, 2015b*].

Wydra argues that thinking modern democracy with liminality requires going beyond the juridical-institutional thought formulas on popular sovereignty and the corresponding models of political theory propounding a fictional contractualism. It also requires understanding political order beyond the methodological individualism of equally fictional rational and egoistic agents that are "free" to and choose among a range of convenient options [*Wydra 2015a: 3–4*; *Wydra 2015b: 201*]. This is so because modern democracies have their origins in historically contingent crises that endow them with an ambiguous nature. The ambiguity refers to democracy's "permanent interregnum," or the paradoxical state of a permanent authority vacuum based on the promise of emancipation on the one hand, and the need to rule and hence to possess a center of authority on the other [*Wydra 2015b: 183–186*]. Drawing on ideas from Claude Lefort and Ernst Kantorowicz, Wydra even speaks in this context of the "people's two bodies," the actual sociological reality of the people as a fractured and fragmented sociality, and the symbol of the people as one, as an imagined whole subdued to authority [*2015b: 187*].

However, how did the people's two bodies come about? Here the crucial insight is that liminal crises were overcome historically through a combination of institutional-legal and *ritual responses.* In circumscribing the emergence of democratic power, the emphasis must fall on the latter and this in a double way. The first relates to the simple point that pre- and non-democratic institutional practices had to collapse in order for democracies to emerge: people weren't born democratic, they became so in conditions of existential uncertainty and historical contingency. Therefore, bringing order in an extra-legal social context could only be achieved by experiencing ad-hoc new ritual forms of political representation. The second way refers to the fact that building a community of equals implied not only spontaneous crowd politics in ritual processions but also an original violence that was "channeled" through a particular type of ritual, that of human sacrifice [*Wydra 2015b*: *190–191*]. In other words, the claim to transparency and demystification of political power, corresponding to the canonic reading of modern democracy, hinges on the ways in which the ritual responses to liminal crises created a new lasting sense of the sacred and the profane, a trans-generational emotional bond carrying community spirit and consensus. As Wydra observes, rituals are always thought to be in connection with sacred things, and the rites of democracy are not different as they disclose the sacred of the people as a unified entity, as something with an essence. Put it differently, the "sacrality of symbols is the way in which the object is more than the mere sum of its parts and points to something beyond itself" [*2015b: 191*]. Wydra's last statement on the emergence of political order offers precisely such a systematic inquiry into the co-constitutive formation of politics and the sacred [*2015a*]. Important to specify here is that for Wydra, the sacred is not a religious doctrine, a metaphysical belief or a foundational principle of sovereign politics, but a constitutive force transforming political goals, aspirations and moral judgments [*2015a: 5–6*]. This is condensed in the striking sentence that "If politics is not engaged with the sacred, it is not politics" [*2015a: 16*]. As such, what sustains democracy over time (and any other regime) as an experience and existential practice is its underlying ritual process, its permanent dialogue with the sacred as brought into being during the liminal crisis.

Yet – following a genealogical and reflexive spirit – this paper does not deal with an insignificant instance of the "sacred," but with the actual event-sequence that shows the process by which a particular form of the "sacred" itself was historically constituted. We know that the sacred (*le sacré*) did not exist as an explicit, meaningful category of existential representation before the French revolution, being applied at most only to the person of the king. It is with this event that the sacred came to be expanded to social and political institutions in what can be seen as an immanentization of human spirituality [*Lefort 2006*; *Voegelin 1986*]. Before the French revolution and the modern age, the equivalent of the sacred was Christian sanctity, the idea and practice of saintliness as emerged during the Middle Ages [*Vauchez 2005*] and as it was still performed ceremonially at the court of Louis XVI [*Caiani 2012*]. In this sense, in order to capture the transformation from the sanctity of power to the political power of the sacred, we have to go beyond an understanding of the sacred that excludes a dialogue with the divine, as this is the very consequence of the revolution itself. At this point comes the brief discussion of the sacred empty place of power and its meaning.

The French Revolution as Historical Mediation of the Democratic Empty Place of Power

The idea of an empty place of power was initiated by French philosopher Claude Lefort in the context of his extensive efforts to understand the modern democratic imagination and the problem of modern totalitarianism through the methodological/ontological distinction between politics and the political [*Lefort 1986, 1988*; *Flynn 2012*]. The fact that he came up with a concept aimed to capture the "political" of modern democracy while specifically reflecting also on the French revolution can only provide more empirical weight to my analysis. In short, the politics of modern democracy means that "the locus of power is an empty place, it cannot be occupied – it is such that no individual and no group can be consubstantial with it – and it cannot be represented" [*Lefort 1988: 17*]. In other words, nobody can own the state or appropriate power indefinitely because the essence of modern democracy does not lie in a specific positive determination: not in a metaphysical/religious/transcendental principle, not in certainty, and not in a substantive identity. Rather, its essence is that the empty place of power points towards the absence of such things, as modern democracy strives for pure self-immanence: it does not refer to an outside, nor to an inside; not to the materialization of the Other, nor of the One [*1988: 225–226*].

In these thoughts, one can already see the first serious cracks in the deceptive powers of what we are dealing with. This is so because saying that a "place of power" does not embody a principle or a substantive identity, does not equal on the plane of reality with no principle/identity, but with a different kind of principle/identity; just as for example an anti-metaphysics is not a non-metaphysics but a different metaphysics, and an anti-theology is not a non-theology, but another theology; or just as the truth about "truth being relative" is not a non-truth but another truth, namely the truth that relativism wants to embody.[13] Similarly, "the power of nobody" – a perfectly accurate observation on the empty place of power – is not the power of "nobody," but of some-thing which is yet another

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[13] This is also why epistemological relativism is self-contradictory.

body. Lefort was to a degree aware of the problems posed by his observations although he was unwilling or unable to formulate this beyond the following very important statement. At the end of one of his most famous essays on the French revolution and the "theologic-political" frame of modern democracy, Lefort said:

> We must recognize that […] any move towards immanence is also a move towards transcendence […] any attempt to explain the contours of social relations implies an internalization of unity […] any attempt to define the objective, impersonal entities implies a personification of those entities. The workings of the mechanisms of incarnation ensure the imbrication of religion and politics even in areas where we thought we were dealing simply with purely religious or purely profane practices or representations [*1988: 254–255*].

So what is this hidden body, or this some-thing of the empty place of power? What is the "theologic-political" Lefort attempted to grasp? How do Wydra's two bodies of the people actually communicate with each other, what lies *in-between* them allowing them to capture form, each in the light of the other? What is their open-clearing (Heidegger)? In order to answer this same one question, we need to get a different angle on Lefort's decisive insight into the empty place of power. In short, the problem with Lefort's "theologic-political" is not that it is wrong but that it refuses to go the extra mile and disclose its own experiential source in the liminal void, thus perpetuating the constitutive failure of Kantian thought, only in a phenomenological disguise. To understand this we need to look at the following statement: "Of all the regimes of which we know, it [modern democracy] is the only one to have represented power in such a way as to show that power is an *empty place* and to have thereby maintained a gap between the symbolic and the real" [*Lefort 1988: 225*]. While the first part of the sentence is correct, the second is simply *not*. No society can actually maintain a gap between the symbolic and the real, the empty place of power and the "theologic-political" being, in fact, the symbolization of a very peculiar some-thing. In line with the argument made in this paper, this some-thing is the liminal void itself, the "positive" determination ordering our world and making thus the juncture between the real and the symbolic. Seen from such a perspective the thought that thinks (and "sanctions" or "rationalizes") modern democracy through the empty place of power is a type of metaphysics of the liminal void. To my knowledge, Lefort never problematized the question of metaphysics in his own thought, and this is exactly also the reason why Lefort's movement of thought is capable of bringing the politics of modern democracy into the light while concealing in the same time its constitutive power. In other words, we only have to let Lefort speak, and sooner or later we will stumble on the liminal void and how this makes the junction between the symbolic and the real.

Unsurprisingly, this is what Lefort has to say when he grasps the democratic moment: "Democracy is instituted and sustained by the dissolution of the markers of certainty. It inaugurates a history in which people experience a fundamental indeterminacy as to the basis of power, law, and knowledge, and as to the basis of relations between *self* and *other*, at every level of social life" [*1988: 19*]. Further, "this phenomenon implies an institutionalization of conflict" [*1988: 17*]. In a nutshell, this all but entirely overlaps with the experience and depiction of social liminality and the liminal void. This refers exactly to the condition of liminal fluidity: to the quasi-apocalyptic and terrifying experience of levelling and losing one's meaningful categories of existence; it refers to the institutional channelling of

conflicts once all extra-legal means have been exhausted; and it also refers to the mimetism of conflict: the internalization of schismatic behaviour and the rise of ideologically defined identity politics as an artificial creation of difference and sameness at the heart of the mechanism of power.

However, to say that the real and the symbolic of modern democracy are ordered by the liminal void, and to say that the imaginary of modern democracy constructs the metaphysics of the liminal void making the junction between the real and the symbolic, does not say yet what is implied, concretely and historically, in the liminal void and its metaphysics. It does not say what exactly is the sacred of the empty place of power, or what has been sacralized becoming thus a foundational touchstone for the modern democratic imagination and its deviant totalitarian forms.

The Sacrifice of Louis XVI: The Third Body of the People, or How the Liminal Void Captured Form in the Sacrifice of the Christian Father

In order to answer this question, and indicate how the democratic imagination and implicitly the modernist literature on the French revolution blur our vision, we need to turn to the tragic figure of Louis XVI. To my mind, the key to unlocking the puzzle lies in understanding the ways in which the liminal void managed to catch form existentially through the sacrifice of the Christian Father. This is to say that the sacrifice of Louis XVI did not simply take place as an act condemning kings and oppressive monarchic power as commonly seen in the literature. Rather, the peculiar nature of the sacrifice of Louis XVI refers to the fact that it was undertaken – consciously or not – against the power and symbol of a *Christian prince* standing analogically for the Christian Father. This has two dimensions.

In an inspired essay on the rise of modern nihilism, Albert Camus [*2000*] was acutely aware that the decapitation of Louis XVI figures as the symbolic and historical condemnation of the Christian God. Yet, in most 20th century histories of the revolution, the person and fate of the king, his trial, and execution have a very low profile [*Hardman 2000*]. This is all the more intriguing as overcoming at the social level the sacred monarchy of divine right and in a certain way also the Christian metaphysical world-view underlying it, was so to speak the very core of the existential process of the revolution. As shown elsewhere [*Roman 2015*], academic scholarship displays three paradigmatic positions regarding the sacred dimension of the French monarchy: one of "illusionism" in which the sacred is acknowledged as a social reality and used analytically only in so far as it can justify *ex post facto* the republican creed [*Walzer 1992*], one of "negation" in which the sacred while recognized, is also simultaneously denied any role in social theory and the social process [*Feher 1987*], or simply one of "absence" in which the sacred is neither here, nor there, utterly irrelevant for judging and understanding the revolution [*Furet 1996: 122*]. However, as argued before, thinking the revolution with liminality makes clear that the transformation of the sacred is essential to understanding the revolution's lasting effects and the meaning of the empty democratic space of power. Therefore, the destruction of a Christian metaphysical symbol through the sacrifice of Louis XVI cannot be separated in any sensible way from the (post-) revolutionary dynamics at the level of knowledge, politics, and society more largely.

There is, however, a layer of truth and reality in this argument that is not uncovered by adopting only the symbolic perspective of political anthropology. This is so because not only the ritual murder of the king is important here (Louis XVI as a *symbol* of the Christian prince/Father), but also the actual person of Louis, this element shifting the discussion to the level of philosophical anthropology. By following *Imitatio Christi* in the midst of crisis and being sacrificed at that, Louis shows how in a very concrete way the ritual process of the revolution was oriented *against* the Christian father (Louis XVI as Christian prince and the *analogical* reality of the Christian father). We cannot truly understand or think the dynamic of the revolution if we do not recognize the incredible magnitude of this fact. While such a claim cannot be fully substantiated within the boundaries of a paper, it is nevertheless central and needs to be stated as such, indicating its main signposts. The first aspect of this claim regards Louis XVI's Christian life conduct. Here things are quite clear as two recent monographs go at great length emphasizing and bringing into the open the strong Christian faith driving Louis XVI in his actions and relations to the world surrounding him [*Hardman 2000*; *Caiani 2012*]. To put it short: this was neither an absolutist nor an "enlightened" king. The second and thornier issue concerns understanding the exact nature of *Imitatio Christi* practiced by Louis XVI. Based on my reflections on the French revolution, the solution proposed here to solve this problem appeals to René Girard's anthropological and comparative work on the history of religion and mythology. This has two major reflexive developments. In a first step, Girard [1979] advances a *sui generis* theory of mimetic desire that explains how all (founding) myth and culture is to be traced back to an original sacrificial violence: a scapegoat is sought out in order to bring about communal pacification. In a second step, Girard substantiates how this sacrificial sacred marking the threshold of hominization was overcome historically through the Revelation of Christ. According to him, the Gospel texts contain the most effective way of unmasking sacrificial violence and the mechanism of scapegoating [1986], this being also the main reason why we are capable of grasping the instrumental lie and the mythological strata behind human sacrifice in the first place.

Without going any further into the complexities of Girardian anthropology, the key aspect to highlight is that *Imitatio Christi* refers in this perspective precisely to a practice of life that does not succumb to sacrificial violence when confronted with it, rather recognizing, exposing and overcoming it. And here Louis XVI was uniquely situated inside the French society at once to observe as a privileged "outsider" the unfolding sacrificial process and also to become its most important symbolic and existential object of polarization. Historians up to this day are puzzled by the duplicitous and contradictory nature of Louis' character and actions during the revolution. Yet beyond such observations and in the light of the above, it is vital to see that Louis was living his own inner passion, torn between the political exigencies that come from being a king and his conscious convictions and diagnosis of the situation. Perhaps the most striking document disclosing his inner torment is the letter[14] sent to his emigrated brothers from September 1791. In this letter, he is explaining the reasons for accepting the new constitution and expressing his resolution to seek – even beyond any hope of success – a course of action that avoids, by all means, the perils of civil and international war. While elements of his attempt to hold the right balance and pacify

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[14] For the content of the letter [see *Hardman 2000: 172–175*].

the French society at any *personal* cost are visible throughout the revolutionary crisis, it is this letter and the period before the fall of the monarchy until his execution (spring 1792 – January 1793) that display the king's *Imitatio Christi* with greatest clarity, generating the well known myth of a king who was not capable to reign, but certainly knew how to die [*Dunn 1994*; *Hardman 2000*].[15]

Summing up, thinking the execution of Louis XVI from the perspective of these two mutually reinforcing arguments – one at the level of political anthropology and one concerning the philosophical anthropology of the king's person – the symbolic and existential sacrifice of the Christian Father emerges as exactly the *third hidden body* on which the people's two bodies of modern democracy depend on surviving, mediating the relationship between them and orienting their history, and their sociological and "metaphysical" reality.

Conclusion

Methodological Contributions. This paper has attempted to bring contributions to the scholarship of the French revolution both on a substantive level, and also methodologically, thus going beyond the field and into the social and human sciences more generally. As regards methodology, the paper has argued for the relevance of a political anthropological take on the French revolution. It has shown that modernist interpretations and analyses of the revolutionary phenomenon reduce the latter to economic, social and political rationalism, itself underpinned by a tricky and quite simply flawed progressive philosophy of history. Instead, using the approach of liminality and focusing on the exact nature of "experience," this paper has gone beyond Durkheimian sociology and Kantian philosophy in three significant ways. First, the paper was able to integrate into the discussion the essentially always overlooked problem of the existential void, showing that key parts in the revolutionary transformation were emotional charges with the liminal void and the enduring symbolization of this void in terms of the sacred empty democratic place of power.

Second, this paper has suggested that liminality with its focus on the ritual process offers a methodology of social change that completes the insights gained by genealogical, processual and "event" sensitive social theory and historical sociologies. Third, the paper has emphasized the existentially open nature of human experience bringing to attention a concealed ontological-metaphysical dimension to human existence that cannot be simply purified out of political and social reality by the scientific method, nor "domesticated" by moderno-centrist philosophies of the liminal void. As such, the paper has argued that the sacred cannot be reduced to a Durkheimian category of mere social construction, and constitutes an invitation and opportunity to reflect on the methodological normalization of metaphysics in the social and human sciences. Specifically, there is a solid case to be made here for a reconsideration of classical and Christian forms of thought. *In-Between the Void and Political and Social De-Christianization.* On a substantive level, the paper has claimed that the process of overcoming the royal sacred and the sacrifice of Louis XVI as

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[15] For a social scientific analysis and demonstration of Louis XVI's pursuit of *Imitatio Christi*, hence going beyond narrative exposition [see *Roman 2017*].

a Christian king are the central existential axis in the dynamic of the French revolution. In view of the ritual process underlying any established political order, the ritual murder of the Christian prince cannot be taken lightly and must be formulated explicitly as a particular brand of the secularization thesis at the heart of the modern democratic imagination. This argument follows standard Weberian methodology: it identifies the conditions of emergence for a phenomenon – the people's third body as the experiential basis for the modern democratic sacred –, and its lasting effects – secularization as the ritual process of sacrificing the Christian prince and analogically, the Christian Father.[16] Therefore, understanding secularization in modernity does not refer only to the problem of quantifying the public/private marginality of religion in general or its privatisation [*Casanova 1994*], nor to the question of determining the impact of existential pluralism on the lived experience of belief [*Taylor 2007*], and not to the "theologic-political" implied in the modern democratic imaginary [*Schmitt 2005*; *Lefort 2006*; *Agamben 1998*; *Vries – Sullivan 2006*]. Recognizing the reality of the people's third body indicates something different and more specific, namely that the democratic sacred guards as an ordering reality not against religion as such, but against *Christian religion* as a manifestation of political power and as an existential symbol of representation.

There is, however, more to the argument than just saying that in the aftermath of the French revolution Christian religion was gradually put on the Index on a historical, political and sociological level. Following the genealogical idea of "backward inference" [*Nietzsche 2001: 235*], it is clear that Christian inspired spirituality did not simply vanish during the French revolution and the birth of modern politics but was put to "work" by the same. In this sense, the people's third body (the modern democratic sacred) performs not just the political function of the ritual hangman of the Christian Father, but also the function of a genuine *switchman*, to repeat the famous Weberian metaphor, re-orienting world-images. To give just a few examples, for Camille Desmoulins and for countless revolutionaries ever since, the revolution was the real Christianity as Jesus was in actual reality a good old "sans-culotte." Further, liberals in the tradition of Kant are claiming that post-revolutionary conditions paved the way for the best of Christianity. Similarly, the various Marxists, socialist, communists, but also fascists and Nazis all claimed to make real the promises of (mostly hated) historical Christianity about "paradise" and brotherhood [*Voegelin 1987*; *1997*].[17] As Alain Besançon [*2005: 104–111*] puts this, a kind of *perversa imitatio* took place in regard to the Old Testament (Nazism as the reverse ideology of the chosen Jewish people), and the Old and New Testaments (Communism as an immanentist messianic sect with its own redemptive agents).

It is impossible to understand the political and sociological evolutions in the European history of the past 200 years without acknowledging the existence of the *people's third body* and its functions. While my case is not an overarching claim about every single dynamic of post-revolutionary European history, it nevertheless sheds light on the way the "political" of modern democracy and the specific outlook of its politics determine the logic of reality

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[16] Of course, Christian kings have been assassinated or sacrificed in public before Louis XVI, yet not for the reason of being Christian kings *per se* (see, for example, the execution of Charles I in England).

[17] For a concrete and particularly insidious example on this activity of forging [see *Figes – Kolonitskii 1999*] who show how the Bolsheviks attempted to win over Russian peasantry by claiming to be Christians, not any kind, but the best.

underpinning our contemporary lives. It also shows that the problem of existential nihilism is not simply a matter of the political extremes of modernity but also, via the liminal void, of the "centre" and the very way in which modern democratic imagination seems incapable of naturalizing any kind of lasting "tradition" that goes beyond the field of an empty space and the mythological strata of pure self-immanence. The snag here is that the *Doppelgänger* of this pure self-immanence is nothing other than the limitless sacred with its inbuilt proclivity to limitless conflict and perpetual crisis.

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Camil Francisc Roman completed a doctoral thesis on the political anthropology of the French Revolution at the University of Cambridge. He has a highly cross- and interdisciplinary focus on modern revolutions as symbolic and experiential processes of transforming modes of consciousness. He is interested in reflexive and interpretative approaches to the human sciences, with an emphasis on anthropologically and historically oriented theory. The long-term goal of

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Historical Sociology in Russia*

N I K O L A Y   V.   R O M A N O V S K I Y **

Historická sociologie v Rusku

Abstract: The author of this paper discusses the current state of historical sociology in Russia reflected in the respective section of the Sociological studies journal. After noting the potentialities of the discipline, the author summarizes the overall output of the 20 years' long existence of this section. The basic preoccupation in the initial phase of the section's existence was to get – and convey to readers – a clear understanding of the essence and functions of contemporary historical sociology (HS in the text below), to introduce its potentialities to the Russian sociologist audience. However, even today there are few regular contributors, authors tend to delve into minor issues, and even resort to long surpassed views on the discipline. A most urgent issue for Russian historical sociology today is, according to the author, to draw lessons from Russia's recent centuries to understand the essence of Russia's present as it is penetrated by its past: "Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under the circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living" (K. Marx). This is the essence of the enigmas to be deciphered by historical sociologists. The author formulates some such enigmas (like the proverbial Russian rake repeatedly stepped-upon) observable in recent (as well as earlier) events in the country.

Keywords: historical sociology; journal's section; Russia's sociology; history of sociology; sociology and history; contemporary Russia; lessons of history

The new section "Historical Sociology" featured for the first time in the *Sociological Studies* journal in the May 1998 issue (No. 5). Since then, the audience of the journal has had several opportunities a year to read materials on the topic. The section launched under the following circumstances: when joining the staff of the journal in September 1997, I (the author) was entrusted, among other sections, with the "HS" section, along with a pile of texts eventually – according to journal's head editor – to become the first installment of this section. Symptomatically, the contents of the May 1998 section reveal a lack of any uniform understanding of the essence of HS. The introductory text by Zh. T. Toshchenko (head editor) [*Toshchenko 1998*] on historical memory was followed by N. Romanovskiy's text on the definitions of HS as circulated in various sources and historical sociology's uses in the then Western Sovietology [*Romanovskiy 1998*]. E. B. Galkin summarized and discussed data on 83–84 leading personalities of Russia from Rurik († 879) to 1917 [*Galkin 1998*], demonstrating the characteristics of supreme power holders of the country in its past. With hindsight, I see Galkin's material was nearest to the correct notion of HS. The section

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ended with a paper on the politics of grain (bread) pursued by the USSR government [*Popov 1998*], clearly belonging to social history. In editing the papers for this installment, the question of the essence of HS did emerge, though I failed to find any clear-cut definition.

The HS section of the journal had a pre-history. The Journal's head editor had been firmly motivated to make this step, and competent enough in trends and innovations in the discipline of sociology. He had learned the significance of the impact of the past on human beings, through traditions, arrangements, and memories, from personal experience in researching the social consciousness of USSR citizens. This at a time when the flow of field studies left no time for high-level temporal generalizations or searching for the roots and origins of current events. The significance of HS-studies was also stimulated by the rapidly developing international cooperation with the global sociological community during this period. Russian (post-Soviet) sociologists did know the importance of HS, the "historical turn" in international sociology, the "Renaissance" of HS – though then this was a recent development. The head editor of the Sociological studies journal, Zh. T. Toshchenko (academically busy with such issues as historical memory, historical consciousness, etc.), became a convinced supporter of the idea of introducing such a section in the journal and permitted no delay.

True, in Soviet times there had been no chance for HS to take root in official academia considering the situation with the recognition of sociology's disciplinary status and its place among other social sciences, but there had been attempts to this end. M. N. Gromyko – a student of the West Siberian peasantry – published a paper on the subject advancing some forward-looking ideas. She stated that "the notion of HS is beginning to acquire the right to exist in our literature" [*Gromyko 1967: 115*]. The development of social history has been accompanied by the growing popularity of sociological methods and application of its concepts. Student textbooks were published for ethnologists and historians by L. P. Lashuk (Moscow State University) *Vvedenie v istoricheskuyu sociologiyu* (*An introduction to historical sociology*) [*Lashuk 1997*], L. M. Drobizheva [*1971*] and B. N. Mironov [*1980*]. I. D. Koval'chenko's school at the Moscow State University actively developed quantitative history, widely applying sociological methods [*Koval'chenko 1987*]. The place of HS in historical knowledge was discussed by V. V. Ivanov (Kazan, Republik of Tatarstan), a specialist in the methodology of social sciences [*Ivanov 1991*].

By the end of 1997, the Journal's editorial portfolio contained some texts (apart from those mentioned above) in what we assumed were HS; this turned out to suffice for 1998 issues only. New texts arrived, among them S. Chuikina's reconstruction of the social traumas and social practices of a family that had to pass through numerous social and political cataclysms in Russia and the world in the first half of the 20th century [*Chuikina 1999*].[1] The 1998–1999 section also featured the social history of Russia, social demography, etc. Attempts then began to decipher what became a key problem for the section architects: what exactly is HS? In spite of the importance of this topic, I failed for two or three years to find or formulate any response to grasp the essence of contemporary HS (then, to repeat, undergoing a *Renaissance*). This fact prevented me from firmly steering through the practical issues raised by filling the pages of the section with texts disciplinary-wise belonging

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[1] The text was not printed in the HS section – the editors did not want to delay the publication; besides, we assumed that papers in HS would continue reaching us regularly enough – alas, we were too optimistic!

to HS. The search for a response to the questions: what should HS do? What are its essence and potentialities? Led me through an international (mainly) and Russian flood of sociological information (at this time the Internet was as good as unavailable to rank-and-file Russian scholars). Handbooks and encyclopedias as a rule simply restated often polarized views and practical approaches.[2] Even today some scholars trying to work in the field of HS do not know the ins and outs of this array of opinions. Hence, the experiences of our journal might be instructive.

The Key Issue of the "Historical Turn" in Russian Sociology

Scholarly literature contained too many contradictory definitions which do not explain the reasons behind them. Late in the 1980s a scholar from the USSR Academy of Science Institute for academic information in social sciences (a Soviet analogue of the German GESIS) published a review of the then academic output in HS abroad, stating the existence of 3 to 4 practices of working in the HS field as presented by the authors of texts on HS in available Western handbooks and encyclopedias [*Kudinov 2005 (1995)*]. The voluminous literature on history/sociology relationships had nothing to say about the essence of HS. Next, in this search, I took a step that appeared to be flawless: a review of the International *Journal of Historical Sociology* (JHS below in my text; est. 1986), which I entitled the *Visit card of HS* [*Romanovskiy 1999*]. This, I reasoned, must explain the essence of contemporary HS! My head editor, however, was of another opinion: having read my "visitor's card" text he asked me again: what is HS? There was no reply to this question in the JHS review. This interdisciplinary enterprise at the border of history with sociology often offers its readers social history rather than HS. Its authors do not delve into HS definitions, concentrating instead on specific problems and cases. As a result, I had to add to my paper a few lines stating the practices of JHS editors (p. 106 Russian text).

Meanwhile, the number of different approaches discussed as HS in various sociological sources exceeded a dozen, and I was not certain that the list was close to complete: historical consciousness, historical memory, sociological methods used in studying the past, social history, historical demography, the philosophy of history, the laws of history, the origins of the present, alternatives in history, counter-history, the history of sociology, etc. Later this fact would be stated and discussed in my monograph on HS [*Romanovskiy 2009: 8–15*]. The array of meanings which the authors of works on HS have kept providing this discipline with, called for (as I see the situation now) a historical and sociological (that is researched by sociological tools) investigation of HS' evolution against a background of the logic of the entire evolution of sociology in the world and in Russia.

Thus, in late 19 – early 20th century Russia (M. Kovalevskiy, V. Kliuchevskiy, N. Kareev, N. Rozhkov e.a.) HS as a discipline was understood as the study of "laws" of historical development. N. I. Kareev's "historiology" is just a typical example here. V. O. Kliuchevskiy assumed that the "Historical study of specific bodies – in a word, the study of the properties and action of forces creating and guiding human co-existence – forms the task of a special branch in historical science, and of the science of society, which also might be singled out of from universal historical research under the title *historical sociology*" [*Kliuchevskiy*

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[2]   This fact I duly mentioned in my first paper on HS [*Romanovskiy 1998: 8–9*].

1993: 5]. In the second half of the 20th century, this search for universal historical laws was already seen as obsolete.

The key to the situation was found in M. Weber's links between Protestantism and modern (in early 20th century) capitalism, as well as in the often cited passage from K. Marx "18th Brumaire": "Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under the circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living" [*Marx 1976 (1851): 374*]. From this point on, my attention was drawn to the principal function of HS – searching in the social past for sources, or roots, which are helpful for understanding and explaining present phenomena and issues. R. Merton, I learned, wrote his doctoral thesis in the early 1940s on the links between modern capitalism and British science. Popular Foucaultian ideas on the archeology of knowledge [*Foucault 1994 (1969)*] were grounded on the above-mentioned Marxian idea: the past is there in the present, the present is the result of past events and influences. J. Goldthorpe supported my stance with his review of European family evolution [*Goldthorpe 1987*], as did R. Collins with his "Credentials" in education and stratification [*Collins 1979*], and US social psychologist T. Shibutani, in his study of the essence and functions of rumours, extracted from a sum of cases from the Old Testament to Fidel Castro [*Shibutani 1966*]. The sociological community in its time had debated works by F. Braudel, I. Wallerstein, T. Skocpol; the journal *Past and Present* discussed the agrarian roots of early European industrialization and capitalism (1976–1982). In Russia, 1997 was the year a doctoral dissertation defended in the Institute of sociology, RAS, on *Historical Sociology: the making of the social institutions of Soviet Russia (the 1920s)* by A. I. Chernykh [*Chernykh 1998*] with due monograph appearing the following year.

HS was busily gaining momentum. Its "Renaissance" and the "historical turn" in sociology brought about a flow of texts on issues linking history with sociology. The discipline kept on institutionalizing as more and more universities were offering relevant courses, texts on HS multiplied, and HS sections emerged in national sociological associations. However, the definition of historical sociology had yet to be deciphered for architects of HS-section in our journal. The logic of the array of HS definitions, analyzed in parallel to the evolution of sociology, allowed understanding and explanation of the multiple ways to fill in the content of the "HS" discipline offered by various authors in many countries. I interpret this fact as follows: in the eras of Comte, Marx, Spencer or Kliuchevskiy, sociologists mined history to find laws of societal development. Late in the 20th century, HS was understood in the way Marx (18 Brumaire) and Weber (Ethics) had taken it. In mid-1950s sentence was pronounced on this "old" way, i.e., looking for laws of history through HS. A US review of sociology's achievements from the 1950s (published 1958) in a collection of scholarly articles *Contemporary Sociology* stated that HS was dead beyond resurrection. The words were authored by H. Barnes, who earlier had written on theories of social evolution [*Barnes 1958: 266*].

My search for a "correct" definition of HS was spurred on by preparatory efforts by my colleagues to publish a new encyclopedia on sociology: they insisted that I wrote a new entry for it. V. V. Kudinov had done the similar job the dozen years earlier with the obvious goal to inform Russian readers on the then – in the late 1980s – uses and understandings of HS in Western sociology [*Kudinov 1989*; *1995*], while the 2002 encyclopaedia needed

an academic definition of HS and a description of its specific practical uses. My formula constructed for this encyclopaedia ran as follows: HS is "a part of sociology ensuring by its methods a unity between the analysis of the past, present and future and the temporal continuum of sociological theorizing and empirical research, by means of embracing the historical past into analysis of a given topic studied by sociologists, thus defining its historically and socially given parameters" [*Romanovskiy 2003: 528*]; it partially coincided with at least one of the formulas found translated from English reference books published by this time in Russia (i.a., [*Abercromby et al.: 175*]). I also happened to more concisely define HS as *a temporal, historical component of sociology*. To enrich sociologists' research efforts with the historical component at an empirically verified, non-speculative level – this is the main purpose of HS in our days. This is what the "historical turn" demanded which was taking place in sociology then.

Incidentally, this understanding of HS enabled me more clearly to see which texts arriving at the journal's office were closer to the core of HS, or to its periphery, and which lay outside it and belonged to HS's past. This helped a lot in selecting materials to be published. In practice, this definition of HS was not strictly adhered to, and we published social history interesting for our readers, or data from historical demography, or views on methods used by sociologists when studying the events of the past, or debates on historical memory and historical consciousness, etc. A "soft" approach to selection was inevitable for we rather regularly ran short of HS-papers in our postbox. Sociologists here rarely turned to the capabilities of HS, while historians almost never studied the past using the sociological tool-box and concepts. Yet we hoped the situation was reversible.

Efforts and Results

Recognition by the top Russian sociological community of the issues of HS was reflected in grants by the Russian Academic Foundation of Humanities (RHAF) between 2003 and 2010 – first for a general review of the field, then for studying the current problems of HS, and finally for the theme of "historicization" (later I shall return to this). Annually, on average, our journal was publishing two to three installments on HS, sometimes resorting to translations of the texts or book reviews of eminent foreign authors' (unfortunately these were rare) related to HS. I had to write for the section too (in fact, I enjoyed it), for instance with a reconstruction of Stalin's thinking in the spring of 1941 [*Romanovskiy 2005*], when he suddenly commanded publication of his 1934 notes on a text from F. Engels heritage.

The situation of Russian HS as it looked at this time is documented by a "Round Table" (in correspondence form) in our journal *Historical sociology: experience and outlook* (2004). Again, this was effected under the head editor's active insistence. It was difficult to find participants for the Roundtable as there were few at hand: the author of a book on HS, M. Ya. Bobrov (1929–2005) [*Bobrov 1998*]); V. V. Afanassiev, who published a booklet on HS in 1995 [*Afanassiev 1995*] – we failed to locate him as he had left his city of Barnaul and only much later emerged at the journal office; Yu. N. Rozhkov –author of a monograph on Soviet youths' everyday lives in the 1920's [*Rozhkov 2002*]. J. Alsted of Denmark took part – he had just published a book on HS [*Alsted 2001*; *2005*]. A. I. Chernykh was unable to take part; B. N. Mironov willingly agreed – a historian with a name – and also persons known for their insights into the general problems of contemporary sociology such as

I. F. Deviatko and G. E. Zborovskiy. The "Round Table" could not but demonstrate a wide range of understandings of HS among Russian sociologists – from the search for historical laws to providing the sociological toolbox used by historians. The head editor insisted that I, too, take part in the "Table," closing the discussion by summarizing the views expressed on the subject of HS and reproducing my definition of this sociological discipline [*Romanovskiy 2009: 52*].

While studying contemporary HS, I repeatedly stumbled on the term "historicization" (or "historicization"). As a scholarly problem this induced me to delve into methodology of "historicization" – that is, to research the logic (real or in scholarly mental work) of constructing, as in our case, events, innovations etc where "Historicization" was applied – apart from clarifying the logic of multiple HS understandings – to methodologically similar analysis of the history of sociology and then the development of sociological theory from Comte to J. Alexander and B. Latour. "Historicization," I argued, was a methodological strategy (research design) to investigate the intricacies and factors of our discipline's evolution. I even dared to measure these factors via an experts' poll [*Romanovskiy 2010*].

RHAF eventually supported the publication of my modest book Istoricheskaya sotsiologiya (Historical Sociology) [*Romanovskiy 2009: 294*] generalizing my publications partly mentioned above. The book embraced: 1) Problematizing the understanding of HS through 100 years or so in Russia and the world (Chapters 1 to 3); 2) the Methodology of a sociologist's work in this field (Chapter 4: Four "Ms" of Historical Sociology); 3) Applying HS to a range of science issues (history of knowledge, history of sociology, inter-disciplinarity in sociology); 4) "Patterns" of Russia (pre-Soviet, USSR and post-Soviet Russia): history through the looking glass of HS – here historical sociology was applied to painful problems of our country's past and present.

This book somehow became a kind of watershed in my infatuation with the "broad" analysis of international and Russian historical sociology. Far greater attention was demanded from me by another section of the journal *Theory and Methodology*.[3] The HS section lived a life of its own – not too dynamic; some texts in it looked odd while others were impressive. Thus, the potentialities of HS were well reflected in a paper on the Volga region rural home industries before 1917 – growing immensely under government's military orders. Some of these had come close to what we might call workshops [*Morozov 1999: 105*] or factory enterprises. The Government was supportive in allowing them not to enlist their workers in the armed forces. This historical episode gave evidence of a gradual "other" strategy of Russia's industrialization[4] in contrast to the historically real one.

Historical Turn Unfinished?

The theme of Soviet industrialization found its continuation in the review of S. F. Grebenichenko's (1962–2017) book on home industries (*promysly* – crafts) in Russia at the time of NEP [*Grebenichenko 2000*], when they yielded up to two thirds of foreign trade incomes, and were seriously weighed up as a starting point for the newly planned industries in the

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[3]   Some persons kept saying – There is no theoretical sociology in Russia.
[4]   The "giant plants" allegedly the essence of socialist industrialization, unviable in 1990s almost without exceptions, began demonstrating their ailments much earlier.

country (in the way, in particular, South Korea went much later). The impressive sociological content analysis was masterfully done of regulatory acts by the authorities of the USSR and the RSFSR in the 1920s, administering the then sphere of rural trade cooperation and artisanal production. 1217 decrees, laws, decisions, clarifications, directives, regulations, circulars, etc. were computer-processed – over 14 thousand pages of typewritten text. The key concepts of this set of documents proved the existence and interplay of four alternatives to the development of Soviet Union economy (as history knows it), including the transformation of crafts, developing handicraft workshops into machine industry enterprises. Stalin's industrialization was something different.

St. Petersburg expert in the social history of XVIII – early XX centuries Russia, B. N. Mironov, employs a filigree method of sociological research of the past. At the beginning of his scientific path (1984), he wrote the monograph the *Historian and Sociology*. In the *Social History of Russia* [*Mironov: 2016 (1999, 2001, 2008)*], he uses proto-sociological surveys (Imperial Geographic Society, Free Economic Society, etc.), statistics (the weight and growth of draftees for the Russian Empire army over a number of decades), participant observation (a journalist who worked as coachman studying the "*izvozchiki*" group – an early example of such a method), survey questionaries, *zemstvo* statistics, censuses. Even a document by Ekaterina the Great is shown to have been close to sociology.

A. V. Zhavoronkov, meanwhile, toiled at the base of his monographic research for 25 years [*Zhavoronkov, 2007*]: the resultant 135 field studies supplied him with 60 million social facts about the dynamics of the mass consciousness of Russians in the spheres of social life – "an independent sociological examination of the processes that took place in our society over the past 40 years" [*ibid.: 449*]. Gaussians, algorithms, clusters, scalar masses, interpolations, matrices, maps, graphs (two-, three- and even four-dimensional), entropy, Spearman's correlation coefficients and Kendall (Leikert) scaling represent the authors' methods of research and data presentation. The result was some constants in the behavior of the upper classes, in their reaction to the demands of the lower classes, and the response pattern of the latter: "Five-sixths of the information field fails to correlate in problematic and topical structure either with intra-apparatus information or with final decision" [*ibid.: 443*]; this fact needs no comment.

Scholars writing for the section under consideration, in fact, represent Russian historical sociology. To add to this, there are also M. V. Maslovskiy and N. S. Rozov. The academic interests of the latter are focused on the philosophy of history or, in his words, historical macro-sociology [*Rozov 2016*; *2011*; *2009*; *2002*].[5] M. V. Maslovskiy worked significantly in the HS field for a time [*Maslovskiy 2001*; *2002*; *2011*], only later to change the focus of his efforts, and it is yet unclear whether he remains in the field. Historical sociology is a focal point of publications in our journal by the head of the respective department in the Charles University in Prague J. Šubrt [*2014*; *2015*; *2016*].

Worth mentioning too are papers on the centuries-long evolution of the terms "right" and "left" in Indo-European languages [*Lukitchev – Skorik 2011*] – a characteristic aspect of the linguistic turn in sociology and clear-cut demonstration of Russian specifics of legal understanding; contributions to the centenary of the 1917 revolution [*Vodolazov 2014a, 2014b*; *Mironov,* 2014], a paper on symbolic capital in the brand *His Majesty's Imperial*

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5   N. S. Rozov also translated some key R. Collin's works in HS.

court supplier [*Grigoriev 2006*], historical demographic essays by L. Rybakovskiy [*Rybakovskiy 2000a*; *2000b*] etc. In recent years socially important issues have been raised – in historical terms – in articles on Ivan the Terrible (and Stalin today) among Russian Christian Orthodox marginals – a remarkable trait of societal consciousness [*Vorontsov et al. 2017*]; in the study of Russia's modernization ("Europeization") lessons [*Nefiodov 2017*]; in debates among sociologist and philosophers on "the ruse of the needlet"[6] for making Russia modern [*Trubitsyn 2010* e.a.]. Archival data (previously inaccessible for secrecy reasons) permit a view of some social characteristics of Soviet society [*Bogdanov – Ostapiuk 2017*].

However, the achievements of the section reviewed are but a weak indication of what HS is capable of. In Europe and the USA – the birth-place of HS "Renaissance" – the names of I. Wallerstein, R. Collins, C. Tilly (1929–2008), S. Eisenstadt (1929–2008), T. Skocpol are well known; I translated some of their work. Thus, Tilly – in the pages of our journal – expressly advised those going in for HS to practice social critique, pattern identification, scope extension, and process analyses [*Tilly 2009*]. In this vein, J. Šubrt [*Šubrt 2014*] recently presented his views on Sh. Eisenstadt's HS, on a number of issues related to the field of sociological knowledge. L. Griffin – in a translated paper – reflected on methods of event-structure analysis program application in HS research [*Griffin 2010*].

Our journal introduced to its readers the *Trajectories* newsletter (formerly – *Footnotes*) of the *Comparative and historical sociology* section of the American Sociological Association. We also published translated debates on whether historical sociology should become even more comparative [*Arjomand 2014*; *Wallerstein 2014*; *Mahony 2014*] to better understand the evolution of human society. We followed the "Global historical sociology" project and even more ambitious [Global Historical …][7] debates among the members of this ASA section as to whether "Comparative HS can save the world," or "Should do so" [*How Comparative …*; *Should Comparative …*].

Russian historical sociology does not feature grand designs; it is much more modest in its posture, facing so many unresolved issues. Shifts in the field are slow; it is too early to speak of dynamics or achievements. Typical of it is episodic attention to minor topics. 20 years of HS section activity have failed to change this general situation. Moreover, there occurred an unfortunate setback. T. N. Kremliov [*2016*] published *Istoricheskaya sotsiologiya: voprosy teorii obshchestvennogo razvitiya (Historical sociology (questions of the history of societal development))*. The book was polemically criticized by N. S. Rozov [*Rozov 2017*] – perhaps not undeservedly – and the author responded. Kremlëv's scheme depicts human society as evolving from a primitive stage to agrarian society, replaced by an industrial one, while ahead looms the intellectual society of the future [*Kremliov 2016: 5–8*]. The 650 page-long large-format text is mostly speculative, and there is no discussion of sociological data,[8] while the version of societal development it obviously reflects is the *Instmat's* (Historical materialism) remnants of influence in the social thought of our

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6   "Oil needle" – overdependence of the country on oil and gas exports allegedly preventing Russia's economy and polity modernization.

7   The monograph's editors though, modestly speak of a "promise of a truly global historical sociology" URL – https://www.amazon.com/dp/B074XDW7T (accessed 14. 11. 17).

8   No worse would be a scheme with primitive society replaced by a traditional one, followed by modern, postmodern and – in perspective – informational society. Is this historical sociology?

country. Sociology, however, understood, is expected to operate with empirically verified data; speculative schemes are at best hypotheses to be empirically proven. It is a fact that to empirically ground a theory of human development (evolution) is thus far beyond the abilities of social scholars and their digital tools – however powerful.

Recent developments in Russian historical sociology reflect a degree the state of national sociology, which is largely concentrated on current problems of societal reality. HS might offer a perspective on the contemporary social problems of our country (I shall indicate few of them below) that, taking into consideration its centuries' old institutional and cultural issues, have threatened and still threaten it with serious trials – very much like the proverbial rake repeatedly stepped upon by us or our predecessors, destabilizing society. The state of historical sociology today in Russia depends much on data mined by professional historians. Alas, historical knowledge in our country is passing through "Troubled times" – especially with regard to 20th and early 21st-century history. "Decline" [*Chelyshev 2017*] apparently affects the whole body of this science in Russia today. The origins of this issue are a specific matter, but often it looks like the Russian situation in the historical profession today is mostly shaped by the demoralization of historians faced with aggressive amateurs with the media behind them.

Without an understanding of the past there is no future: does our attitude to history not illustrate the truth of this rule? There is no place for panic here. Soviet authorities used to pay excessive attention to history, and the result is well known. The sciences of the past have their potentialities. However, these have to be utilized. Here there is a place for historical sociology, too, to assist in the theoretical foundation of our country's vital problems. There are at least two perspectives for HS which historians together with sociologists might research and table for society to have its decisive say: 1) the less obvious lessons of past history that keep negatively affecting contemporary Russian society and polity; 2) an eventual societal agenda to define steps to correct the situation resulting from such negative influences; that is, to offer eventual remedies – by way of discussing, hypothesizing and verifying or falsifying potential corrections.

Group 1), related to lessons of the past, might embrace, for example, the necessity to achieve a) understanding of the USSR's experiences as a globally alternative social post-capitalist order, b) discovering the circumstances, reasons, mechanisms, etc that led to a series of "fatal" decisions resulting in millions of human and billions of (in fact – countless) economic losses for our country and its people. Tsushima and 22 of June 1941 are two polar illustrations of what I am aiming at. In my modest assessment, there were at least 15 such decisive moments in the 20th century alone – a sufficient sample for scholarly analysis to obtain dependable results; c) recognition of the fact that a most crucial curse for Russia is the issue of "throne succession," etc.

Group 2), related to feasible steps to correct the situation, might concern such diverse issues as the formation of true elites, the training, and re-training of public government officials, overcoming the gap (obvious at present), rift or cleavage between what popular views see as "us" and "them"; the necessity to grasp a really explosive factor of our past and present – the multinational character of our state and society, etc.

To repeat, these are ideas for Russian (and international) experts, to be discussed, refined and defined. But one more aspect should be clarified. The essence of the unlearned lessons of the past – curses and unseen traps – prompts 15) the formulation at the very

outset of ways and means, methods and methodologies of "solving" the above issues. Their historical embeddedness calls for affecting the deepest cultural layer of traditions and peoples' consciousness, a signal for the government and inteligensia of the country to resort to cultural changes amounting in sum to a cultural revolution. Much has been said about this in the past, yet little, if any, attention has been paid to the decisive issue for our situation – the methods and methodology of correcting trends that grew up in this sphere. The task is to more thoroughly "dig into" the experience of working out and applying the social technologies of cultural revolution. In Russia and abroad, this experience lies, I can say, on the surface.

Considerations about the processes in Russia over recent centuries, suggested by this HS-reading, result from 20 years of work on conceptualizing, fulfilling and criticizing the rubric of HS in our journal. Characteristically, the thoughts of such a plan have kept emerging in recent months in the context of the presidential campaign in the Russian Federation, as attempts to formulate a kind of national agenda for the country and its people. A thinking reader, from this fact, will be able to refine his ideas about HS at its present-day stage of development. It's a pity, but the communities of professional sociologists and historians find it difficult and are slow to master this problem. The rubric of HS in our magazine has presented only a fraction of the data but is capable nevertheless of influencing ideas prevailing in current public thought effectively. As shown by the recent book from T. Piquetti [*2015*], science is able to pose and suggest solutions for ambitious tasks with regard to the links between the past, present, and future. There may or may not be demand for them from above and below. A better understanding of the essence and prospects of the situation in the world – this is the price for those in sociology who dare to put "macro issues" on the agenda and find answers to them. Considering the rubric "HS" for 20 years, I conclude with alarm: making no headway is too akin to stagnation, the consequences of which are still not overcome.

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Rewriting Israeli History:
New Historians and Critical Sociologists

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Revize dějin Izraele: Noví historikové a kritičtí sociologové

Abstract: The New Historians and Critical Sociologists were two groups of thinkers who emerged in Israel during the 1980s, strongly criticizing Israeli history and society. Coming from diverse backgrounds and using different methodologies, nonetheless they all shared a highly critical approach towards mainstream historians and sociologists, and, more importantly, towards key moments and issues in Israel's history. These thinkers blamed the Zionist establishment for ignoring the distress of the European Jews during the Holocaust, committing war crimes against the Arab population during the 1948 War, and abusing immigrants in the years after the state's independence. These claims raised passionate debates between mainstream and critical scholars, which strongly affected Israeli society. This paper examines the processes that led to the emergence of these thinkers, the novelty of their historical narratives and interpretations, and analyzes the specific terminology they employed, as well as their opponents' criticisms, which their research provoked.

Introduction

Up until the 1980's, Israeli historiography and sociology reflected, by and large, Israel's mainstream, uncritical, historical and sociological narratives concerning the making of Israel and the Arab-Israeli conflict. The essence of this narrative runs more or less as follows: the 19th century saw a Jewish national revival in Europe, which sought to create a Jewish State in the Land of Israel. However, the land was occupied first by the Ottomans and since 1917 by the British, who objected to the Jews' resettlement in their motherland. Nonetheless, the growing antisemitism in Europe and the Zionist efforts propelled the British government to support the idea of a Jewish "national home," in the form of the Balfour Declaration (1917), and the Peel Commission (1936). While the Zionists sought to create a progressive and egalitarian society in Israel, the Arabs were growing increasingly hostile towards the Zionists, violently attacking them and sabotaging their efforts. Before and during the Holocaust, the Zionist organization did all it could to save the European Jews, exercising both diplomatic and military efforts, such as the parachuting of Zionist fighters behind enemy lines. In 1947, following World War II, the United Nations acknowledged the Jews' right for their own country. Following Israel's declaration of independence, it was attacked on all frontiers by hostile Arab armies. During the war, Palestinians fled

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Israel to neighboring territories under their leaders' commands, and in spite of Israel's attempts to convince them to stay. Despite its inferior military standing, the small Israeli army managed to vanquish the stronger, plentiful Arab armies. Following Israel's independence and victory, Holocaust survivors and Jews from Muslim countries, immigrated to Israel and helped build the new state.

The 1980's saw the emergence of several Israeli historians and sociologists who challenged this narrative. Proclaiming themselves "new historians" and "critical sociologists," these thinkers wanted to bring to light and public attention topics which were either unknown to or undiscussed by the dominant historians, and the general Israeli public. In this paper they will be referred to as the Critical Historians, while the "old" historians and "institutional" sociologists will be referred to as "old" historians.

The Critical Historians challenged this narrative on four main fronts: first and foremost, they discussed the maltreatment of Palestinian civilians in the 1948 War. Using previously classified documents made available by the opening of state archives, the Critical Historians showed that the Israeli army was responsible for several massacres and deportations of Palestinians. Second, they compared Zionism with colonialism, suggesting the Zionists, like the American Puritans, and French colonialists, exploited and disinherited the local population. Third, they criticized the Zionist elite for ignoring the distress of the European Jews before and during the Holocaust, and for mistreating the survivors and Jewish immigrants from Muslim countries, who came to Israel after 1948. Finally, they aspired to replace the "old" historians' terminology, which they considered inherently justified Zionism, with a new terminology, which would reflect the neutral or negative motives and consequences of the Zionists actions. The Critical Historians' research, it should be noted, was intended not only to create an academic debate, but moreover, to influence and change Israeli national memory and collective consciousness.

This paper explores the different arguments and methodologies of the Critical Historians, focusing on theories of hegemony, colonialism, and the Palestinians' place in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Considering the four main topics the Critical Historians targeted, the final part of the paper explores the main arguments of the "old" historians and sociologists who criticized and opposed the Critical Historians.

The Emergence of the Critical Historians

In order to better evaluate the Critical Historians' research, it is important to understand the social, political, and historical circumstances of their emergence.

The term "new historians" was originally coined in a 1988 paper by Benny Morris to describe himself, Avi Shlaim, Ilan Pappé, and Simha Flapan. According to Morris, the main reason for the Critical Historians' emergence was the opening of state archives. Throughout the 1980s the Israeli government was declassifying "hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions" of papers [*Morris 2007: 14–15*], from the years 1947–1956, including Foreign Ministry, Defense Ministry, and IDF documents. These documents played the main role in Morris's *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem* which exposed expulsions and massacres committed by the Israeli military and para-military forces. The book was one of the first Critical Historiographies to be published in Hebrew (most early works were written in English), and therefore played a central role in the early part of the historians' debate.

Morris also explained the Critical Historians' emergence through the historians' socio-logical profile – all were born around 1948. Unlike (literally) older historians, who had par-ticipated in Israel's foundation, experiencing the war at first hand, the Critical Historians judged Israeli history from a more detached and analytical standpoint, especially in light of the 1982 Lebanon War, which many Israelis saw not only as an extremely bloody war, but also as the first senseless war instigated by Israel [*Morris 2007: 14–15*].

Aside from these technical reasons, other factors also influenced their emergence. Some scholars, such as sociologists Baruch Kimmerling, Uri Ram, and Gershon Shafir were heavily influenced by the international academic climate of the 1970's–80's. Through-out the Western world this was the high tide of postmodern theories and multi-narrative histories. Influenced by these theories, many Israeli academics were eager to implement them in their own immediate environment [*Ram 2006: 247*; *Taub 1997: 232*]. These sociol-ogists introduced several new concepts into the discourse on Israeli history, most impor-tantly Zionism as colonialism, and *Mapai*'s hegemonic rule which excluded other minority groups from Israel's political and social nerve center.

Another important role in the Critical Historians' crystallization was played by social and political events which, as of the Six Day War (1967), and the occupation of the Pal-estinian territories, pushed Israelis to "soul-search" their past, present, and future. These events include: the 1973 Arab-Israeli War; the reawakening of the Palestinian national movement in the 1970s; the 1977 rise to power of the Right-wing *Likud* at the expense of the socialist-left *Ma'arakh* for the first time in Israeli history; the 1982 Lebanon War; and finally, the outbreak of the First Intifada in 1987.

These events both affected and reflected Israel's self-perception and self-awareness [*Kimmerling 2001: 23*]. The Critical Historians' emergence represented what many have termed a "maturing" process of Israeli society, which entailed a confrontation with Israel's less-heroic moments on the one hand [*Friling 2003*], and a rebellion against the estab-lished academia on the other. Israeli society, like its historians was becoming disillusioned with past myths and conceptions; reappraising Israel's part in the Arab-Israeli conflict; demythologizing Israel's founders; and cautiously readjusting Israel's political and social vision. Politically, this process was symbolized by the growing comprehension that Israel should reach some sort of understanding with its neighbors – a realization which culmi-nated in the 1993 Oslo Accords led by the far-from-dovish Yitzhak Rabin. Raising strong objections from various parts of society, the Oslo Accords nonetheless represented Israel's maturation, acceptance of responsibility, and willingness to participate in creating a new regional reality.

Terminology: Demythologizing Israeli Myths

One of the major issues the Critical Historians attacked was what they considered the "old" historians' part in "mythologizing" Israeli history [*Segev 1998: v*]. This mythol-ogization, they argued, was accomplished not only by constructing a unique narrative and depicting specific events, such as the heroism and exceptional morality of the Israeli soldiers, but more so, by using a specific terminology which justified *a priori* the Zion-ist cause [*Lissak 2007: 180*]. Thus, by using the terms *eretz Israel* (land of Israel) when describing Palestine under Ottoman and British rule, the geographical entity was depicted

as belonging to the Jewish people throughout history. The term *aliyah* ("ascent") conveys Jewish immigration to Palestine/Israel in a positive way, while *yerida* ("descent"), emigration from it, carries a negative undertone. On the other hand, the Arabs' and Palestinians' rebellions against the British mandate and the Jewish settlement were called *meora'ot* (literally "events"), an abstract term which conceals the actual causes which led to these rebellions [*Gelber 2007: 463*]. These are just a few examples of how Israeli history came to possess a mythological aura, connecting contemporary Zionists all the way to the biblical Hebrews, thereby establishing the Jews' moral and rightful claim to the State of Israel – both in territory, and in statehood.

In order to counter this subjective historical description, one of the main tasks the Critical Historians undertook was revising historical and sociological terminology, mainly by replacing positive terminology with neutral or negative terminology: the War of Independence, was substituted by the 1948 War, or the First Arab-Israeli War; instead of *aliyah*, Jews merely immigrated to Israel, or worse, they *colonized* it; the *meora'ot* were now Arab rebellions; *eretz Israel* became Palestine; the generic term Arabs was replaced with Palestinians, etc. [*Lissak 2007: 180*].

The Critical Historians, however, were not content only with revising terminology, but also took to task classical Zionist terms for their destructive implications. "The negation of the diaspora," for example, which designated Israel as the only home for the Jews, caused the Zionist settlement to largely ignore the distress of the European Jews before and during the Holocaust [*Segev 1991: 404*]. One of the Zionists' aims, the creation of "the new Jew," which signified the revival of Jewish identity and nationhood, possessed fascist roots, and brought along feelings of indifference and contempt towards the European Jews by the Jewish settlement in Palestine [*Segev 2001: 23–24*].

Finally, some terms, especially *colonization* and *hegemony*, pushed for new and extended research on Zionism as colonialism [*Pappé 1997: 346*], and the privileged hegemonic *Mapai* party and its exclusion of non-hegemonic and minority identities [*Ram 1993: 7*].

Considering the mainstream historical narrative mentioned in the introduction, the Critical Historians wrote about a Zionist elite which began colonizing Palestine in the 19th century, exploiting the local population for labor on the one hand, while depriving it of its land, backed and supported by the British Mandate. The Zionist elite ignored the distress of the European Jews during the World War II, seeing them as bygone relics of a decadent world. During the 1948 War, the Israeli forces, better equipped and more organized than the Arab armies, committed war crimes against Palestinian civilians, and deported them under government orders. After the War, Holocaust survivors and Jews from Muslim countries were propelled to immigrate to Israel, where they were accepted with disdain and contempt, excluded from the social and political nerve centers.

Zionism as Colonialism

At first glance, the similarity between the Zionist movement and other colonial movements is self-evident: the Zionist movement was formed by white European men during the 19th century, and like previous religious, national, and expansionist movements, sought religious revival in Palestine [*Pappé 1997: 357–358*]. Initial attempts by the Zionists to rely on their own labor and resources proved futile, and they began seeking help

through overseas donations [*Shafir 1993: 110*]. In addition, their early infatuation with and admiration of the indigenous' way of life quickly gave way to embittered hostility. Consequently the Zionists began to condescend and exploit the indigenous population, while robbing it of its land and resources [*ibid.: 110–111*]. Finally, the survival of the Zionist settlement and the formation of the State of Israel would not be possible without the support of the British Empire, which allied with the World Zionist Organization, and "which both opened up and secured the country to Jewish immigration and land purchase" [*Kimmerling 2001a: 90*].

Postcolonial theories inherently share some common factors such as the division of society into exploiting colonizers and exploited indigenous victims, as well as the focus on the colonizers' condescending view of the natives, which in the Middle Eastern context is associated with Edward Said's "orientalism." Proponents of the "colonialist Zionism" paradigm frequently claim that Zionist colonization was the main trigger for Arab and Palestinian hostility towards the Zionists, and that consequently the postcolonial prism is the most suitable for understanding the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict [*Shafir 1993: 104*].

Nonetheless, the uniqueness of the Zionist movement compared to other colonialist movements is undeniable. To name just a few differences: Zionism was a national movement which sought to secularize biblical symbols, unlike the puritans of North America; the Zionists did not act as an extension of a country or a church, therefore they did not exploit the land's resources for an overseas base, nor did they receive organized and stable support from a strong administrative body; finally, unlike other colonial movements who were predominantly "pulled" to distant colonies, the Zionists were equally "pushed" from Europe by the pogroms in East Europe and rising antisemitism [*Bareli 2003: 305*].

In face of these disparities, supporters of colonialist interpretations of Zionism have had to justify the "colonialist Zionism" narrative, and consequently there are several postcolonial theories concerning the Zionist movement.

One of the main methods for constructing a colonialist narrative of Zionism, is finding a historical "parallel" of the Zionist movement, such as the American Puritans, or German and French colonialism, and pointing out similarities in various colonial aspects, such as motives for colonization, methods of expansion, external supporters of colonization, and the relations between the colonizers and the indigenous population. Thus, Pappé recognized similarities between the Zionists and the idealist-agrarian Basel Mission which attempted to build a colony in Palestine [*Pappé 1997*]. Pappé found similarities between the movements mainly in terms of discourse (the "return" to the promised land); symbolism (the "ideal village"); historical context (both phenomena took place against the background of rural industrialization); education (hostility towards Islam); gradual corrosion of ideals, etc. [*ibid.: 358–362*]. Pappé did mention some differences between the movements, mainly the Zionists' dependence on British goodwill in establishing a state, and the ultimate goal of the settlements (the Mission did not aspire for the immigration of all Christians, nor did it consider industrialization), but these were mentioned briefly, and as insignificant. Similar approaches were taken by Shlomo Sand, who found equivalences between Zionism and the Spanish Conquistadors in Latin America, and Kimmerling and Ram, who found analogies to the Puritan colonization in North America [*Gelber 2007: 412–413*].

Gershon Shafir, one of the earliest sociologists to have used the postcolonial prism, linked Zionism to European colonialism by identifying different types of European colonialism, and assessing the similarities and differences between Zionism and various colonial types. Following the categorizations of researchers D. K. Fieldhouse and George Fredrickson, Shafir recognized four main types of colonies: *occupation*; *mixed*; *plantation*; and *pure settlement* [*Shafir 1993: 106*]. Shafir claimed Zionism was a mixture of *plantation* and *pure settlement* colony, notwithstanding specific characteristics it developed over the course of time. Both types represented colonies in which Europeans colonized territories for the purpose of inhabitance and exploitation of resources and land. The *plantation* colony is characteristic of the cotton areas in the south of the United States, where black slaves were imported from Africa for labor, while the *pure settlement* colony is characteristic of the north of the United States, Australia, and New Zealand, where the colonizers either deported or annihilated the local population, and both employers and employees belonged to the same ethnicity. The Zionists, Shafir argued, had to decide whether they wanted to create a *plantation* colony, in which the Arabs would be delegated to a lower "caste" of workers and citizens, or whether they should create a *pure settlement* colony, from which the Arabs would be expelled [*ibid.: 108*].

Shafir did acknowledge three distinctive characteristics of the Zionist movement: the second immigration wave's adoption of a *pure settlement* colony instead of a *plantation* colony; which segmented the land's economy into three: the Arab, the plantation, and the pure settlement economy, which was to become the backbone of the Israeli State's economy. Segmenting the land's market was later to serve as the basis for the partitioning of the land into the Jewish and Palestinian states [*ibid.: 114*].

Shafir's analysis is a typical example of the "Zionism as colonialism" paradigm. As a pioneer in using the postcolonial prism in Israel, Shafir opened the door to other postcolonial works which focused on the cultural clash between the Zionists and the Arabs, and explored various dimensions of exploitation and abuse on the Zionists' part. What is evident in Shafir's portrayal of the Zionist movement's settlement process is the use of precise terminology and rigid description, which hardly address the Zionists' ideological motives or their reasons for having emigrated from their homelands. Shafir's description is extremely technical, and gives primacy to economic considerations and actions, all but ignoring the roles played by political and social factors in the Zionist movement, and treating idealist discourse, such as "conquest of labor" as merely rhetorical, designed to promote purely functional purposes.

Hegemony and Elite

The Critical Historians have also researched two interconnected terms: "hegemony" and "elite." The Israeli use of the term *hegemony* is rooted in Gramsci's cultural-political theory, and was developed primarily by Kimmerling and Ram, while the term *elite* was developed less theoretically but more narratively, by Segev [*Kimmerling 2001*; *Kimmerling 2001a*; *Ram 1997*; *Segev 1991*; *Segev 1998*]. Kimmerling termed the Israeli elite *AHUSALIM*: an acronym standing for Ashkenazi, secular, veteran, socialist, and nationalist. According to Kimmerling, "The *AHUSALIM* built [Israeli] society and state, won the 1948 War, during which they expelled a considerable part of the Arabs from the State's

territories, absorbed a massive amount of immigrants and crushed them in a cultural and political crusher in order to make them a new nation through melting pot mechanisms. The *AHUSALIM* were the undisputed lords of the land, at least during the first two decades" [*Kimmerling 2001: 11–12*].

From the Critical Historians' perspective, this elite was mainly criticized for being intolerant towards new Jewish immigrants, forcing them to comply with and adopt the previously established customs and norms; for neglecting the European Jews during the Holocaust; and for excluding non-elite groups such as the Arabs, the ultra-Orthodox, and the Sephardic Jews from the political, economic, and cultural spheres.

The first Zionist immigrants arrived to Palestine in the end of the 19th century. These immigrants created their own "social and mental 'bubble'," secluding themselves from the local Arabs, while depending on them for land acquisition and labor nonetheless [*Kimmerling 2001a: 90*]. As of the early 1920s, the settlement sought to develop its own institutions and organizations, in order to create a sort of "state-within-state," for the purpose of administrating the Jewish settlement [*Kimmerling 1993: 333*].

Kimmerling identified five basic premises of the Jewish settlement, inherent to its identity: the future "Jewish commonwealth" was to be established in all or part of British Mandate Palestine, and until the community was consolidated, it would give preference to absorbing mostly young, able Zionists; the Jewish settlement was a direct continuation of the ancient biblical Jewish society; the settlement's inner and external legitimacy was given by the bible and other religious sources; Hebrew was adopted as the formal language; a hybrid calendar was created, made out of secularized religious holidays and national holidays, such as May Day [*Kimmerling 2001a: 92–93*].

The pre-Israeli elite established and fortified its status mainly by having succeeded in building a society out of thin air, forming a strong and efficient military force, and replacing the stereotypical weak, uprooted "diaspora Jew," with the strong, working "new Jew" – the *sabra* (literally: prickly pear). Excluded from the borders of the Jewish organized settlement and the future state were the Arabs, the ultra-orthodox Jews, the "old *yishuv*" Sephardic Jews, and the communists [*Kimmerling 1993: 333–334*]. Participation in the construction and modelling of the new state was possible only to those who adopted the values, ideas, and customs of the ruling elite [*ibid.: 335*].

The formation of the State of Israel saw the doubling of the Jewish population from 650,000 to 1,300,000 with the arrival of immigrants from Muslim countries and Holocaust survivors on the one hand, and the decrease of the Arab population from 900,000 to fewer than 150,000 on the other [*Kimmerling 2001a: 94*]. The Israeli elite was both suspicious and disdainful of the new immigrants, viewing the survivors as *avak adam* ("human dust," i.e. wrecked people), who might take over state mechanisms. The non-European Jews, on the other hand, were viewed as "low quality" human material, stereotypically seen as aggressive, uncultured, and lazy, having come from barbaric countries which did not experience Enlightenment and modernity [*ibid.: 95–96*]. The Arab and Levantine culture which they brought with them was seen as a primitive threat to the Israeli culture, which was rooted in European culture and thinking. Immigrants who did not integrate into the old establishment through marriage and/or by adopting the elite's values were made to become manual workers, and were excluded from the centers of society by being located in peripheral villages and development towns [*Kimmerling 1993: 336*]. Their assimilation difficulties

were ignored by the establishment, which expected only the younger immigrants and the following generations to become "true" Israelis.

The Israeli elite also feared for its political status, as the survivors, among whom there were many socialists and communists, might seek to "communize" the state, whereas the non-Europeans might align themselves with the nationalist, right-wing, Revisionists. As a result, the elite secured its status by creating a new Israeli hegemonic identity. This identity was created through a highly centralized "all-encompassing institution" and by generating a "new state civil religion, with its own cults, ceremonies, calendar, holidays and commemorations […], first around the military, and later around the Holocaust" [*Kimmerling 2001a: 96–97*]. In many ways this civil religion was a reformation of the pre-Israeli settlement hegemony, revolved around the pioneers' civil religion [*Ram 1996: 21*].

Whereas the settlement's main ethos was collectivism, the state's was *mamlachtiut*, i.e. *raison d'état*, the state itself. At the center of this ethos was the military, as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was seen more and more unresolvable [*Kimmerling 2008: 143*]. Military service being obligatory, the military also played a crucial part in modelling the Israeli *sabra*. The militaristic ethos left its mark on Israeli society even after it was replaced with the Holocaust (following the Eichmann trial in 1961), and consequently Kimmerling termed Israeli society a "civilian militaristic" society, in which the entire "social nexus," both institutionally and mentally, is oriented towards a militaristic protection of society and the collective [*ibid.: 141*]. As a result of this mentality, groups who do not serve in the army, especially Arabs and the ultra-orthodox, are *a priori* excluded from mainstream Israeli experience and daily life.

Segev's criticism of the old Israeli elite was most explicitly formulated in his 1991 *The Seventh Million*. Segev criticized three main aspects of these relations: before, during, and after the Holocaust.

During the first years of the Nazi regime, the Zionist elite did not realize the extent of the danger German Jews were facing. Segev illustrated this problem through the story of Arthur Ruppin. Following the Nazis rise to power, Ruppin, a Zionist activist, went to Germany in order to discuss the terms of the German Jews' immigration to Palestine. "The whole of Germany was under terror, but Ruppin found it difficult to recognize the Nazis' revolution. 'Had I not known from newspapers and personal conversation to what extent the Jews' economic and political conditions had deteriorated […] – I would not have felt it by the street's appearance, not in Berlin, in any case,' he wrote in his diary" [*Segev 1991: 16*]. Meeting with Professor F. K. Günther, one of the leading ideologists of Nazi racial theory, they amiably discussed the origins of the "Jewish race." Segev used Rupin's and other Zionist activists' comments and remarks in order to display the Zionists' indifference towards the German Jews, and non-Zionist Jews in general. Their main fear was that Jews leaving Germany would immigrate to places other than (future) Israel, and it was this concern which pushed them to sign the *haavara* (transfer) agreement with the Nazis, which enabled the Jews to transfer some of their property to Israel. In addition, the elite's Jewish Agency meticulously selected who was to immigrate. The representatives selected candidates who were closer to the Zionist cause on the one hand, and who were young and physically abler to assist the settlement on the other [*ibid.: 35*].

In British Palestine the immigrants suffered not only from the weather and diseases, but also from the old settlement's condescending treatment. The old settlement, made out

of predominantly ardent ideological immigrants, felt disdain towards the *Yekke* (a derogatory term for the German Jews), who preferred staying in Europe, and made *aliyah* only out of necessity [*Segev 2001: 23*].

During the Holocaust, Segev claimed, the elite largely ignored the European Jews' tragedy, and instead of trying to help the European Jewry, focused on building the future state. Two of the main elements of Zionist ideology, "the negation of the diaspora" and "the new Jew" had long distanced the settlers from the European Jews. The ideal of the "new Jew" was borrowed from similar Soviet, Fascist, and Nazi ideals. The "'new Jew' was erect, brave, handsome, physically developed, enjoyed work, sports, and games, and was free in movements, and dedicated to his people and possessions" [*Segev 1991: 25*]. "Negating the diaspora" meant juxtaposing the "new Jew" with the "old," urban, exilic Jew. The latter was seen as a weak, uprooted, decadent remnant of a dying world, a submissive citizen of states not his, at the mercy of hostile governments and people, helpless against the occasional pogrom, while the *chalutzim* were reclaiming the honor of the Jewish people. The negative stereotype of the urban exilic Jew had sometimes reached classical anti-Semitic descriptions, with Jewish moneylenders described in *Haaretz* as "blood sucking leeches" [*ibid.: 26*].

For the Zionists, returning to Israel was the Jewish people's return to "normality." Deterministically, Jewish history in the diaspora was seen as meaningless in itself, whereas "connecting" to the land was important precisely because it "anchored" the nation, thus bringing it "back to history" [*Raz-Krakotzkin 1993: 23*]. Exilic Jews were resented precisely because by remaining in exile, they were postponing the rebirth of the Jewish people.

At the same time, the Zionist elite exhibited a cynical, realpolitik attitude towards the Holocaust. Essentially indifferent towards the European Jews, the leadership did see the war's upside: whereas the First World War secured the Balfour Declaration, the Second World War would secure the state itself [*Segev 1991: 72*]. This, Ben-Gurion claimed, would be the Zionists' "political conscience" during the war. The Jewish Agency's responsibility was to build a state, not to save "one child from Zagreb" which "sometimes" might be more important [*ibid.: 73*].

While the Zionist leadership objected to *haapala* (illegal immigration to Palestine), the rivaling Revisionists continued throughout the war to assist immigrants and refugees to flee Europe to Palestine. This caused Moshe Sharett, a prominent Zionist activist, to complain about the "bad human material" they were assisting: blind, crippled, and old people [*ibid.: 74*]. When, towards the end of the war, the Jewish Agency also began assisting with *haapala*, it was in order to prove the Agency had actively saved Jews. The leadership's most famous attempt at military assistance, however, was nothing but a mythologized disaster. In 1944 the Agency collaborated with the Royal Air Force in parachuting paratroopers behind enemy lines. Their main mission was to get in touch with partisans. The paratroopers were *kibbutz* members in their twenties: symbols of the "new Jew." They were also inexperienced and ill prepared for the mission. Expecting precise instructions from the Agency upon leaving, they received nothing more than empty slogans. "Ben-Gurion told them to act so 'the Jews would know Israel is their land and refuge,' so they would flow to it in their masses after the victory" [*ibid.: 76*]. The paratroopers did little more than risk their lives. Local partisans blamed them not only for not realizing the danger they were in, believing the war was just a game, but also of risking the local partisans themselves [*ibid.: 76–77*].

After the war, Zionist activists went to Europe in order to convince the survivors to immigrate to Israel. The activists were disappointed with the survivors' "hollow materialism," which they understood to be the result not only of the Holocaust, but also of their prolonged stay in exile. The activists were worried they would be useless to the Zionist cause, and were not afraid to tell them they were not the ideal "human material" [*ibid.: 105–107*]. Once in Israel the survivors were expected not to talk about the Holocaust. The *yishuv* did not want to hear about their experiences, and when survivors did tell their stories – they were not believed [*ibid.: 140*]. Made to keep their stories to themselves, they were alienated from the rest of society.

After years of silence, the third abuse of the elite was its instrumentalization of the Holocaust for social and political purposes. The Gruenwald-Kasztner trial in 1954–1955 deeply embarrassed the *Mapai* establishment. Rudolf Kasztner, a prominent member of the *Histadrut*, had reluctantly sued for libel the pamphleteer Malchiel Gruenwald who had accused him of collaborating with the Nazis. The trial quickly became a disturbing examination of Kasztner's, and through him of *Mapai*'s engagement with the Nazis. The elite was understood to have wasted a precious opportunity in the flop "blood for goods" agreement, in which the Hungarian Jews would be saved in exchange for trucks and other goods supplied to the Nazis [*ibid.: 78*]. The trial, along with other scandals and governmental mishaps, had destabilized Ben-Gurion's and *Mapai*'s secured status during the 1950s. For the establishment, the 1961 Eichmann trial was an opportunity not only to reaffirm its power and morality against the Kasztner affair, but also to create a new ethos for Israeli society. Observing that committed idealism was eroding among Israel's youth, Ben-Gurion saw the trial as an opportunity to induce Israeli society with new idealistic purpose and vigor [*ibid.: 311–312*].

The Eichmann trial was famously recounted by Hannah Arendt in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, and Segev's criticism focused, similarly, on its public and political impetus, its role in raising global awareness to the Holocaust and creating a new homogenizing ethos in Israeli society. However, in spite of his criticism, Segev's description of the trial was not as critical as Arendt's. According to Segev, Arendt herself confessed to him that she had written the book in anger, and would probably have written it differently were she to write it again [*ibid.: 401*]. Acknowledging the trial's political purpose, Segev also noted the liberating effect the trial had had on the survivors and Israeli society. Indeed, Segev's criticisms of Zionist and Israeli history were much less vehement than other Critical Historians, and his narratives did not vilify key characters (in spite of critics' claims), but presented them as humans with strengths and weaknesses. As he wrote in the introduction to *The First Israelis*, "For me, the story of those first Israelis is basically one of success; I tend to think of them with compassion and not a little envy for their part in the historic task of creating a new state" [*Segev 1998: v*].

The Palestinians

The Critical Historians have criticized previous scholars for their depiction – or ignoring – of the Palestinians' part in the history of the Zionist movement and Israel. In previous histories, they argued, the Palestinians were either ignored, or vilified as vicious Arabs. Reconstructing the image of the Palestinians was one of the major aims of the Critical Historians, seeing that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the most central problems

in Israeli history and society. In fact, discussing the Palestinians was a challenge in itself, as the Israeli public had been reluctant to see them as a distinct Arab people [*Kimmerling – Migdal 2003: xii*]. Not only did the Critical Historians have to "introduce" the Palestinians into the Israeli narrative, they also had to clearly present the Palestinian's history and identity.

The Image of the Palestinian in Critical Historiography

In spite of being sympathetic to the Palestinians, most works by the Critical Historians focused on the Palestinians from an exclusively Israeli point of view. Consequently, the Palestinians were depicted primarily as victims: massacred, deported, raped, and abused. Concerning Palestinian aggression, on the other hand, the writers usually focused on Jewish victimhood. Throughout the works of the Critical Historians there is little mention of the Palestinians as a people in itself. One reason for this may be that even the Critical Historians agreed that Palestinian national consciousness developed largely through interaction with the Zionists.

The only substantial work to treat the Palestinians from a seemingly "independent" perspective as well as to meticulously trace their origins, was Kimmerling's and Migdal's *The Palestinian People* from 1994. In their book, Kimmerling and Migdal claimed the Palestinians' forefathers were Bedouins who came from the Arabian Peninsula in the first half of the 7th century. Their forefathers were farmers, who nonetheless preserved their warrior identity. Their enemies were any state or authority which attempted to disarm them or restrict their movement through borders [*Kimmerling – Migdal 2003: 5*]. Palestinian national consciousness began to consolidate in the 19th century with the 1834 rebellion against the Ottomans. Kimmerling and Migdal followed the development of the Palestinians through their clashes and interactions with the Ottoman Empire, British rule, the Zionist movement, and finally Israeli rule. The writers generally refrained from romanticizing the history of the Palestinians as well as from sentimentality, and presented a fairly objective image of the people. Nonetheless, the book managed to enrage right wing Israelis who saw it as a radical anti-Zionist document [*Gelber 2007: 416–417*], and failed to satisfy Palestinian scholars, who saw it as a fundamentally orientalist work, replete with Western stereotypes [*Kabha 2007: 313*].

Kimmerling presented a more interesting analysis of the relations between the Palestinians and the Zionist settlers in his *A Model for Analyzing Reciprocal Relations Between the Jewish and Arab Communities in Mandatory Palestine*. Kimmerling analyzed the cultural, economic, and social relationships between the Zionists and the Palestinians, and showed how the interaction between the groups changed them internally. The Jews and the Arabs interacted on three levels: religious (Jewish-Muslim), cultural (Western-traditional), and political (national) [*Kimmerling 2008: 8*]. The political sphere of interaction was the most important, and also proved to be the most fatal for the Palestinian nation. While Jewish national consciousness was already formulated, organized, and contained a political vision, Arab-Palestinian consciousness was slow to crystalize, lacked a political vision, and was hopelessly trying to preserve the status-quo [*ibid.: 10–11*]. The Palestinians' failure to create a homogenous national identity was most strongly demonstrated in the 1936–1939 Arab revolt. The revolt lacked a common political and social objective, and was a mixture

of peasant, familial, colonial, religious, class, and racial struggles [*ibid.: 12*]. The revolt's failure, Kimmerling asserted, foretold the Palestinians' failure during the 1948 War.

While Kimmerling's analysis was for the most part objective, it was also compassionate and empathetic towards the Palestinians. However, it suffered from one main flaw – reluctantly acknowledging the part the Zionists played in the creation of a Palestinian national identity, Kimmerling also suggested that Zionist presence in Palestine hampered Palestinian nationalism [*ibid.: 13*]. While he generally refrained from explicitly criticizing the Zionists (at least in works that focus on the Palestinians), it is clear that Kimmerling saw their arrival as damaging to the indigenous population, who lacked the political, cultural, social, and economic tools to deal with their sophisticated rivals.

Unlike Kimmerling, most other Critical Historians treated the Palestinians predominantly from the perspective of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The historians focused on the 1948 War, concentrating both on actions taken by the IDF and Jewish paramilitary organizations (*Etzel* and *Lehi*), as well as the leadership's orders during the war, and its reactions to reports of atrocities from the front. In these cases the Palestinians appear only as victims. There is hardly any mention of their lives before the war, except for the rare occasions when their peaceful or hostile relations with their Jewish neighbors are briefly mentioned. The Deir Yassin massacre, one of the most notorious symbols of Jewish violence committed by *Etzel* and *Lehi*, is a representative example of the Critical Historians' treatment of Palestinian victimhood [*Morris 1999: 207–209*]. In *The First Israelis* Segev mentioned the massacre in one sentence, only in order to explain why so many Arabs had left their villages (they were afraid of a similar fate), although he did add a footnote which briefly describes the general course of events: "Over two hundred villagers, many of them women and children, were killed. The rest were paraded through the streets of Jerusalem and then forced to cross over to the Arab part of the city. The Jewish Agency strongly denounced this action" [*Segev 1998: 25*]. Morris described the course of events more meticulously, recording the stages and actual acts of the massacre: "Whole families were riddled with bullets and grenade fragments and buried when houses were blown up on top of them; men, women, and children were mowed down as they emerged from houses; individuals were taken aside and shot" [*Morris 1999: 208*]. These descriptions, curt and to the point, are typical of the Critical Historians' depictions of the 1948 War and the Palestinians.

In other works by the Critical Historians the Palestinians were exhibited as the main victims of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but interest in them hardly exceeded their victimhood. Only in recent years did Pappé start writing on the conflict from a distinctively Palestinian point of view, markedly glorifying the Palestinians and vilifying the Zionists and Israelis [*Morris 2004*]. These attempts, however, have damaged his reputation as a credible historian, at least among Israeli and independent readers. It seems clear that for the majority of the Critical Historians, writing as Israelis meant first and foremost confronting their own history and actions.

Criticizing the Critical Historians: the "Old" Historians Fight Back

As the "old guard" of the Israeli historiography was blamed for embellishing and censoring Israeli history, renowned scholars such as Tuvia Friling, Anita Shapira, Yoav Gleber, and Shabtai Teveth found themselves compelled to defend their own research, on the one

hand, and to counter attack the Critical Historians' works, on the other. Their criticism revolved around four main lines of argumentation: the Critical Historians interpreted events in retrospect and with knowledge that was not available to the Zionist (and later Israeli) leadership at the time; they intentionally falsified and used information out of context in order to vilify the leadership's motives; they misread sources and documents, and misunderstood the significance of events and the hierarchy of historical players [*Friling 2003a: 426–427*]. The fourth line of argument was directed against postmodernism in general and its imported Israeli derivative in particular [*Taub 1997: 233–234*].

The "clash of historians" which ensued also stirred a debate about Zionism and post-Zionism [*Bar-On 2005: 53*].[1] More than other points of contention, this debate quickly seeped to the media and popular discourse in Israel, diverting attention from historical facts and processes, and focusing instead on which narrative Israelis should espouse. Thus, the most noticeable impact of the Critical Historians lay not in uncovering and discussing ambivalent moments in Israeli history, but in polarizing Israeli society, leading the debate to a point in which nearly any criticism of Israeli history or politics came to be associated with post- or anti-Zionism. Soon, questions of political affinity and vision occupied the center stage, instead of historical and academic argumentation.

Bending the Facts

Several "old" historians have taken up the challenge of refuting some of the Critical Historians' claims through detailed analyses of the Critical narrative and the events as they really happened. In *The Zionist Movement's March of Folly and The Seventh Million* and *David Ben-Gurion and the Holocaust* Tuvia Friling set out to expose the techniques Segev used in *The Seventh Million* in order to vilify Ben-Gurion and the Zionist establishment. Friling's articles are considered milestones not only in their critique of Segev's book, but also in "exposing" the general approach and methodology of the Critical Historians.

According to Friling, Segev ignored the difficulty and complexity of the rescue operations in order to deride the Zionist establishment and its failures. Friling describes in detail all the processes and communications which surrounded these plans, in order to demonstrate that the Jewish Agency did all that could be done in order to save Jews. Friling takes up the Transnistria rescue plan as a case study. During the Second World War, Transnistria was under Romanian control. In 1941–1942 the Romanian government deported the 148,000 Bessarabian Jews to the territory. While the Romanian government did not actively exterminate the Jews deported to Transnistria, it did not provide them with any living conditions, leaving them to perish in the wilderness. In the Transnistria rescue plan, the Romanian government offered to free some 70,000 Jews who survived Transnistria in exchange for 14–28 million dollars [*Segev 1991: 78*]. However, both the Germans and the British objected to this deal. The Germans did not want to strengthen the Jewish settlement against their allies, the Arabs, while the British principally prohibited the entrance of citizens of enemy states into their territory. Thus the plan failed not because, but in spite

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1   The term Post-Zionism essentially means that Zionism has finished its role in the evolution of Israel, and that Israel should (or will inevitably) become a multicultural State in which Judaism is merely one of several equal ethnicities and religions.

of the Jewish Agency's efforts. However, in Segev's description of the events, he deliberates whether the Jewish Agency could not still proceed with the plan: "And thus only doubt is left if the Agency could reach an agreement with the Romanians, behind the Allies and Germans backs, in order to save several thousands; maybe it could not" [*ibid.: 79*]. Segev's remark, Friling claims, not only puts the blame on the Jewish Agency in spite of its efforts to save Jews, but is also absurd, given that it would be impossible to secretly transfer 70,000 people [*Friling 1992: 321–322*]. Friling methodically follows the failure of other rescue plans, all the while referring to Segev's narration of the same events, which belittles and disparages Ben-Gurion and the Agency's "little people" [*ibid.: 321*]. Instead of realizing the complexity, entanglement, and difficulty of the leadership's position, Friling claims, Segev prefers to accuse the leadership of "Palestino-centrism," pettiness, and ineffectiveness.

The Critical Historians' various theories of colonization are also strongly attacked by the "old" historians. While Zionism does exhibit some colonial characteristics as we have noted earlier, colonialism is too limited a perspective for analyzing Zionism, they claim.

The first and clearest difference is inherent in what Avi Bareli termed "forgetting Europe." By "forgetting" Europe, the Critical Historians ignore the fact that the Eastern-European Jews who immigrated to Palestine were equally "pushed" there by European antisemitism and pogroms, as much as they were "pulled" to Palestine [*Bareli 2003: 304*]. Moreover, the Zionists invested money in Palestine, unlike the colonialists who coveted the land's natural resources, sending them homeward [*ibid. 2003: 305*]. Finally, the Zionists and the Palestinians competed over labor, whereas colonialists usually exploited the indigenous population. While material analyses of Zionism as colonialism are unsatisfactory, Pappé's comparison of the Zionists and the Basel Mission through the prism of discourse and consciousness is also inadequate. Pappé superficially analyzes a narrow and selective set of symbols and discourse elements, and consequently concludes that Zionism is a form of colonialism. His analysis overlooks both the material and cultural differences between the groups, and especially the role the Jews' Eastern European experience played in turning to Zionism [*ibid.: 311–313*].

Gelber has also exposed serious flaws in the Zionist-colonial prism, focusing on several points: 1) the Zionists did not attempt to conquer the land by force, but saw the return to manual labor as a means to "normalizing" the Jew; 2) unlike other colonialists, they attempted to create a democratic society, and sought to rely on natural growth and immigration in order to ensure their demographic majority; 3) Palestine, unlike other colonial destinations, was a poor country, its resources so scarce, both Arabs and Jews were compelled to emigrate from it during the waning of the Ottoman Empire; 4) while colonialists took over land and resources by force, the Zionists purchased land, causing land prices to rise; 5) the Zionists did not attempt to take over the existing Arab economy, but actually competed with the Arabs over the labor market; 6) culturally, the Zionists severed ties with the "old" world, seeking to create a new society; 7) finally, in Palestine the Zionists sought to revive an ancient heritage, as can be seen in the use of the Hebrew language – in other words, theirs was a typical 19th century national revival, and not a colonialist effort [*Gelber 2007: 416–421*].

Gelber's arguments are convincing for the main part, though they are based on general statements, and sometimes lack scientific accuracy and detail. His attempt to revoke all postcolonial arguments in a few pages is bound to remain incomplete and defective. His

claim, for example, that unlike other colonialists the Zionists did not use force in conquering the land [*ibid.: 418*], is true, but this was not necessarily out of goodwill as out of lack of military ability. In 1904 Menachem Ussishkin, a leader of the Zionist group *Hovevei Zion* wrote: "[W]ithout ownership of the land, Erez Yisrael will never become Jewish. [Land is acquired in the modern world by three methods]: by force – that is, by conquest in war, or in other words, by robbing land from its owner; [...] by expropriation via governmental authority; or by purchase [...] we are too weak, therefore, we have but the second and third [options]" [quoted in: *Morris 1999: 38*]. Ussishkin and other Zionist activists acknowledged their military weakness on the one hand, and their economic strength on the other, and hardly used moral arguments in preferring purchase over violence.

Conclusion

Criticizing the Critical Historians has focused therefore mostly on their selective representation of facts and events. Philosophy professor Elhana Yakira has controversially compared this technique to the one used by Holocaust deniers [*Yakira 2006*]. While Yakira's comparison is generally accepted to be an exaggeration, the Critical Histories are not free from misrepresentations, as Moshe Zimmermann, a vocal critique of Israel, has had to admit, at least in relation to *The Seventh Million* [*Friling 2003a: fn. 66*]. However, it is impossible to claim the Critical Historians' works are entirely fictitious and unreliable. Not devoid of mistakes and political motivation, not only did they bring new unknown facts to the center of attention, they have managed to stir a serious debate on Israeli history, shattering the previous view of Israel as "pure" and completely just. Many of the Critical Historians have also revised their works, acknowledged their mistakes, and published new works which substantiate their claims. Seeing that the historical and sociological discourse in Israel is predominantly modernistic, the Critical Historians have had to base their research on "dry" facts, more than anything else. The interpretation and arrangement of facts are indeed in the hands of the writer, but it cannot be said all Critical Historians have taken more liberty with them than the "old" historians. The main difference between the "old" and Critical historians is essentially in the party with which the writers identify. While the "old" historians see themselves as Zionists, and identify with the history of Zionism, in spite of its faults and wrongs, the Critical Historians are not necessarily Zionist, and are consequently less empathetic towards the Zionists and their actions. As Anita Shapira has noted, the Critical Historians were less immersed in the exhilaration of building Israel than the "old" historians were, but this was less a result of generational gaps, as she has claimed, and probably more a result of a collective discomfort with the path Israel was taking in the 1980s and the intensification of the crisis it was in.

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The Unimaginable Revolution: 1917 in Retrospect

J O H A N N   P.   A R N A S O N *

Nepředstavitelná revoluce: rok 1917 v retrospektivě

Abstract: The essay takes off from current controversies about Communism, and on the relative weight of its cultural, political and economic components. The discussion then moves, in light of recent historical scholarship, to problems of conceptualizing the revolutionary process that gave rise to Soviet Communism. A strong emphasis is placed on the singularity of the Russian revolution, and on the limits to general theories of revolution. Hasegawa's revised work on the February revolution of 1917 is discussed at some length, and his interpretation of that event as an interaction between popular and liberal forces is accepted. The following months saw the emergence of multiple revolutionary movements, but also the strengthening of an organization and an alternative leadership with a project different from the main currents of the revolution, but capable of conquering power through a selective mobilization of revolutionary forces. The presuppositions of Bolshevism are analyzed, as well as the implications of its victory. The essay finishes with reflections on Stalinism and its roots in the revolutionary process.

Keywords: Bolshevism; Communism; Russia; World War I; revolution; empire; Lenin; Stalin

As the "end of history," celebrated around the turn of the century (surely one of the flimsiest delusions of all times), gives way to a re-enactment of the cold war, it seems appropriate to reflect on background implications of the shift. The resurgence of the cold war imaginary, massive enough to confuse and aggravate a conflict structurally different from the supposed paradigm, is a complex phenomenon irreducible to any main actor or impulse. The present paper will not deal directly with its unfolding impact [for a recent judicious discussion, see *Legvold 2016*]. But to grasp the broader context, we need to reconsider both presuppositions and prompting circumstances of this recent – and very muddled – reawakening to history.

Rethinking Communism

The vision of an end to history, or more precisely a definitive triumph of "liberal democracy" over all conceivable alternatives, was based on strong assumptions about a certain counter-history having run its course. More important than anything else was the belief that not only had the Soviet Union disintegrated, but the Soviet model had departed from the scene, suffered a total collapse, and its history could be written as "the past of an illusion" [*Furet 2000*; the English translation unjustifiably replaces "past" with "passing," thu suggesting an ongoing process, whereas Furet was unequivocally talking about a past

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that had run its course]. This view was never more than wishful thinking, and the course of events – the rise and rise of China, the persistence of authoritarian rule in Russia, and a variety of unexpected developments in more peripheral ex-Communist states – soon dispelled the illusion of a clear exit from illusion. But the dominant response has, as noted above, been a return to earlier stereotypes and simplifications, rather than an effort to rethink expectations. This is not to belittle the vast amount of scholarly work done on the historical trajectories, mutations and legacies of Communism, and and on the implications of these factors for the prospects of the contemporary world. The opening of archives, the critique of ideological constructs, and the new possibilities of critical debate in post-Communist societies have brought the historiography and historical sociology of this field to a new level. However, the scholarly breakthrough has not had any decisive impact on the climate of opinion in the broader public sphere.

This is probably to some extent due to the complexity of the emerging picture, and to the variety of perspectives in play. Multiple aspects of the Communist experience have been explored in much greater detail than before, but there is still extensive work to be done on synthesizing the different approaches. For one thing, scholarly work produced during the last quarter of a century contains claims to the effect that the cultural, the political, the economic or the geopolitical dimensions of Communism deserve particular attention and have been highlighted by newly available sources. As an eminent historian puts it: "Without its transforming cultural objectives, Bolshevism makes no sense at all" [*Read 1996: 300*]. It is, on this view, the termination of the Soviet regime that enables us to put the aspirations and problems of the cultural project, as well as the resistance to it, into proper perspective. Politically centred intepretations will emphasize the beginning and the end of the trajectory from 1917–1918 to 1989–1991. At the outset, an exceptionally acute power struggle, culminating in an unprecedentedly radical change, determined the uses and understandings of ideological themes; in the final phase, unforeseen ramifications of political reform confronted the whole power structure with problems insoluble on its terms. This double reference becomes the defining context for analyses of the Soviet experience.

As for economic aspects, probably most prominent in popular narratives of Soviet decline and fall, an emerging line of argument maintains that enduring foundations were laid at a very early stage, when the victorious Bolsheviks had to cope with a spiralling collapse made worse by their mixture of ignorance and extremism. The continuity of the economic culture and strategy that crystallized in this setting, was obscured by labelling the early version as war Communism (although its basic contours were visible before the main round of the civil war) and the later stages as a planned economy. There were, obviously, significant organizational and institutional differences between early Bolshevik, Stalinist and post-Stalinist phases, but the continuity seems well expressed by the concept of économie mobilisée, used in French debates [*Sapir 1990*]; this might be translated as "permanent war economy," and is reminiscent of Oskar Lange's prewar description of the Soviet model as a war economy *sui generis*). Lenin's 1918 reference to the creation of two separate components of socialism, the German war economy and the Russian dictatorship of the proletariat, may be read as a first indication of this turn. The long-term impact of the model thus anticipated was to prove a major obstacle to the change of economic institutions. A comparison with China would be instructive on this point as on many others, but

here I can only suggest a plausible line of analysis. On the level of economic policies, the Chinese Communist leadership was at first inclined to apply Soviet methods in principle while striving to accelerate development beyond Soviet precedents. When this strategy did not achieve the desired results, including the aim of imperial parity with the Soviet Union, the next step was a shift to more home-made but fundamentally unhinged visions of acceleration, linked to supposedly unique Chinese possibilities of mass mobilization; this combination marked the two decades of the Maoist ascendancy (1956–1976) and left the whole regime in an unsettled state that in the end made it easier to redefine the frameworks and priorities of development.

Finally, a geopolitical perspective will highlight the global context of Communist trajectories. The rise of totalitarian regimes in Europe after World War I was – not least – a response to a profoundly but ambiguously restructured constellation of powers. The pre-war empires of Central and Eastern Europe had collapsed, whereas the victorious Western European states found themselves in a situation marked by the vastly increased all-round power of the United States, although the implications were to some extent obscured by a temporary isolationist stance of the emerging superpower. At the same time, military success seemed to open up new prospects for Western hegemony in Africa and Asia, but this was obstructed by inter-imperial rivalry as well as by rising waves of resistance. Seen in this context, the totalitarian reconstructions of empire – beginning with the rebuilding of the Russian one under Bolshevik rule – appear as attempts to reverse or redirect global changes in progress. Their very different outcomes, especially when China – the main non-European case – is taken into account, show how difficult it is to define the last century in terms of a main trend.

In that connection, we may briefly digress on the American factor, not judged in the same way by all historians of the period. In an essay on rethinking the Russian revolution, Luciano Canfora [2017] raises the question of limits to the historical horizons of those who seized power in 1917 and launched the Soviet project; he suggests that two interconnected misperceptions were crucial. The ideologists and strategists of Bolshevism assumed that capitalism had, in principle, run its course, exhausted its possibilities, and reached a state of terminal crisis. They also failed to grasp the weight and significance of American involvement in global affairs, backed up by the most dynamic and increasingly dominant capitalist economy. The question of capitalism, its place in the Bolshevik imaginary and in the historical environment of the Soviet Union, will be revisited below. As for American influence, a very different view is taken in one of the most ambitious reinterpretations of early twentieth-century history, Adam Tooze's book on the "reconstitution of global order" between 1916 and 1931 [Tooze 2015]. In this perspective, the defining aspect of global constellation after World War I was "the painful fact that the United States was a power unlike any other. It had emerged, quite suddenly, as a novel kind of 'super-state,' exercising a veto over the financial and security concerns of the other major states of the world" [ibid. 6]. "The end of the war was thus the beginning of American hegemony, at first muted by an isolationist turn of foreign policy, but in the long run leading to the 'pax Americana' that still defines our world today" [ibid. 7]. Communism, fascism, and Japanese ultra-nationalism are then analyzed as responses to the imminent threat of an American world order; Churchill, Hitler and Trotsky are cited as witnesses to this historical conjuncture.

There is no doubt that Tooze's work throws new light on a crucial period. His argument is too complex to be further discussed here. But doubts may be raised about some of the most far-reaching conclusions. Is our world defined by a *pax Americana*? Does that kind of peace prevail across Eurasia? To ask that question is to answer it. And it seems clear that in this case as in many others, an overdrawn image of the present has affected perspectives on the past. Tooze's own account of contradictory American responses to the new situation suggest a more complicated storyline than the one summed up in his most condensed formulations: he describes the worldwide depression of 1920, precipitated by Wilson's defeat, as "perhaps the most underrated event in the history of the twentieth century," and the Great Depression of 1929 as the moment "when the all-consuming crisis of the early twentieth century claimed its last victim – the United States" [*ibid. 28–29*]. His references to protagonists of the supposed counter-offensives are also problematic. It seems well established that Hitler expected a final struggle for world domination between Germany and the United States, but this was a long-term perspective (to the extent that Hitler was capable of such things), and an open contest; occasional mentions of a looming American threat may have been designed to motivate supporters rather than to clarify prospects. Trotsky wrote some perceptive comments on the growing power of the United States, but they reflect a sensibility to international affairs that set him apart from the Bolshevik core. As for Stalin, whom Tooze also ranks among the politicians reacting to American ascendancy, there are good reasons to disagree. Stephen Kotkin's monumental biography of Stalin [*Kotkin 2015, 2017*] is very informative on this point. Stalin's strategic vision was, in the interwar years, resolutely and consistently Eurasian, in the broad sense that included the flanking insular powers at the western and the eastern end. He saw Britain as the main imperialist power, even after its relative decline *vis-à-vis* America should have been quite visible, and Japan as a particularly serious threat to the Soviet Union. That did not prevent him from paying particular attention to the geopolitically central problem of relations with Germany. But he seems to have underestimated the potential and – in due course – the ambitions of the United States. In the aftermath of World War II, two successive but divergent developments forced a change of perspective. Confrontation with the United States came earlier than the Stalinist leadership had expected (though partly as a result of its own actions), and the Soviet Union thus faced a more powerful adversary with a more assertive global policy than the image of mutually hostile imperialisms had allowed for. But very soon after this turn, the Communist victory in China held out the hope of a Eurasian bloc and a massive change in the geopolitical balance of power. That led, among other things, to the Korean War, which Stalin would not have allowed to go ahead without assurance of Chinese support. These different trends may to some extent explain the unsettled character of Stalin's foreign policy in his last years. It was left to his successors to try to rationalize relations with the US in a global environment where Soviet power was structurally inferior.

Finally, the imperial project pursued by Japanese ultra-nationalism was not foredoomed to a collison with the United States. An unequal compromise with Chinese nationalism, resulting in partial conquest of China and war against the Soviet Union, was a possible choice for the architects of Japanese expansion. To sum up, the conflicts, developmental paths and plausible alternatives of the twentieth century are best understood in terms of multiple geopolitical pattern and processes, rather than a unidirectional march of history (culminating, as we would now have to add, in the epiphany of Donald Trump).

Following the Weberian maxim that emerging historical constellations open up new perspectives on their past, the discussion below will examine the genesis of the Soviet model in light of later destinies, with reference to issues noted above: the multiple mutations that put an end to Communism as an integral regime, retrospective questions about its cultural, political or economic core, and to the specific problems posed by a geopolitical frame of reference. The last-mentioned aspect has until recently been given less attention than it deserves. Western cold war perspectives were disproportionately focused on ideology and politics; a stronger emphasis on economics came later, and with ambiguous implications: first because of concerns that the Soviet Union might after all prove more capable of eonomic competition than had been expected, later on the grounds that precisely economic failure had sealed the defeat of Soviet-type regimes. Notwithstanding the revival of cold war attitudes, post-Communist conditions have made the importance of geopolitics clear enough for it to be brought back into historical and sociological analysis.

This essay makes no claim to independent contributions on the historiographical level. The aim is, rather, to spell out some conceptual and interpretive lessons that can be learnt from the very rich harvest of historical scholarship on Communism as well as on early twentieth-century Europe, especially from works produced over the last quarter of a century. As will be seen, these lessons are largely related to the correction of traditional assumptions and limiting perspectives on the events in question. Efforts to reimagine the Russian revolution have been hampered by inadequate approaches. But the title referring to an "unimaginable revolution" has another and stronger connotation. The October revolution had a global impact surpassed only by its French predecessor (and if the influence of the latter was more lasting and far-reaching, that of "Red October" was more concentrated). But no revolution has been marked by a comparable gap between initially imagined goals and long-term historical outcomes. The process began with hopes for an imminent and worldwide proletarian uprising; it must, however, be assumed that there was from the outset a less explicit commitment to Russian leadership, not only in the sense of a first move, but also with a view to international guidance by the organization that was taking over Russia. The party as an ultimate decision-maker and an all-round supervisor had become an integral part of the revolutionary imaginary. At the end of the upheaval, after an explosion of violence and destruction unequalled in any other revolutionary process, the Bolsheviks found themselves reconstructing an empire, more capable of mobilizing power resources than its predecessor (and characterized, in its formative phase, by a more extreme despotism than the tsarist regime had ever achieved), but internationally more isolated.

To stress the distance between imagined beginnings and actual results is not to deny the role of ideas in the process. The Marxian thesis that human beings make their own history is as valid in this case as in others; and as Max Weber grasped better than anybody else, the pursuit of interests (in the broadest sense) that fuels the making of history is channelled by ideas. Bolshevik political culture centred on a set of ideas. The point is that these ideas were, when put to the test, imaginary significations with a surrounding field of meaning whose logic emerged in confrontation with unforeseen circumstances and led to results that took may of the protagonists by surprise. To cut a complicated story short, the seizure of power in the name of an authoritarian leadership superimposed on a mass movement (or, more precisely, on a briefly convergent set of mass movements) culminated

in the deification of despots, in human sacrifices legitimized either as judicial acts or as unavoidable side effects of progress, and in the model of a super-state claiming complete fusion with society. To clarify the context of these transformations, we must take a closer look as historical landmarks.

World War I as a Catalyst and Pathmaker

It is a commonplace that the first world war had major and lasting effects on subsequent history. George Kennan's description of it as "the seminal catastrophe of the twentieth century" is one of the most frequently quoted statements on the subject; less frequently noted is the particular emphasis on "seminal," suggesting origins and directions rather than mere accelerating or disuptive effects on more central processes. This distinction is, as will be seen, relevant to the understanding of war and revolution in the Russian setting.

Traditional approaches to Russia's twentieth-century trajectory tended to see the involvement in an all-European war as an accelerating factor, speeding up a revolutionary dynamic essentially rooted in internal conditions. Variations on this theme could serve to distinguish liberal and Marxist narratives. To the former, acceleration caused by war played into the hands of extremist forces and favoured a radicalizing turn not unlike those known from brief episodes in the history of Western revolutions; but in Russia this gave rise to a new regime that lasted for three quarters of a century. After 1991, this view could be amended to the effect that Bolshevism had been a long parenthesis, after which Russia would return to a "normal" path of modernization. On the Marxist side, acceleration due to war was held to have opened the way for a socially and historically progressive deepening of the revolution; but Marxist critics of the consolidated Soviet regime could also argue that the impact of the war had aggravated problems and caused deformations or even derailed the whole process. A third perspective saw the war and the revolution as parts of a general, pan-European explosion of violence that marked the period from 1914 to 1918.

None of these approaches can be dismissed out of hand. If we want to move beyond them and spell out more specific connections between the world war and the revolutionary upheaval in Russia, the first step must be a closer look at the character and the unfolding of the war. In this regard, there is much to draw on in recent scholarship, and a convincing effort to revise standard accounts of a conflict that was long viewed from a primarily Western European (or more precisely Anglo-Saxon) vantage point. To introduce the new perspectives, a quote from Dominic Lieven's book on imperial Russia and the war seems particularly apt: "A basic point about the First World War" is that "contrary to the near-universal assumption in the English-speaking world, the war was first and foremost an eastern European conflict […] The great irony of the First World War was that a conflict which began more than anything else as a struggle between the Germanic powers and Russia to dominate east central Europe ended in the defeat of both sides" [*Lieven 2016: 2*]. These observations call for further comments on the overall pattern of the war. Both historians and the broader public long favoured an interpretation that emphasized and blamed the rivalry of nation-states. This was an integral part of the Western-centred view. It is now more widely recognized that the war was, first and foremost, a multi-imperial conflict, to that date the most complicated of its kind. It involved two different groups of imperial powers, the Western European states with overseas possessions or affiliated territories and

the continental empires of Central Europe, Northern Eurasia and the Middle East. Germany may be seen as an intermediate case: it had acquired overseas colonies, but on home ground, it was an imperial power by virtue of its having incorporated a whole system of smaller states, and because of the presence of national minorities. It was also, as events were to show, disposed to conquest in Eastern Europe. But the rivalry of these major geopolitical actors was not the whole story. The European constellation left space for imperial or at least large-state aspirations by newcomers to the scene. Italian efforts to join the ranks of the great powers, at first unsuccessful, led to conquest at the expense of the weakened Ottoman empire. That precedent is generally believed to have had a part in triggering the Balkan wars against the Ottomans; the creation of a unified Italian state by the kingdom of Piemont also became a model for Balkan states aiming at enlargement in the region. A greater Bulgarian state was cut down to size by its erstwhile allies, but Serbian visions of expansion remained active and were an important part of the background to the July crisis in 1914. More generally speaking, the sub-imperial periphery was an integral and lasting aspect of the European power cauldron. For one thing, the postwar resurrection of the Polish state was linked to activated memories of a much larger domain, leading to the invasion of Ukraine in 1920. To complete the picture, it should be added that imperial powers outside Europe were drawn into the conflict. Apart from American intervention, certainly not unrelated to the imperial vision and self-image that went back to the origins of the United States, two East Asian states intervened on very different premises and with contrasting results. Chinese participation in the war was very limited, but began with high hopes of improving the position of a declining empire; they were disappointed, and that experience did much to trigger a political and cultural upheaval in China after the war. These events, encapsulated in the 4th May movement, established new frontlines for internal power struggles and paved the way for Chinese reception of the emerging Soviet model in its double capacity asan alternative to the West and a recipe for restoring an empire. Japanese intervention was also limited, but much more successful. Japanese expansionist policies had already laid teh foundations of an empire; the recognition of Japanese claims to German colonial footholds in East Asia helped to stimulate and legitimize further moves, and Japan's international standing was further consolidated by treaties after the war. At the same time, Japanese nationalist leaders could choose between three different strategies *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union: a war that would have continued the 1918–1921 intervention on a much larger scale, a *modus vivendi* that would facilitate offensives in other directions; or an alliance, at one stage seriously considered in influential circles. In the end, it was a version of the second alternative that prevailed. But the uncertainty about relations with Japan was of some importance for Soviet policies between the wars.

Finally, the view of World war I as a multi-imperial conflict entails some changes to the traditional chronology. Gewarth and Manela [*2005*] date a "war of empires" from 1911 (the Italian attack on the Ottoman empire) to 1923 (the end of the war between Greece and Turkey). But the picture can be extended. A global cumulation of imperial ventures during the last two decades before 1914 included a war between China and Japan, between the United States and Spain, and the Austro-Hungarian annexation of Bosnia. The ways of avoiding war developed in Europe before 1914 were not negligible, but they were clearly weakened by the overall dynamics of world affairs. As for the aftermath of the main conflict, it involved both interstate struggles and civil wars.

The Russian Empire from Crisis to Reconstruction

The prelude and the sequel to the revolution of 1917 should be placed in this broader historical context. Among the imperial powers in play, Russia underwent the most total collapse, the most brutal struggle about its future, and a uniquely radical rebuilding. To begin with a background factor, Russia went to war with memories of recent upheavals. It had suffered a defeat by Japan, followed by a peace settlement supervised by other powers, and by a revolution whose ultimate failure was due to dissonances between its driving forces, as well as to concessions later curtailed but hard to revoke completely. This recent past affected all responses to the new crisis caused by the war, not least the mutual perception of the last defenders of autocracy, the remnant of parliamentary institutions and the army that in the end was forced to choose between the former two. There was no similar case; the Ottoman situation was different in that a successful revolution had preceded territorial losses of a magnitude unique in that period, but the revolutionary project was active enough for the leadership to hope for redress through alliance with the most promising partners.

Russia's "imperial apocalypse" [*Sanborn 2015*] began with defeat, retreat and loss of territories in the last months of 1914, and continued the following year. The decomposition of the imperial army began at this early stage. According to Allan Wildman, who researched this process more thoroughly than any other Western historian, "wholesale desertions, plunder, and disorderly flight, compounded by the intermingling of hundreds and thousands of Polish, White Russian, and Jewish refugees" [*Wildman 1980: 91*] marked the beginning of a crisis that was to reach much more catastrophic proportions. But he also notes that the mutinies accompanying this breakdown did not in themselves "reflect an incipient politicization of the army" [*ibid. 115*]. The decisive impulse in that direction came from social and political upheavals in the rear. To put this next stage of the crisis in proper context, we must place due emphasis on specific factors, rather than on general backwardness and a discrepancy between ambitions and resources of the Russian state, frequently stressed in earlier scholarship. More recently, historians have shown that social and economic developments during the years 1914 to 1916 were not uniformly negative. It was a conjunction of two particular problems that brought about a crisis of revolutionary proportions, and it took a very distinctive spatio-political setting to force an escalation to ultimate stakes. A bread supply crisis in the main city centres combined with a breakdown of relations between the autocratic state and the remaining beneficiaries of its tenuous political concessions; a third and decisively aggravating factor was the mutiny that paralyzed the militray response to popular protest in the capital. The result of all this was the next phase of imperial decomposition: a local and bipolar revolution. Its scene was St. Petersburg, and recent historical scholarship has done much to clarify the significance of that site. Karl Schlögel's writings [*2009*; *2017*] are particularly insightful. Multiple aspects of the capital as an urban and political formation were relevant to the unfolding events. The spatial relationship between working-class suburbs and industrial quarters on the one hand, the centres of power, wealth and representation on the other, was a crucial circumstance. A public sphere originally created by autocracy in its own image, but now more weakly linked to that source (after several recent de-legitimizing upsets, from the firing on protesting crowds in 1905 to the departure of the ruler for the front), was therefore

more easily taken over by alternative powers. The proximity to a very vulnerable frontier, unusual among European capitals, affected the social and political atmosphere, and not least the mood of the army stationed in the capital (the neighbourhood of Finland, the imperial domain that had most effectively sought to chart its own path, also counted for something).

If the revolution that broke out in this setting can be described as bi-polar, that label should be clarified through confrontation with the more familiar notion of dual power. The victors of October constructed a narrative that became official truth in Soviet discourse. On this view, the February days had seen the triumph of a popular insurrection against tsarism, but without the kind of leadership that would have been needed to pursue power in a more sustained way. As a result, governmental authority fell to an improvised grouping of politicians, whereas the Petersburg soviet – and in due course a broader set of similar emerging institutions – retained some of the power growing out of revolutionary action, and during the year became a strategic basis for a second, more radical revolution. This story of a rapid rise to final victory did not survive the Soviet regime, but even before its fall, it had become clear that adversaries of the Bolsheviks could invoke an adapted version of the same narrative. "Dual power" then appeared as a fracture favouring the designs of a third party, marginal at first but gradually moving to centre stage. The Bolsheviks benefited from the weakness of the government and the unstable orientations of soviet power, and in the end they defeated the former and instrumentalized the latter.

It seems clear that the narrative model of dual power calls for more critical examination, and Tsuyoshi Hasegawa's revised account of the February revolution [*Hasegawa 2017*] is a particularly instructive guide to the field. Hasegawa does not discard the very notion of dual power, but he makes several points that suggest a new view of the whole constellation. He admnits that the "revolution from below provided the general framework, but the specific course of the February Revolution was determined by the conflict within established society," and adds that "when the revolution did come, it was the liberals that tipped the balance between the to forces and who had the most telling effect on the specific course of events during the revolution" [*ibid. 650, 652*]. Hasegawa accepts Leopold Haimson's thesis about a dual polarization inherent in the modernizing processes unfolding in tsarist Russia: "The revolt of the masses against the established order and the irreconcilable conflict between 'society' and 'state'" [*ibid. 639*]. It was the specific interaction of these two trends in the conditions of war that shaped the trajectory of the first 1917 revolution; and if the "working class provided the most important source of social instability in Russia" [*ibid. 639*], direct onfrontation with the state had to take place within privileged society. The conflict aced out on that level did not simply pit the liberals against the autocracy. There was also, in the final phase of the February revolution, a dispute on strategy among the liberals. Hasegawa stresses the different options favoured by Rodzianko and Miliukov: the latter, who prevailed, advocated the formation of a provisional government as a revolutionary body with strong if temporary powers, rather than subordinating it to the duma, which might then have been converted into a constituent assembly. Miliukov was obviously striving to maximize the power of the politicians who had taken over from a paralyzed autocracy and faced the task of managing an unfinished revolution. In the short run, this strategy was effective. The provisional government came into being with "enormous prestige, power and authority," and Hasegawa describes it as a "paradox" that

it nevertheless came to rely on the "incomparably weaker and more divided" institution of the St. Petersburg soviet" [*ibid. 660*]. It seems a safe guess that the architects of the new centre saw the paradox as a short-term problem, resulting from the revolutionary circumstances to which they had responded. The fact that events took a very different turn was not due to any logic of dual power as such.

In a comment inspired by developments in Russia, though not directly related to the events discussed above, Max Weber noted that "great politics is always made by small groups (*Kreisen*) of people," but that their action presupposes the support and "free commitment (*Hingabe*) of sufficiently broad powerful groups" [*Weber 1988: 106*]. Both the basic truth of this statement and the necessary qualifications can be illustrated by closer comparison with the 1917 trajectory. Great politics was certainly made by successive small groups, from the Duma Committee to the Bolshevik leadership. It is equally true that they always relied on the backing of significant social forces. But the Russian case also shows that the constellation of committed and participating forces could undergo rapid changes, and that his complicated the relationship between the background actors and the most visible players; it could also increase the distance between the two sides. The presence of divergent forces could enlarge the scope for action by the "small groups." However, the interaction of forces and protagonists was always crucial, and it repeatedly led to results unintended by either side.

The soviet pole of dual power never replaced the governmental one. A proposal in that vein made at the beginning of March was only supported by a tiny minority, and when – almost eight months later – the government was overthrown in the name of soviet power, that was already a smokescreen for something very different. If dual power was important for further developments, it was in the capacity of an opening for divergent but in the upshot co-radicalizing processes, rather than a mechanism for transfer and re-transfer of power. Moreover, the war was, at all stages, a key factor in the evolving situation, and its effects changed with the overall picture. Following Hasegawa, it seems well established that the military urgency that had arisen at the beginning of 1917 favoured the liberals who had taken control in St. Petersburg. The plans for a military counterrevolution, associated with the generals Alexeyev and Ivanov, were serious, and they were not thwarted by mutinous soldiers. The decisive reason seems – when it came to the crunch – to have been the reluctance of the generals to launch an operation that would vey likely have spiralled into civil war and dealt a fatal blow to Russia's war effort. The politcians in St. Petersburg were aware of this, integrated it into their calculations and left the generals unclear about how far the civilian leaders were prepared to move against the monarchy. This micro-history of exchanges between very few people was the first but not last of such episodes in 1917; the interaction between Kerensky and Kornilov belongs in the same category, as does Lenin's bullying of the Bolshevik leadership before the October insurrection.

A very different dynamic emerges when we consider the longer-term implications. If the provisional government started from a position of strength, it was – more than anything else – the war that undermined this advantage. No revolutionary government had ever come to power in a military situation comparable to the one faced by Russia in early 1917. Since the new liberal leadership was still committed to an imperial vision of the Russian state, no radical downscaling of war aims could be considered. On the other hand, a government aspiring to constitutional rule and public confidence could not speak

the same language as the defunct autocracy, neither on matters of war nor peace; some adjustment was needed, and that was bound to awaken disagreements. Most importantly, the continuing decomposition of the army deprived the government of its most decisive power resource. Historians disagree on the importance of "order no. 1," issued by the St. Petersburg soviet and designed to democratize the structure of the army; it seems more appropriate to explain the links between social upheaval and army disintegration in terms of processes. Traditional notion of social revolutions tended to treat the upheaval in the army as a by-product of changes involving classes and their power struggles, but there are at least two weighty reasons to to regard the revolts of the soldiers and the political activism of the soldiers as distinctive and momentous parts of Russia's terminal imperial crisis. The clash between commanders and subordinates within the army differed in kind and degree from the class conflicts that spread throughout Russian society, and were more conducive to maximal radicalism without clear definition of aims; even more significantly, the disintegration of the army was an irreparable blow to state power, and thus to the position of the provisional government.

The transformation of power balances and conflict patterns in Russian society during 1917 was neither a unilinear turnaround of the divide briefly stabilized after the February revolution, nor a maturing of the whole revolutionary process into a new stage. Following the Czech historian Michal Reiman and his collaborators, whose work [*Reiman et al. 2013*] will be more extensively discussed elsewhere in this issue, it seems more adequate to describe the dominant trend as a growing divergence of distinct and in the end incompatible revolutionary logics. Against the traditional but untenable concepts of bourgeois and proletarian revolutions, Reiman proposes a dichotomy of civic and plebeian revolution, obviously related to the argument about dual polarization (betwwen state and society and between upper and lower classes). The civic revolution, primarily associated with urban middle strata (not reducible to the Marxist notion of a bourgeoisie), aimed at constitutional limitations and the codification of citizen's rights; in the given context, that was bound to include social reforms. The plebeian revolution demanded an overthrow of the privileged classes, without much interest in consitutional or institutional innovation as such, and could easil drift into visions of liquidating class enemies. A growing tendency to identify democracy with the collective action of the oppressed classes reflects the ascendancy of this current in the summer and autumn of 1917.

The distinction between civic and plebeian revolution is convincing, as far as it goes. But questions may be raised about additions and modifications. Some nuancing of social affiliations is needed. There is no doubt that the Mensheviks – and to a lesser extent the Socialist Revolutionary Party – were aligned with the project of a civic revolution, and to the extent that they inluenced working-class action, the civic logic had a foothold in that social milieu. One of the significant examples is working-class support for efforts to replace the Bolshevik government (after its self-proclamation at the congress of soviets) with a coalition of socialist parties; that strategy was inseparable from the hopes linked to a constituent assembly. On the other hand, the notion of a plebeian revolution calls for further differentiation in regard to worker-, peasant- and soldier-based struggles. It is a noteworthy point that the peasantry took the logic of plebeian revolution much further towards social secession than other actors; the outcome was a significant revival of rural insstitutions that had variously been seen as possible stepping-stones to socialism or obstacles to

non-revolutionary modernization. Neither of these expectations was confirmed by the events of 1917 or their aftermath.

Not the least important reason for further reflection on Reiman's dichotomy is the cluster of national revolutions that acompanied the downfall of the empire. There is certainly room for applying the distinction to these diverse cases, but with due allowance for varying patterns of dispute and interaction between the two logics. To mention only two particularly striking examples, the Menshevik government in Georgia (overthrown by Bolshevik intervention after a very short reign) seems to have striven to reconcile civic and plebeian aims, whereas the conflict between them was one of the factors that led to civil war on the threshold of Finnish independence.

However, the most pressing question in regard to Reiman's conceptual scheme is what to make of the revolution that did prevail over both of the alternatives most visible until late in 1917. The Bolshevik takeover was undoubtedly a revolution within the revolution, but as Reiman righly insists, "proletarian" and "socialist" are equally inappropriate labels. It goes without saying that "Red October" and its more decisive sequel had nothing to do with a civic revolution; and in view of the sustained Bolshevik push for a power monopoly, from the outset and thoughout the following years, they were obviously not acting in the spirit of plebeian revolution. The roll-back of popular resistance, autonomous collective action and alternative political currents became a defining feature of Bolshevik rule. A concise label for the transformation that took off between the insurrection in St. Petersburg and the consolidation of a Bolshevik dictatorship is not easy to find. But a somewhat more complex description might refer to a Jacobin, military, statist and imperial revolution with democratic pretensions, significant urban popular support, anti-statist self-imagery and internationalist delusions. If we use the concept of Jacobinism in Eisenstadt's sense, denoting the vision of a political vanguard equipped with ideological prescriptions for rebuilding society, Lenin's takeover was the paradigmatic breakthrough of that kind. The French revolutionary episode that gave the phenomenon a name was a first adumbration, limited by dependence on a representative institution which the original Jacobins could not fully control. The question of later variations on Lenin's model is too complicated to be pursued here. Kautsky's reference to Mussolini as "Lenin's monkey" is not inappropriate; it is much more difficult to defend the idea that Bolshevik precedents inspired National Socialism.

It was the control of strategically situated military units, in conditions of generalized military breakdown, that enabled the Bolsheviks to gain power in the main city centres; a popular basis, also strategically located, was nevertheless crucial to the survival of the regime. The construction of a new power apparatus signalled a shift to revolution from above, but that turn must be seen in a longer-term context. As argued above, the February revolution was already an interplay of action from below and from above. At the other extreme, Stalin's revolution from above, beginning at the end of the 1920s, instrumentalized urban aspirations to change as well as antagonisms within rural society, and can to that extent be said to have incorporated residues of a revolution from below. The two dynamics thus interacted, in drastically changing proportions, for some two decades (if we regard the great purge as the concluding phase of the revolutionary process, as distinct from the longer trajectory of the Soviet regime). There is no doubt that the Bolshevik seizure of power marked a statist reorientation; but the paradox of this strategic shift was that the vision of an all-encompassing party-led transformation served both to enhance and

to disguise the statist implications. The notion of the party as a totalizing institution and a sovereign maker of history became, in practice, a framework for a new type of state-centred development. At the same time, the party was imagined as a unifying focus for social activities and aspirations, thus holding out a promise for an ultimate fusion of state and society. In this connection, a few words may be said about Lenin's *State and Revolution,* written in hiding in the summer and autumn of 1917 but not published, and therefore not accessible to any broader readership, until early in 1918. There is consequently no reason to assume that Lenin regarded this text as important for the revolutionary action launched in October. A more plausible view is that he felt a need to clarify the long-term ideological perspective required to sustain the conquest and maintenance of state power. But if the text is read in isolation, even this view may seem hard to defend. The Italian Marxist Lucio Colletti (later a prominent follower of Berlusconi) once wrote that *State and Revolution* related to the state created by Lenin and his successors roughly as the Sermon on the Mount to the Vatican state. On a less evangelical note, some authors have interpreted the text as an attempt to theorize direct democracy, with reference to the soviet movement, but in a short-lived atmosphere of optimism about mass support and international impact. The insoluble problem with this reading is that it has to construct a brief but radical break with the notion of the party as a vanguard, defended in Lenin's earlier representative writings and unmistakably applied in practice and propaganda when he acquired the power to follow it up. This is a hermeneutical absurdity, and the obvious alternative is to assume that the party – though not theorized in the context of the vanishing state – is taken for granted as an agency of transformation and mobilization. *State and Revolution* was never meant to be a comprehensive exposition of Leninism, nor written for direct strategic purposes. Its specific task was to spell out the anti-statist promises of the supposedly imminent revolution, while avoiding the issue of super-statist implications built into the project.

Finally, the real historical and geopolitical space available for international aims was the domain of the Russian empire, with certain limitations. The secession of the north-western periphery – Poland, the Baltic countries, Finland – had to be accepted, but as later events were to show, it was regarded as unfinished business. Whether the half-hearted intervention of foreign powers might have led to more extensive loss of territories is an open question; the most serious possibility was certainly Japanese conquest of the far eastern region, still feared by Lenin's successors. But the way things developed, the international – or more precisely trans-national – dimension of the revolutionary transformation was a rebuilding of the collapsed empire, on a somewhat diminished territorial basis and in new social and political forms. It became officially an empire of nations united under a universalist centre. One of the paradoxes of Soviet history – and not the least important in its final stage – was that an ideologically internationalist and effectively transnational power structure became a promoter of nation-forming processes, albeit with specific – and in the Stalinist phase very brutal – constraints.

The Russian Metamorphosis of Marxism

All the aspects mentioned above have to do with the intertwinings and discrepancies of ideological visions and actions in pursuit of power; that raises further questions about the sources and character of the ideas that entered into the Russian revolutionary process.

Four different approaches to this field have been most in evidence. The ideas of Leninism, explicit claims as well as tacit presuppositions, have been interpreted as derived from Marx and the Marxism of the Second International, or as a result of the revolutionary intelligentsia appropriating the vision of coercive Westernization represented by Peter the Great (but this time with the twist that a superior version of the West was envisaged). In a very different vein, they have – despite their militantly anti-religious stance – been traced back to religious sources, either a distinctive Messianism of the Orthodox tradition or the universalist vision of Russia as a third Rome. Finally, some authors have seen Lenin's key texts, especially *What Is To Be Done?*, as malign innovations and landmark steps towards the invention of totalitarianism. It cannot be said that these different perspectives have ever been debated in a way likely to facilitate comparison of their merits and weaknesses.

That state of things is a good reason for considering a view different from all those listed above, and to the best of my knowledge never discussed, but – as I will argue – likely to throw new light on the others. Franz Baermann Steiner (1909–1952), a long neglected but now gradually rediscovered thinker with roots in the Jewish cultural milieu of inter-war Prague, left a rich collection of notes and sketches which he did not live to elaborate. Commenting on the kind of Marxism that had become an exclusive official ideology in post-revolutionary Russia, he wrote: "Marx is Russia's Descartes. He does not come after, but instead of Descartes; he is the Descartes of human groups instead of individual reason. Instead of, and as an equivalent of 'Cogito ergo sum,' we now have the teaching of the class struggle; the collective form – the authentic reality – exists inasmuch as it seeks to defend, maintain or establish a social order" [*Steiner 2009: 384*]. The formulations are somewhat condensed, but Steiner was thoroughly familiar with classical Marxism, and knew that the Marx transfigured and canonized by Lenin was not identical with the original; the message is not difficult to decipher. For Lenin and his followers, the evidence of the class struggle – in the broad sense of a clash between polarized groups with alternative societal projects – was the unassailable foundation of social science, the key to historical development, and not least a condition of possibility for the harmony of partisanship and truth. To spell out the foundations of this class foundationalism, we must add that it defined Lenin's vision of capitalism and its progress in Russia. Capitalism was, as he saw it, first and foremost a socio-economic regime developing towards a visibilization, simplification and escalation of class conflict. This shortcut between capital and class replaced Marx's much more complex and unfinished analyses of capitalism and class formation (as often noted, the so-called third volume of *Capital* ends, after a long journey through the labyrinth of capitalist development, with bare prolegomena to a theory of social classes). That has not gone unnoticed in critical scholarship on Lenin, but Steiner's observation helps to place it in a more revealing context. The "Russification" of Marxism, as conceived and imposed by Lenin, was a re-contextualization of the Western Enlightenment, with an exacerbated but also more elaborately masked version of its dissonances betwen particularism and universalism.[1]

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[1] There are other examples of Marxism adopted in non-European cultural settings and becoming a privileged bearer of specific hopes and promises – or illusions – associated with the Enlightenment. Masao Maruyama [*2006*] explained the importance of Marxism in modern Japanese thought in terms of its perceived capacity for critical and context-transcending thought, hence on very different grounds than those emphasized in Steiner's comments on the Russian case. There is obviously comparative work to be done in a broader context, including China and India.

Steiner's suggestion can be taken one step further. If the reception of Marx's work in Russia led to an interpretation that credited him with a quasi-Cartesian achievement, the logical next stage of a highly compressed development corresponded to the transmutation of the *cogito* into a transcendental subject. That step was taken in *What Is To Be Done?*, with Lenin's conception of the party as a vanguard with a mission to maintain the unity, the objective interests and the long-term orientation of the class. The party thus acquires a quasi-transcendental jurisdiction over empirical expressions and meanderings of class action. The problem that spurred this turn was the threat of spontaneous and fragmented struggles obscuring the path prefigured by class foundationalism. If we stay with Steiner's comparison,that danger was analogous to the empiricist decomposition of the *cogito*.

The main merit of Steiner's thesis is that it identifies a significant but unacknowledged shift inherent in the very transfer of Marxian ideas to Russia. In light of this basic ambiguity (a claim to Marxist orthodoxy made in the name of a misconceived deviation), attempts to "rediscover" Lenin [e.g. *Lih 2008*] through an exhaustive survey of his links to German Marxism are pointless. The ignore the distance between the invoked German sources and Lenin's highly charged pre-understanding of them.That aspect gives us a key to the relationship between Western and Russian sources of Bolshevism, and more specific links to Russian traditions can be integrated into the picture. The imaginary elevation of class makes it easy to claim "progressive" legacies of earlier ruling classes, including those who supposedly determined the modernizing strategies of Russian rulers. The question of religious sources is more complicated, but some suggestions may be made on the basis of interpretations developed in other contexts, especially in the debate on secularization and its underlying Christian presuppositions. The work of Hans Blumenberg is particularly instructive in this regard. His line of argument is, in brief, that the idea of enduring religious contents (especially visions of salvation) in secular disguise is untenable, but that the modern secular modes of thought and intepretations of the world are conditioned by the preceding patterns with which they break, and by the circumstances of the break. Secular visions of the world and of the human condition have to meet demands for orientation that survived their original religious framework, fulfil inherited criteria of meaning, and answer questions that remain on the agenda. If the prevalent Russian understanding of Marxism makes it appear as a narrower but precisely for that reason more uncompromising version of the Enlightenment, the lessons derived from Western debates on secularization may be applied to the Russian constellation. The question is too complicated to be tackled here in any detail, but some remarks are in order on Lenin's response to the problem of demarcation from religion without conceding any terrain to it.

On the most elementary level, Lenin had to condemn the attempts of heterodox Bolshevik intellectuals to add a religious message to the idea of the revolution. This was a minor skirmish, but it led directly to more fundamental moves. A key theme in Lenin's first major intervention in philosophical debates, *Materialism and Empiriocriticism,* is the dismissal of philosophical idealism (and especially the subjective idealism seen as more prominent in contemporary thought) As a philosophical text, *Materialism and Empiriocriticism* is worthless, but as an ideological pronouncement,it defined a guideline that remained in force during the subsequent Soviet period. For the damnation of religion (and by association of idealist thought) to be sustainable, the revolutionary vanguard – supposedly

constituted by the Bolsheviks – had to claim possession of a comprehensive and self-contained world-view. Lenin praised the all-powerful truth and all-round coherence of Marx's teachings, but this was an imaginary construct. European Marxism had not reached that stage of ideologization, and Russian additions had not gone beyond statements of authority and intent. Engels's writings, especially *Anti-Dühring*, were the closest thing to a systematic coverage, but they did not add up to the kind of world-encompassing ordering and explanatory model later produced under the label of dialectical materialism. That could only take shape with the aid of political control and prescriptions. But the result was an ideological edifice comparable to the most elaborate religious doctrines, and complete with a hierarchy of prophets. This was supposed to be a system of rational principles and procedures, conferring total meaning, capable of justifying a social order and its dominating party-state as the culmination of a progress defined in cosmological terms. It was the most extreme version of the attempt to fuse rationality and meaning that Jan Patočka ascribed to the radical type of modern civilization. On the other hand, the similarities to religious systems of belief are too significant for the concept of secular religion to be dismissed. Within that category, some further differentiations will be needed, not only when Communism is compared with other secular religious phenomena, but also between varieties of of the former. In the case of Maoism, the deification of a supreme leader went further than in the original Stalinist model, at the expense of systematic ideology, and of the rationality claims linked to it. Secular religions are not simple or uniform returns of the sacred; rather, they represent varying combinations of more or less significant adaptations to inherited religious patterns, across a cultural and political divide.

Making Sense of Stalin

Neither the ideological foundations nor the political structures of the renewed empire were completed by Lenin. His writings after the seizure of power do not even contain clear indications of ways to go; least of all can such pointers be found in his much-quoted and overrated last texts, marked by rapidly failing health. But strange hints appear even before October. Lenin's musings on the ability of the Bolsheviks to maintain their expected hold on state power, written a few weeks before the St. Petersburg insurrection, draw a comparison with the pre-revolutionary ruling elite and conclude that victorious revolutionaries should at least have the same staying-power as their predecessors. The question would hardly have arisen if an international revolution had been taken for granted; in such circumstances, survival in power would have been guaranteed. The whole argument suggests a caveat that was not in evidence when Lenin pressed for instant action. His obsession with the bid for power was overwhelming, but seems to have allowed for occasional glimpses of problems that might upset the scenario. Even so, the argument is puzzling. Lenin ignores the fact, obvious by then, that the Bolsheviks would have to put a collapsing empire together again, and restore it to the status of a great power – something that the tsars and their officials had worked on for several centuries.

Another example of rambling rationalization can be found in a later text, a review of N. Sukhanov's book on 1917. Lenin rejects the criticism that the Bolsheviks had acted against Marxist theory by seizing power in a country where the conditions for a socialist society had not been created; his rejoinder is that it is possible and historically legitimate

to take power and use it to create the conditions in question. In other words: is there anything wrong with standing a theory on its head and then pretending that it is still the same theory?

The unwavering logic of Lenin's policies after October was the effort to consolidate a Bolshevik monopoly of power. In the initial phase, he assumed that this power could be used to bring about a rapid social transformation, but by 1921, that project had collapsed. The regime characteristic of the following period, known as NEP, was neither a coherent model nor a conceivable long-term option. Its core component was a political monopoly, uncompromisingly defended, combined with loosely defined concessions and relaxations in the economic and cultural spheres. None of the political factions that emerged after Lenin's death had a privileged Leninist legitimacy; but whatever the textual basis, there is a growing consensus to the effect that Stalin's "socialism in one country" was a logical continuation of Lenin's reorientation after the abandonment of hopes for revolutionary breakthroughs in Europe. It is now, in any case, generally agreed that Stalin, rather than Lenin, was the main architect of the Soviet state and the protagonist of its resurrection as a great power, modernized in immensely costly and destructive but in some regards very effective ways. But it is also beyond dispute that he was one of history's great mass murderers, and that he presided over the creation of a regime that incorporated both slavery and serfdom into its power structures. It is not proving easy to strike the appropriate balance between these two aspects of Stalin's record. In a recently published book on Lenin as the inventor of totalitarianism, Stéphane Courtois, editor of the *Black Book of Communism* and an author unsuspectable of any sympathies for Communist theory or practice, refers to Stalin as the "greatest politician" [*le plus grand homme politique – Courtois 2017: 443*], at least in the sense that he used the means at his disposal most successfully to achieve his ends.Faced with such statements, one is tempted to quote Elias Canetti [*1980: 523*]: "The respect for the 'great' of his world is very hard to destroy." But if we want a more detailed response, we will have to take a closer look at the record.

We can start with a reminder of contingency. Stalin's success,such as it was ("triumphant debacle" is Kotkin's word for the initial phase of crash-through collectivization and industrialization) cannot be seen as historically necessary. The "great socialist offensive" launched at the end of the 1920s might have ended with the self-destruction of the regime. One of Stalin's many paradoxes seems to be that he was, most of the time, a cautious politican averse to grand risks; but when he gambled, he did it in colossal style. There may, however,be a relativizing point to make. As Stalin is likely to have seen it, long-term coexistence with a very insufficiently controlled peasantry was no less a gamble than the offensive that was chosen, and only the latter was in line with the vision of an empowered socialist state. But when it comes to the great purge of 1936–1938, and especially to Stalin's murderous rampage through the elites and institution on which he had previously relied, matters are more complicated. The chaos caused by the purge was such that it is easy to imagine it spiralling into a collapse, and no sufficient reason has been found for Stalin's decision to embark on a massacre of this magnitude. The question will be considered from another angle below. A third case is perhaps best described as a situation where caution became indistinguishable from gambling.The decision to avoid anything that might provoke a German attack, in the hope that a quasi-alliance might last a little longer, was also a gamble, and turned out badly (there is no evidence to suggest that Stalin ever expected a

long-term partnership). In light of later events, and of Hitler's whole way to fight the war, it is tempting to suggest that Stalin unknowingly outwitted him; but the claim goes too far. No historical necessity guaranteed that the geopolitical entanglements culminating in World War II would end with the destruction of Nazi Germany by an alliance of the Soviet Union and Western powers.

In short, a non-determinist reading of the record has to admit that Stalin might have gone down in flames. A closer examination of his rule will reveal more specific internal weaknesses that help to explain later developments, both the need for hastily improvised reforms when Stalinism – properly speaking – decomposed with the death of its founder, and the impossibility of a more thoroughgoing reform when the regime faced a crisis. A good starting-point is Kotkin's comment on Stalin's much-quoted saying about cadres deciding everything. Kotkin notes a subtext: it is the reliability of officials in the state and party apparatus, their loyalty to the supreme leader, that counts for most, and this emphasis implies a downgrading of institutions. Stalin has gone down in history as a state- and empire-builder, but his capacity for institution-building in a more specific sense was of a lesser order, as shown by his remorseless battering of institutions whose integrity and functioning should have mattered to him (a certain minimal consolidation of institutions was therefore the first task of those who had to ensure the survival of the Soviet Union after Stalin). It was the bond between leader and cadres that supposedly decided everything. This point has a direct bearing on the understanding of the great purge. Kotkin is undoubtedly right to stress the overwhelming evidence for calculation behind the massacre, but there was another side to it. In view of the whole context, it is plausible to assume that the calculation was inspired by a vision: a total identification of subordinates with the wisdom and strategy of the leader was what Stalin strove for. The cadres that had supported him against various oppositional groupings were suspect because they had acted and matured in an environment marked by opinions and strategies in conflict. Their replacement by new people was to ensure closer bonds. The "social mobility" resulting from the purge, often noted by historians and sometimes seen as a symptom of social pressures behind the onslaught on the party-state apparatus, seems to have been an organic part of Stalin's strategy.

This analysis will, however, remain one-sided if it is not complemented by another perspective. Stalinism was not simply a drive for total control by an all-powerful leader. There was, notwithstanding the weak grasp and feeble identity of institutions, a specific institutional aspect of the regime that should be noted; it had to do with the institutionalization of ideology. Here we must take issue with Kotkin in a more critical fashion. As a biography, his work is a masterpiece unlikely to be surpassed by later scholarship on the subject; there are more problems with his ideological interpretation of Stalin. He is certainly right to insist that Stalin was both an ideologist and an ideology-builder and that anti-capitalism – in the double sense of building an anti-capitalist order and defeating capitalist encirclement – was central to his outlook.But what did capitalism mean for Stalin? Kotkin's remark on the "use of capitalism as an antiworld" [*2017: 7*] appears to be on the right track, but he does not take it further. His weirdly inadequate approach to the history of ideas interferes with the argument. He writes: "The tragedy began unfolding with the very invention of 'capitalism.' Once markets and private property were named and blamed as the source of evil, statization would be the consequence" [*ibid.: 302*]. This suggests a

linguistic determinism hard to take seriously. The history of the notion of capitalism is much more complex than Kotkin suggests. To the best of my knowledge, it is generally accepted that it was introduced by Louis Blanc in the 1840s, but had no broader impact at the time. Marx very rarely used it; he preferred to talk about the capitalist mode of production, with strong emphasis on the power structures and conflicts built into this organization of social labour. Capitalism became a more central concept of a more complex reality in the works of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century thinkers familiar with Marxism but critical of its reductionistic bent; Werner Sombart, Max Weber and Joseph Schumpeter are the obvious cases, but Georg Simmel also deserves a mention, although the word "capitalism" was not as important for him as for the others. The growing insight into the complexity of capitalism (indulging its cultural dimensions) is thus first and foremost a Central European development, and so is the conflict of interpretations in the field, still relevant to theorizing about capitalism. All that was, of course a closed book to Lenin and the Bolsheviks, but not so much because of sheer ignorance as because they had built a defensive wall against it. As noted above Lenin had adopted a more streamlined view of capitalism as a simplifier and polarizer of class conflict than Marx ever did; this entailed a more emphatically reductionistic view of politics and ideology as expressions of capitalist contradictions. A further step was taken in Lenin's treatise on imperialism; the world war became a necessary result of these contradictions, and the amalgamation of war and capitalism completed the subordination of politics and ideology to the all-encompassing dynamic of an economic regime on the road to self-destruction. This was the view that Stalin inherited and adapted to his post-revolutionary strategy. A vastly simplified notion of capitalism became an over-extended symbol of Western modernity as a whole, up to and including its supposedly fatal propensity to global war; and overcoming this adversary became the mission of the renewed Russian empire. In fact, the regime remained – on practical, institutional and imaginary levels – more dependent on the horizons of capitalism than the official ideology could admit.

Stalin's institutionalization of this ideology began in the early phase of the succession struggle after Lenin's death and was completed in the 1930s. His speech at Lenin's funeral was already an important step towards sacralizing the party, legitimizing a permanent purge as its *modus operandi,* dogmatizing Marxism-Leninism and preparing a more explicit claim to be the Lenin of a new age. Wolfgang Leonhard [*2009*] was one of the relatively few authors who took this episode seriously enough. One of the crowning pieces was the construction of the "four classics of Marxism-Leninism," Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, as a spiritual authority superior to all institutional ones. This chain of prophets became the central axis of Soviet ideology. Stalin did not claim superiority over the other classics (and he was capable of disparaging himself through comparison with Lenin). But he was the last classic (the list was never meant to be extended), the only living one, and the ultimate interpreter of the others. In that sense, his position was not altogether unlike the Islamic image of Muhammad as the "seal of the prophets."

The question of anti-capitalism is thus more complicated than it might seem to those fixated on a benign image of today's really existing capitalism (it is hard to avoid the impression that Kotkin belongs to that school of thought). The revised picture of the ideological background, as outlined above, may raise new questions about some episodes in Kotkin's biographical narrative. It is not being suggested that it will offer a better explanation of the

central enigma of Stalinism: the great purge. Nor can Kotkin be blamed for not offering a comprehensive explanation.[2] Nobody has so far done that. This may be one of the cases where the limits of historical explanation become most visible.But tentative understanding will always venture beyond them. In this context, it seems best to end on that note. To make sense of Stalin, we need the work of Robert Tucker, Oleg Khlevnyuk and Stephen Kotkin, as well as the analysts of totalitarianism, from Arendt to Gauchet. But we also need Elias Canetti and his unique if cryptic insight into the nature and possibilities of power.

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2   This seems to be the message (or one of the messages) of Sheila Fitzpatrick's less than enthusiastic review of Kotkin in *The London Review of Books* [*Fitzpatrick 2018*].

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Michal Reiman – Bohuslav Litera – Karel Svoboda – Daniela Kolenovská: *Zrod velmoci. Dějiny Sovětského svazu 1917–1945.* **Prague: Karolinum, 2013, 584 pp.**
Pavel Kolář: *Der Poststalinismus. Ideologie und Utopie einer Epoche.* **Cologne – Weimar – Vienna: Böhlau, 2016, 370 pp.**

Although the following reflections are published in our review section, they are strictly speaking of a different character. The reviewer is not an expert on the subject of the two books, i.e. modern Russian and Eastern European history; his comments are therefore primarily concerned with lessons that historical sociologists might learn from the two books, and to a certain extent with problems that they might raise. Moreover, one of the books was published five years ago, and by conventional standards, a review published in 2018 would be somewhat late in the day. But given the importance of the book, and the fact that it has not been translated into any Western European language, it still seems worth while to draw it to the attention of a broader audience.[1]

The Birth of a Great Power: History of the Soviet Union from 1917 to 1945, by Michal Reiman and his collaborators, is a major work, and some of its strengths should be underlined. First and foremost, and in line with the title, it represents a successful combination of geopolitical, historical and social analysis. Geopolitical approaches have been gaining ground in historical scholarship, and for good reasons, but the case is sometimes overstated. Stephen Kotkin, a major authority on Russian and Soviet history, argues that modernity is a geopolitical rather than a sociological category; most historical sociologists would assume that it must be both, and Reiman and his collaborators show convincingly that geopolitical processes intertwine with social ones. The narrative covers the exceptionally rapid collapse of an imperial power, caught up in war at a particularly unsettled stage of its modernizing process, and unable to cope with the strains thus imposed on its polarized and multi-national society; it ends with the victory of a reconstructed great power in World War II and a brief survey of the postwar situation. This trajectory is one of history's most spectacular geopolitical transformations. But it involved a complex and radical revolutionary process, an exceptionally thoroughgoing destruction of the old order, and – as the authors show very well – a dynamic of divergence rather than maturing or unification among the revolutionary forces. What then followed was a new phase of state formation and imperial reconstruction, under the aegis of a counter-elite with significant popular support, but more and more reliant on a selective mobilization of forces and aspirations released by the revolution, combined with uncompromising repression on other fronts. The first major step towards re-emergence as a great power (but not a guarantee of future success) was the ruthless and immensely destructive, but in some ways highly effective modernizing leap that began at the end of the 1920s.

The transformation of Russia between 1917 and 1945 is thus an exemplary case of entangled geopolitical and social dynamics, and not one that would support notions of historical necessity. Reiman and his collaborators also have much to say on episodes within the process, and some points of that kind may be noted. The role of individual leaders in history is one of the perennial problems of historical sociology, and few cases are as frequently cited in such discussions as Lenin's leadership in the Russian revolution. The book reviewed here does much to demystify this issue, although the conclusions are not spelt out as quite as sharply as the reviewer would like. As the chapter on developments between February and October 1917 (pp. 58–111) shows, Lenin's famous first speech after his return from exile was neither well reasoned, nor did it reflect solid knowledge about the situation in Russia. The later victory of the Bolsheviks made the speech look like the beginning of a success story; but that was not at all clear at the time. The most independent-minded and reflective Bolshevik activists were shocked

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[1] There is a much shorter version in English: Michal Reiman, *About Russia: Its Revolutions, its Development and its Present.* This text summarizes the essentials of the argument, but it is obviously not a substitute for a full translation.

by the speech, and if it had a certain impact, that was partly due to Lenin's long-standing authority within the party, partly to vague but attractive promises of strength through radicalization. Another episode to be reconsidered is Lenin's role on the eve of the Bolshevik seizure of power. A closer look at the record – exemplified in the book – shows how obsessed Lenin was, for several weeks, with the perceived opportunity to strike at a rapidly weakening power centre; but it is also clear that his self-imposed exile in Finland limited his grasp of the situation in the capital. He thought that the date finally agreed for the insurrection would be too late, and some of the plans he played with during the preceding weeks are best described as hysterical nonsense. The upshot is that the leadership of the Bolshevik party, long doubtful about the direct bid for power (some of them resisted even at the final hour), acted as a counterweight to Lenin and brought his plans closer to conditions on the ground. And there was a third factor: Trotsky possessed mobilizing and organizing capacities which neither Lenin nor any of the other leaders could match, and his role was crucial. Moreover, the whole action depended on circumstances over which the Bolsheviks had only partial control. In short, the victorious October insurrection looks less like an achievement of one leader than a synergy of several factors, including Lenin's drive – an unlikely outcome, but then Russia in 1917 seems to have found itself in a situation where only improbable outcomes were possible.

Finally, Reiman and his collaborators give a thoroughly debunking account of Lenin's last years. His tactics within the party leadership in the years 1920–1921 are described as a kind of *coup d'état*, consolidating the power of a faction put together in a hamfisted way, and sealing the victory by a ban on factions which lent itself to more and more repressive uses. Lenin not only engineered Stalin's appointment as general secretary; he also took the lead in changing intra-party rules and practices along lines eminently conducive to more dictatorial rule. In view of all this, the reservations about Stalin in Lenin's much-quoted and mislabelled "political testament" cannot be taken very seriously.

On the other hand, the oppositional currents within the party are given a very critical treatment. All things considered, and with a view to their history from the beginning to the end of the 1920s, they do not deserve Robert V. Daniels's description as the "conscience of the revolution." They were too handicapped by the fetishism of party unity, too fixated on different priorities and consequently reluctant to join forces, and they all underestimated both Stalin's abilities and his single-minded drive for supreme power. But they can be given credit for targeting the dubious premises of Stalin's pursuit of socialism in one country as well as the weaknesses of his "socialist offensive" at the end of the 1920s; their leaders also had a better grasp of international politics than the Stalinist faction. But one point that emerges very clearly from the discussion of this subject is the untenability of speculations about Bukharin as an alternative leader. His inconsistencies and his inability to sustain political conflict seem to have ruled him out of that field.

The ups and downs of the first two five-year plans are discussed in detail, with emphasis on the fact that this was not a once-and-for-all gamble, but a decade-long roller-coaster with successes, debacles and unforeseen complications. The question of dependence on foreign technology is treated as an open controversy, where scholars still defend very divergent estimates; but this factor was clearly more important for the first five-year plan than for the second.

To conclude, some questions about conceptual and interpretive issues should be raised. The first one has to do with the great emphasis that Reiman and his collaborators place on plebeian forces and attitudes in the Russian revolution. The distinction between a civic and a plebeian revolution in 1917 makes sense (with some reservations, indicated in an article on the October revolution elsewhere in this issue). But the term is also applied to the post-revolutionary power elite, especially the forces allied with Stalin, and to the political culture that crystallized around them. Here one might wish for a more precise conceptual definition; more importantly, there were other factors in play, and they seem irreducible to the continuity of a plebeian

political culture. The shattering and brutalizing experience of the civil war counted for much in the formation and methods of the Soviet state. Another aspect, less frequently noted, is the primitivizing logic of Leninism, certainly not explicable in terms of plebeian origins. Its effects can be traced on several levels. Lenin's invocation of Marxism as a complete and self-contained world-view was an imaginary reference; no such thing had yet been developed. When the Bolsheviks seized power and established a political monopoly, the imaginary teaching had to be given a more tangible and structured expression; the result was Marxism-Leninism, a comprehensive ideological edifice built in haste and on oversimplified foundations. Even compared to Engels's *Anti-Dühring* and some theorists of the Second International, it was a regressive formation. Another fateful feature of Lenin's legacy was the insistence on party unity. Lenin's vision of it was unrealizable, and provoked never-ending schisms, which in turn tempted the leader to take stronger measures. That became easier after the seizure of power, and Stalin took that line to extremes far beyond the practices envisaged by Lenin. In one of the latter's most unhinged pamphlets, *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, the claim that even a one-man dictatorship can represent the interests of a progressive class is defended against the advocates of democracy; Stalin seems to have fused that idea with the traditional notion of the Russian people needing an autocrat. Finally, it has more than once been suggested that Lenin turned Clausewitz on his head and treated politics as a continuation of war by other means (if I am not mistaken, Victor Chernov's obituary on Lenin is the first recorded source). That view became more pronounced as Lenin's strategy developed. The decisive step was the interpretation of World War I as a logical and terminal outcome of capitalist development; it culminated in the appeal to transform the imperialist war into a civil war. Lenin's actions after his return to Russia followed that line; the civil war that turned out to be intra-imperial rather than international radicalized it, and Stalin took it to extreme lengths. Violence became the unconditional and ever-ready medium of politics.

All these considerations tone down the role of plebeian habits or traditions. Another reservation also focuses on the question of continuity and discontinuity. Reiman and his collaborators tend, in my opinion, to over-rationalize Stalin's actions in the second half of the 1930s (this is, needless to say, not to be confused with a defence of them; nothing of that kind is to be found in the book). They do not pretend to have a sufficient explanation for what they call the mass murder of post-revolutionary elites, but the strongest emphasis seems to be on the claim that Stalin had reasons to fear a widespread and potentially explosive opposition to his policies; they had resulted in a confused mixture of successes and disasters, and Stalin was no doubt aware of the resultant discontent across the social spectrum. He appears, on this view, to have opted for a wholesale elimination of possible opponents, not just a liquidation of former rivals as well as collaborators who had disagreed with him on specific issues (pp. 393–483). The argument is comparable to other ways of rationalizing the great purge, such as J. Arch Getty's thesis that Stalin was combating a Russian tradition of clans with particular interests and strategies forming inside the power elite, and that the purge was analogous to punitive and preventive actions undertaken by earlier autocrats, such as Ivan the Terrible (whom Stalin credited with a much more progressive historical role than previous revolutionary leaders and ideologues had ever done). An obvious objection to this latter parallel is that Stalin's purge was organized on an incommensurably larger scale than any historical example, and with an unprecedented ideological charge. More generally speaking, and with reference to the book reviewed here, something is missing in the over-rationalizing explanations. Mass murder of the 1936–1938 calibre is not conceivable without some kind of vision (however inappropriate that term may seem), some imagined purpose and rationale (unless we opt for the very implausible and rarely defended view that the recourse to violence cuts action loose from meaningful references). In Stalin's case, there was obviously a good deal of strategic calculation, not least in the careful combination of show trials and backstage

killings, but there was also a vision perhaps best captured by Kotkin's description of Stalin as a "massacring pedagogue." He envisaged a new generation of cadres who would identify totally with the leader and unquestioningly follow his instructions; those who stood in the way had to be eliminated. How this lethal phantasm took shape is not a question that can expect a conclusive answer. That would require a synthesizing knowledge of historical, ideological and psychological knowledge, which is not within the horizon of rational expectations. All that can be said here is that Stalin's final fusion of imperial and revolutionary traditions was also a mutation into something monstrously new.

To conclude, one conceptual problem should be briefly noted. It is clear that Reiman and his collaborators do not reject the notion of totalitarianism. They refer to the political regime of the Soviet Union as totalitarian, and even to a totalitarian model of society. But there is no discussion of the concept, and that leaves some questions unanswered. The idea of totalitarianism emerged in the interwar years as a response to new and unexpected metamorphoses of power, but it was from the outset a contested concept with widely divergent definitions. Looking back on its career, and with a view to recent debates, two main approaches may be distinguished. On the one hand, there is the definition favoured by political scientists (and much used during the Cold War); it focuses on clearly demarcated institutional structures. On the other hand, there is a line of more philosophically grounded reflection, going back to the works of Hannah Arendt, Cornelius Castoriadis and Claude Lefort, and giving more weight to the symbolic and imaginary dimensions of power, as well as to the fusion of its various forms. The present writer favours the second alternative, but this is not the place to discuss it further.

Pavel Kolář's book on Post-Stalinism deals with a different epoch and has a more limited focus. It sets out to correct the conventional post-1968 wisdom about the last decades of Communism. While it is true that Khrushchev's attack on Stalin at the twentieth congress of the Soviet Communist party triggered an enduring legitimation crisis, to which no definitive answer

was ever found, It is very misleading, but all too common, to describe the subsequent history of Eastern European Communism as a linear and unmitigated decline. The same applies to the notion of a complete and universal loss of faith during the final phase. On both counts, Kolář convincingly presents a much more complex picture. It must, however, be said that he overstates his case when he argues that a consciousness of epochal change (*Umbruchsbewusstsein*) puts post-Stalinism alongside the historical landmarks of 1789, 1848 and 1918 (p. 329). The aftermath to 1956 was more lively and multifaceted than later generations liked to admit, but it did not leave an intellectual, political or ideological legacy comparable to the earlier dates mentioned by Kolář.

The concepts of utopia and ideology are central to Kolář's analysis of post-Stalinism. Events and efforts of the years after 1956 can be analyzed on many levels. The story includes limited but not insignificant adjustments of the power structures in place, unavoidable after the posthumous downgrading of Stalin as a leader and an ideological classic; major protest actions, and in the Hungarian case even a revolution, suppressed by Soviet intervention; the most significant political restructuring took place in Poland, where a previously imprisoned Communist leader came to power and negotiated a new *modus vivendi* with the Catholic Church, put an end to the collectivization of agriculture, and granted the universities significantly more autonomy than before (what he did not accept was the demand for an institutionalization of the workers' councils that had emerged in 1956).

Kolář's main focus is on intra-party responses to de-Stalinization and the resultant controversies, which can now be documented in much greater detail than in earlier work on this period. He compares three countries with a very different record: Czechoslovakia, Poland and the German Democratic Republic. As noted above, Poland underwent the most significant political changes. The sources cited by Kolář lead to a more nuanced picture of developments in Czechoslovakia than has commonly been presented in scholarship on the period. In 1956, there was

more unrest and controversy within the Czechoslovak Communist party than retrospective accounts have tended to suggest, but the leadership succeeded in blocking further progress; however, in the long run, this episode can be seen as an early advance signal of the most significant post-Stalinist breakthrough, the reform movement that culminated in the Prague Spring of 1968. The German Democratic Republic was, for well-known reasons, less receptive to messages of change than the other two countries, but even there, the post-Stalinist turn marks a date.

Notwithstanding these differences, Kolář argues that the analysis of post-Stalinist discourses, more or less critical, supports a conclusion that can also draw strength from broader perspectives on political events: post-Stalinism brought about changes to the cultural profile and horizon of the regimes in question. Kolář sums up these innovations under the twin headings of utopia and ideology. The utopian goal of progress through socialism to communism remained non-negotiable for the ruling parties, but the meaning of this obligatory promise did not remain unchanged. Kolář uses the term "processual utopia" to describe the main shift. At a minimum, this meant more emphasis on practical mesures and visible progress, rather than on official foreknowlege of the road ahead. Less conformist versions could emphasize the need for ongoing criticism and self-correction; this was the road taken by reform communism.

The concept of ideology refers less to an "other" of utopia than to an overall framework which also allows the formulation of utopian goals. There was no pricipled retreat from the claim to exclusive ideological authority, but as the official frame of reference became less stridently monolithic and more responsive to changes, ideological schems became more adaptable and open to selective use. One example mentioned by Kolář is the way the notion of a "cult of personality," coined by the Soviet leadership to limit the impact of de-Stalinization, could be taken over by those who had in mind a more radical criticism. An example worth noting, although belonging to a somewhat later period than the major part of Kolář's discussion

and therefore not mentioned in the book, is an article published in 1962 by the Czech economist Radoslav Selucký; he suggested that "the cult of the plan" should be treated as a phenomenon akin and comparable to the cult of personality. This provoked an intemperate reaction in high places, but the article did help to spark further discussion. Other symptoms of ideological ambiguity are important for the understanding of the final phase. Official commitment to an ideological system did not necessarily mean equal acceptance of all its parts; it is true that Marxist-Leninist notions, more or less consciously held, could enter into perceptions of reality, even when belief in the more normative claims of the state doctrine had tacitly been written off. But even on the cognitive level, awareness of shortcomings could lead to limited and semisecret borrowings from other sources. In the 1980s, the Czechoslovak authorities permitted and encouraged – without any publicity – the study of neoclassical economics, and this turned out to be an important part of the preparation for a neo-liberal transformation.

Kolář places the post-Stalinist changes to ideology and utopia in a broader context, not least in relation to the shifting fortunes of class and nation as privileged historical actors. Here he seems inclined to accept the widely shared claim that the nation has, universally and unequivocally, proved more resilient than any class-based alternative, and he quotes Catherine Verdery's study of Romania, where the move from class to nation was more evident before the fall of Communism than elsewhere in Eastern Europe. But Romania was an extreme case. At the moment of the Communist takeover, the party was by far the weakest in the region; it tried to compensate for this by a particularly repressive rule, but in the long run, the strong legacy of nationalism (including memories of a vigorous Fascist movement) prevailed. More generally speaking, a differentiated view of the shift from class to nation is needed. The victory of nation-based narratives over class-based ones has been much more massive in some places than others, and references to class have sometimes gone into terminal decline without any corresponding rise of nationalism. In this regard, a

comparison of the Czech republic with otheer countries in the region – Poland, Slovakia, Hungary – is very instructive. A further consideration is that national narratives are not all of a piece; they may contain a more or less explicit imperial component, and the idea of a civilizational nation (i.e. a nation claiming distinctive civilizational identity), formulated by Hans Antlöv and Stein Tönnesson, deserves more discussion. If there are cases of civilizational nations, China is surely an example of the first order.

The reference to China raises another question. In Kolář's book, the Chinese experience figures primarily as a negative lesson, perceived by Eastern European critics of Stalinism as a particularly frightening illustration of the regime pathologies they were combating. But a closer look at the record shows that matters were more complicated. In retrospect, it seems clear that a Sino-Soviet conflict was developing from 1956 onwards, that Mao Zedong saw the attack on Stalin as a threat to his own pretensions, and that official Chinese pronouncements on contradictions within the people, as distinct from those between the people and its enemies, were meant to deflect the critique of Stalinism. At the time, some critical Marxists in Eastern Europe saw it differently and sought inspiration in Chinese texts. The most striking example was the Czech philosopher Zbyněk Fišer, alias Egon Bondy.

Kolář's book is meant to throw new light on neglected aspects of Communism in Eastern Europe after 1956, not to present a comprehensive and balanced history of its decline. It would therefore be unfair to criticize it for not venturing in the latter direction. But it is a reminder of the need for a complex analysis of the whole process, with due attention to domestic and international factors, and to transformative aspirations as well as structural obstacles.

Ulrich Beck: *The metamorphosis of the World*. Cambridge: Polity, 2016, 223 pp.

The reviewed book is the posthumously published work of one of the most important European intellectuals of the last few decades, the German sociologist Ulrich Beck (1944–2015). Beck studied in Freiburg and Munich; he acquired his professorship in 1979 in Münster; from 1981 to 1992 he lectured in Bamberg. From 1992 until the end of his professional career, he worked at *Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich*. At the end of the 1990s, he became a visiting professor at the *London School of Economics*. He was the editor-in-chief of the journal *Soziale Welt* and the editor of the *Edition Zweite Moderne* book series in *Suhrkamp* publishing house. In addition to his academic activities, he latterly devoted himself as an expert to the field of modernization and environmental issues, as well as socio-political activities aimed at supporting the vision of a federalized and cosmopolitan Europe.

Beck became world-renowned with the book *The Risk Society*, first published in the year of the Chernobyl disaster in 1986 (in English it was published in 1992). The book kick-started global interest in risk issues, which was very intense for many years and created hundreds of similarly oriented publications. The total number of books in which Beck is listed as author or editor exceeds thirty. Beck's work has been published in translations in some two dozen countries. Among the best known are the titles *Reflexive Modernization* (1994, co-authored by Anthony Giddens and Scott Lash); *Ecological Politics in an Age of Risk* (1995); *The Reinvention of Politics* (1996); *World Risk Society* (1998); *What Is Globalization?* (1999); *The Brave New World of Work* (2000); *Individualization* (2002, co-authored by Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim); *Cosmopolitan Europe* (2007, co-authored by Edgar Grande); *German Europe* (2013).

In his most famous book, Beck showed that the industrial and scientific-technological achievements of contemporary civilization sharply contrast with its vulnerability. The author describes contemporary society as a risk society. A characteristic feature of contemporary risks is

their unmanageability. They become stowaways of normal consumption; they travel with wind and water, they are hiding in the air which we breathe, in food, clothing and household equipment. Their significant characteristic is latency, invisibility which faces us with the problem of how to identify them in time because they are unperceivable with our inborn senses. Their diagnosis requires measuring instruments and scientific apparatus.

The relationship between science and risk is complicated and contradictory and generally has three levels: a) science is among the causes of risk; b) science is also a means of defining it; c) science should be the source of its solution. However, the system of science, according to Beck, is so far incapable of responding adequately to the risks of modernization. One problem is the differentiation of science itself, its hyper-complexity. With the gradual differentiation of individual scientific disciplines, there is a growing amount of specialized knowledge, and science is often unable to assemble this in such a way as to understand risk as a poly-causal, multi-factorial phenomenon. In addition, the research of risk is often associated with competitive clashes between individual scientific professions; there is tension that prevents collaboration, although the situation demands interdisciplinary cooperation.

Beck's conception of risk society is based on distinguishing two phases in the development of modern society: the first and the second modernities, which correspond to the terms "risk society" and "world risk society" respectively. The first modernity is represented by the "classical industrial society" of the 19th century. It was a semi-modern society in which some elements of tradition persisted. Today, according to Beck, we are seeing that this world of the nineteenth century is disappearing. The irritation brought about by this is an inherent result of the success of modernization processes, which are now not only no longer following the directions and categories of classical industrial society, but are directed against them. In the first modernity, there was a modernization of tradition, i.e., modernization simple; the second modernity is about the modernization of modernity, which is

referred as reflexive modernization. Reflexivity, in Beck's conception, is essentially self-confrontation. A risk society becomes reflexive by identifying itself as a problem.

Life in a risk society is risky not only because of various threats of a technological nature; similarly ambivalent are technological innovations which, on the one hand, allow for a high material living standard, while on the other hand produce risks. Another contradictory feature of the modernization process is increasing individualization, which Beck sees as an important phenomenon of contemporary society. This is due to the release of people from the social forms of classical industrial society. The emplacement and enjoining of individuals within the framework of classes, families, and social roles that was typical of the first modernity has become obsolete in the second modernity. These once-so-strong social structures, which braced and constrained people, but at the same time provided support and orientation for them, are now very fragile. Problems which were formerly solved in the context of traditional institutions must be handled individually. But not everyone is able to orientate themselves in the confusing maze of today's society.

One of the characteristic features of modernization, according to Beck, is that on the one hand society is regulated and controlled by forms of parliamentary democracy, but on the other hand, the circle of the validity of these principles is limited. This contradiction arises from the fact that there are two separate systems in the industrial society: the first is a political-administrative system based on the assumptions of parliamentary democracy; the second is a technical-economic system based on private ownership. According to the axial principle of the political sphere, power can only be exercised with the consent of the governed. However, the second area, which includes private firms and scientific institutions, does not concern public control or the consent of fellow citizens. This area, considered to be "non-political," remains in the competence of economic, scientific and technological fields for which the democratic procedures – applied in politics – are invalid.

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The interests emerging from the technical and economic sphere Beck designates as "sub-policy." Sub-policy has a key influence on the life of the first and the second modernities, and its leadership often displaces democratic policy. However, in doing so it dodges the democratic rules of public oversight, gaining legitimation for this with reference to progress and raising the standard of living. The argument about raising living standards also serves as justification for the negative effects of modernity. As a result, substantial changes in society take place as a sort of side-effect of economic and scientific-technical decisions.

The sidelining of the state is reinforced by the process of globalization and by the pressures exerted by multinational companies, for whom an ideal environment excludes the influence of trade-unions, social policy, protective laws, and restrictive rules. The principle of national state authority is also undermined by speculative capital relocations. Modern global elites live where is most enjoyable for them, and pay taxes where it is cheapest. Political parties, continuing in directions fixed in the first modernity, are the dinosaurs of industrial epochs. Beck concludes that where no one wants to take responsibility, new actors must join who are aware of the risk and are willing to do something about the situation. Of great importance for changing social attitudes is the activation of public opinion and, above all, citizens' initiatives and groups, which can be referred to as new social movements. With these new collective actors actively promoting their interests, politics can be lifted up from the narrow boundaries of an obsolete political system and brought to a new path that reflects the true nature of reflexive modernization.

Despite all the criticism of the risk phenomena in Beck's work, one cannot see him as an opponent of modernity. He does not reject the project of modernity but aims at different modernity, rather than one which in its assumptions copies the dominant paradigms of the industrial era.

The *Metamorphosis of the World*, the last book by Ulrich Beck, recapitulates and recalls in a number of references and insights all the fundamental ideas formulated in his previous works, and at the same time raises a new theme, which, as the title of work suggests, is "metamorphosis." The issues that Beck has raised in this book can be described as groundbreaking and innovative in the context of previous works, and one can only regret that they cannot be further explored in other works by the author. In this book, Beck states that contemporary sociological theory requires a fundamental revision. His arguments are based on the perspective of "cosmopolitanism," which he developed in previous works, and at the same time, they stress the need to incorporate the perspective of social history in the sociological standpoint. Thus Beck's theoretical and methodological position closely approximates the perspective of historical sociology and practically identifies itself with it. For historical sociology, Beck's work is without a doubt inspiring and stimulating.

The key concept of Beck's last book – metamorphosis – contains a theoretical potential that deserves further thinking and development. Another of Beck's intellectual innovations is the notion of "emancipatory catastrophism." He is of the opinion that catastrophic views and hypotheses about the contemporary metamorphosis of the world contain emancipatory and healing potential. He also believes that the development of the concept of metamorphosis will lead to the metamorphosis of the sociological theory itself.

Metamorphosis is, in Beck's view, something close to what is termed social change in sociology, though this is never explicit. The author says that metamorphosis means "epochal change of worldviews, the refiguration of the national worldview" (p. 5) which is a kind of Copernican Turn (p. 6). Beck says that "risk society is the product of the metamorphosis that has become the productive force and the agent of the metamorphosis of the world" (p. 63). There is actually a difference between the concepts of social change and metamorphosis in Beck's thinking because social change is – according to him – usually understood as programmatic political change with some specific goals which are formulated in the sense of one of the dominant ideologies. The concept of the metamorphosis of the world, on the contrary, expresses something without such intention and program-normative

orientation (p. 18). Beck wishes not to replace the term social change with this new term, but to supplement it to express certain new facts. He also adds that the expression metamorphosis does not tell us whether the transformation of the world is for better or worse.

According to Beck, the sociological understanding of metamorphosis requires empirical study. With the intent to create some theoretical basis for such a study, the author's final book gradually considers a number of problems that, in his opinion, deserve to be analyzed by suitable research methods. These topics include the metamorphosis of social classes, international political structures, globalized economies, scientific research, climate change and other contemporary risks.

Overall it could be said that Beck's last book is a very dignified final output of his life-long work which deserves widespread attention among the reading public. In it, Beck attempts to shift his analysis to new and inspiring themes, and it is only a pity that we will no longer have a chance to read anything new from this author. The voice of the author will be sorely missed in debates about the nature of the contemporary world.

Jiří Šubrt: *The Perspective of Historical Sociology: The Individual as Homo-Sociologicus Through Society and History.* Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing, 2017, 312 pp.

In his latest book, The Perspective of Historical Sociology, Jiří Šubrt draws a new, compelling history and analysis of the field of historical sociology. Relying on expansive research and resources, Šubrt chronicles the precursors and development of historical-sociology, as well as the sometimes conflicting internal relationship between historiography and sociology.

Following Charles Wright Mills' work on sociology and the relationship between the human individual and history, in his book Šubrt aspires to analyze further the relationship between sociology and history and "the issue of how sociology looks at the human individual in society and history" (p. 2). Indeed, the strained relationship between individual-oriented historiography and holistic-sociology is the main question which guides the research and focus of the book. The difficulty Šubrt strives to solve is this: how does historical-sociology settle the fundamental differences in approach, methodology, and character of historiography and sociology?

Historiography is a field which is strongly rooted in an individualist, particular approach. Following Ranke's assumptions that historians should write about historical events out how they actually were (*zu zeigen, wie es eigentlich gewesen*) and 19th-century historians' focus on political history, modern historiography developed a particularistic outlook, focusing on specific details and individual historical actors. At the same time, historians avoided generalizations and comparisons of specific events to others: each historical event took place in a specific context, under particular conditions, which might coincidently resemble, but were in no way connected to other events in history. As a result, early social and cultural historians, such the work of Swiss Jacob Burckhardt on the emergence of individualism during the Renaissance in Italy, won little attention and respect in the historiographical community.

Sociology, on the other hand, developed in the opposite direction in regards to individualism. Šubrt divides the history of sociology into three periods. The first period, which lasted from the beginning of sociology in the 19th century to the 1920s, Šubrt terms the "period of great theories" (p. 4). Given the deep preoccupation of early sociologists such as Comte, Spencer, and Marx (and later Weber and Durkheim) with social-historical development and modernism, the beginnings of sociology were interestingly enough closer to historical-sociology than later stages. In the early period of great theories, sociologists analyzed contemporaneous society in light of history, but also with regard to the future, frequently prophesizing the developments and structure of future

society. Influenced by recent natural-scientific discoveries and evolutional theories, many of them possessed an evolutionary, or at least linear, view of society and social structures: societies evolved from simpler to more complex forms, professions, institutions, and positions underwent specialization, and finally by identifying historical stages and constructs of society, the fathers of sociology believed they would be able to illustrate the future (or at least a possible future) society.

The second stage (1920s–1950s) however, already saw the distancing of sociologists from historical interests, as the move of sociology to the USA highlighted the practical aspects and uses of the field. At this stage, sociologists were mainly preoccupied with collecting empirical data intended for immediate, purposeful use. Interestingly, however, this period was marked by rising interest in societal matters from the historiographic point of view. This trend is most clearly visible in the works of the *Annales* school in France, led by Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch. Rejecting the "traditional dominance of political history," the *Annales* school was interested in broader aspects of history. Moreover, these historians were open to the influence of Durkheim and structuralism, thereby enriching historiographical tools and methodologies with sociological ones.

The third stage, which began in the 1950s, saw a renewed interest in large-scale theories. The beginnings of this stage are best exemplified by Talcott Parsons' theories, which could be termed "structural functionalism," and sought to analyze the various forces which affected social structures and social changes. Parsons' work, however, was essentially ahistorical, and hardly touched on comparative historical events and processes. Nonetheless, in the 1970s large-scale theories were being developed with rising emphasis on the historical dimension, as seen in the works of Norbert Elias, Shmuel Eisenstadt, and Charles Tilly, thereby giving rise to an interest in historical sociology.

Beyond formal historical sociology and the rigid dichotomy of history and sociology, Šubrt also studies the works of "in-between" thinkers such as Hannah Arendt, Raymond Aron, Karl Popper, and others. In the works of these writers, Šubrt finds elements of historical sociology, given their preoccupation with social relationships and structures, while considering the historical context in which such constructs developed and emerged. Arendt's work on totalitarianism and the banality of evil, Aron's on the biased French Marxist-intellectuals, and Popper's work on the open and closed societies, all exemplify, in Šubrt's analysis, works that possess a strong connection, albeit not proclaimed, to historical sociology.

In spite of the rising interest in historical sociology and its gradual consolidation as mainstream science, it still inherently contains an essential tension between historical and sociological perspectives, namely, the perspective of the individual.

Based on this historical development of the scientific fields at hand, Šubrt explores the problem of the individual residing at the heart of historical sociology, or, to put it simply, "History considers individuals, sociology ignores them" (p. 255). This examination takes place through conceptual analysis of notions such as time, structure, and modernity, as well as through the works of researchers who, either explicitly or implicitly, exhibit a historical-sociological approach. If indeed history is individualistic, whereas sociology holistic, then how does historical sociology settle this problem? According to Šubrt, "the broad perspective of historical sociology is that the relationship between human beings and society is not fixed but variable" (p. 230).

At this point, it is important to note that while the individual perspective is central to Šubrt's study, and constitutes the main driving force behind the analysis of historical-sociology, the book also explores other conflicting methodologies and study approaches, illustrating the possibilities and boundaries of historical sociology. Surveying "conceptual opposites" such as consensus and conflict theories; micro and macro studies; positivism and anti-positivism; and quantitative and qualitative research, Šubrt explores the "heterogeneous conceptions and currents of thought within the discipline[,]" noting that "[t]his theoretical variety […] contributed to the basis of historical sociology, and

[…] attributed vital importance to the matter of history in the founding and formulating of the general theoretical framework of sociology" (p. 19).

In light of the conflicting and heterogeneous elements which coexist at the heart of it, historical-sociology is suitable for explaining not just static societies or specific historical changes, but to "study […] change, or in another way, […] why history happens, and why it happens the way it does" (ibid.).

Therefore, change becomes a crucial and central subject at the heart of historical sociology. However, historical sociology is not interested in specific historical changes which are traditionally attributed to the great personalities (i.e., Alexander the Great, Caesar, Napoleon, etc.), but in discovering larger-scale *social* changes which take place throughout history.

By analyzing the ambivalent stance of individualism in historical-sociology, and by drawing a rich and clear view of the field beginning from the 19th century and until today, The Perspective of Historical Sociology is an important and useful book, both for students and for professional scholars. Students encountering the field for the first time may find in the book a readable and precise introduction not only to self-proclaimed historical sociologists but also to other important sociologists and historians.

On the other hand, professional scholars will find an invitation to a discussion on the individual issues and problems lying at the heart of the field. How do different approaches to the study of society and the individuals that comprise it influence our research? In what ways might holistic and individual-oriented research be improved and progressed?

Adam Coman
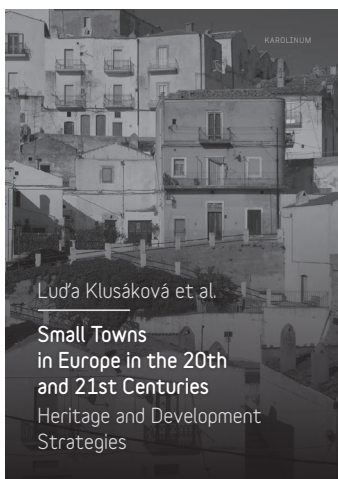
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*Prague, Karolinum Press 2017, paperback,
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Largely unknown small towns, always in the shadow of famous cities, are mostly overlooked by historical research. English, Spanish, Portuguese, Greek, Czech and Russian towns are staged in this volume as examples of a typical European phenomenon. They appear in diverse shapes, influenced by their countries and regions in history. One of possible strategies to overcome difficulties and motivate new development uses cultural heritage as a marketable value. International team of urban historians, sociologists and historians of arts and architects joined at the European Association for Urban History conference in Lisbon in 2014 and decided to present the issue in this volume – composed of five chapters – using a variety of methods and perspectives.

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