

INTRODUCTION

THE FUTURE OF PHILOSOPHY

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The closing down of the philosophy department at Middlesex University, along with the downsizing of philosophy departments in Britain, USA, Australia and elsewhere, signify, if this trend is not successfully fought against, the coming to the end of an era in higher education, and perhaps, an era of civilization.¹ This is the era dominated by the Humboldtian model of the university that began with the establishment of the University of Berlin in 1810. With this model, which all countries had to embrace in some measure because of its manifest superiority, philosophy was not just one discipline among others. It was the transdiscipline that questioned the assumptions and interrogated the values and claims to knowledge of all other disciplines, revealing their significance in relation to each other, asking new questions and opening up new paths of inquiry.² In accordance with its origins in Ancient Greece, the goal of philosophy was to provide the foundations for an integrated understanding of the cosmos and the place of humanity within it through which people could appreciate the meaning of their lives and define their ultimate ends. It had the responsibility for engaging with the broader culture and its problems, for investigating the relationship between culture, society and civilization, and for working out how people could and should live and how society could and should be organized. As Friedrich Schelling,

¹ In *The University in Ruins*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996, ch.3), Bill Readings pointed out that the transformation of universities is associated with the end of the nation-state; that is, 'imagined communities' committed to governing themselves, with a world-order made up of such communities. In their place there will be a global market and economic actors, dominated by a global corporatocracy, with states reduced to little more than instruments to impose and regulate markets.

² See Arran Gare, 'Democracy and Education: Defending the Humboldtian University and the Democratic Nation-State as Institutions of the Radical Enlightenment', *Concrescence*, 2005, 6: 3-25. www.concrescence.org/index.php/ajpt/article/download/92/54.

one of the philosophers who had a major influence on the founding of the University of Berlin, proclaimed: 'Philosophy must enter into life. That applies not only to the individual but also to the condition of the time, to history and to humanity. The power of philosophy must penetrate everything, because one cannot live without it.'³ Philosophy was central to the formation of individuals and society, and it was the core of the university.

It is not only what the collapse of the Humboldtian model of the university presages for the future of philosophy departments that raises the issue of the future of philosophy, however. What many philosophy departments have been passing off to their students in the name of philosophy is really anti-philosophy dressed up as philosophy, if the word 'philosophy' (love of wisdom) has any meaning at all. Many academics in philosophy departments have been undermining not only philosophy but the Humboldtian model of the university and all that it represented for over a century. Despite such academic degeneration, philosophy could be and was kept alive by people outside philosophy departments, many outside academia. Much of the most important philosophy over the last hundred years has come from mathematicians, scientists, historians, artists, writers and public figures who reflected deeply on their particular disciplines, crafts and professions and related their work to broader developments and problems of civilization. Alfred North Whitehead, Bertrand Russell and Edmund Husserl, who began their careers as mathematicians, are obvious examples. What is of greater concern at present is that philosophy itself is slowly being eliminated, not only from academia, but from public life, culture and society. In the new business oriented universities with their career oriented students, there is little place for philosophically reflective mathematicians, scientists (natural or social), historians or law professors, let alone philosophers. Outside universities, the educated public, who used to read works of philosophy, is aging. Fewer and fewer people now read works of philosophy or engage in philosophical reflection. Those philosophers remaining are losing their audience. Although there is evidence that some young people sense that there is something fundamentally awry with their culture, are searching for deeper meaning to and a broader perspective on life and are looking again to philosophy for insight, the status of philosophy has seldom been at such a low ebb.

Of course philosophy has been marginalized in the past, and there have been very few times in history when philosophers have not complained about the lack of appreciation of their work. Sometimes this marginalization has been associated with

³ As recounted by Karl Jaspers in *The Great Philosophers, Volume III*, trans. Edith Ehrlich and Leonard H. Ehrlich, New York: Harcourt Brace, 1993, p.144.

suppression of philosophers for threatening the social order and the power of ruling elites. For this they have been forced to commit suicide or been burnt at the stake. But this meant that philosophy was at least taken seriously. The present form of marginalization is different. Philosophy now is regarded as an academic parlour game irrelevant to everything and, for the most part, of no interest except to other philosophers who have not yet retired or been retrenched. Those who hold academic positions in philosophy are sometimes admired for their cleverness, providing they are clever enough to be appointed to prestigious universities with a high income, are witty conversationalists and do not bore people by talking about philosophy. At most, philosophers are seen as people who might teach people a few intellectual skills. As Alasdair MacIntyre wrote twenty-five years ago of the state of philosophy in an address to the American Philosophical Association, philosophy is now seen as

... a harmless, decorative activity, education in which is widely believed to benefit by exercising and extending the capacities for orderly argument, so qualifying those who study it to join the line of lemmings entering law school or business school. The professor of philosophy, on this view, stands to the contemporary bourgeoisie much as the dancing master stood to the nobility of the *ancien regime*. The dancing master taught the eighteenth-century expensively brought up young how to have supple limbs, the philosophy professor teaches their twentieth-century successors how to have supple minds.⁴

It is not particularly difficult to see what has happened. Positivism, which was already recognized as a threat to philosophy in the Nineteenth Century, has triumphed. Positivists argued that there is a scientific method that enables those who have mastered it to accumulate indubitable knowledge. All other claims to knowledge, apart from mathematics and technical or artistic skills, are either superstition or mere opinion. Scientific knowledge, unlike superstition and opinion, is important because it enables prediction, and therefore facilitates control of nature, the economy and society and the moods, beliefs and behaviour of people. Also, unlike knowledge associated with skills and the arts, scientific knowledge can be written down and taught to people who can then be tested and graded for their mastery of this knowledge. Despite intense debates over logical positivism and logical empiricism (more recent forms of positivism) which resulted in the intellectual demolition of these doctrines, the vast majority of scientists, natural and social, simply assume this view of science, and do not think any philosophical justification of it is required. They have embraced scientism, and with it, the belief that they are the experts who should be in

⁴ Alasdair MacIntyre, 'The Future of Philosophy' in *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*, September, 1987, p.85.

control of their domains of expertise. These 'scientists', and those who fund them and manage their institutions, believe that scientific research is most likely to be successful in advancing knowledge if it is specialized and scientists work in teams. Outsiders, especially those who cross disciplinary boundaries and dabble in, or even worse, fully engage with philosophy, are not taken seriously, even if they have Nobel prizes.

With such specialization there has to be some basis for choosing which areas of research to support. As far as the experts are concerned, this problem has now been solved by allowing the managers of universities and research organizations to operate their institutions as businesses, defining success as maximising their profitability by competing successfully for research grants (while cutting costs of human resources by reducing teaching staff). It is through the market that judgements are made about what knowledge is most profitable and therefore most worth researching and teaching. There is a problem of making sure that human relationships between people and with nature are redefined in accordance with the categories of the market, but this also can be managed scientifically through the sciences of economics, politics, sociology and psychology. The problem of managing large organizations to operate efficiently as market actors has also been solved through scientific management, including human resources management. Even research in weapons can now be managed in this way with the military offering defence contracts on the basis of competitive tenders, succeeding thereby in vastly increasing the efficiency with which people can and are being killed. Where there is a breakdown in the relation between people and their society, this is no longer a matter for philosophy but for the sciences of psychology and sociology, sciences which through the extension of scientific method can now offer tested forms of therapy and social control. Each scientific expert who is genuinely useful can then find their place in this self-regulating system committed to endlessly increasing efficiency of functioning, production and killing, with ever more efficient ways of measuring these and therefore endless increases in the profitability of organizations. If philosophy cannot contribute to improving such efficiency, productivity and profitability, then it is only of value as an item for personal consumption. It should be treated as part of the entertainment industry and evaluated according to whether people are prepared to pay for it. Since, as Guy Debord pointed out, we now live in the society of the spectacle, when faced with the choice between the spectacular and philosophy, few people are willing to pay for whatever personal satisfaction philosophy might provide.

This success of positivism involves the disempowerment of people and their acceptance of this disempowerment as more and more decision-making is placed in

the hands of experts. Why has this been accepted? In *Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy* the American political philosopher, Michael Sandel, examined the evolution in politics in USA and showed how, over the last half century the notion of citizenship has been severely impoverished. Political and economic arguments now revolve around considerations of prosperity and fairness without raising the question of what economic arrangements are most hospitable to self-government.⁵ This is the triumph of liberal individualist notions of freedom, centred on rights, over the republican idea of liberty as self-governance. This triumph has global ramifications as liberal individualism has spread from USA (and Britain) around the world. Sandel showed that while in USA liberal individualism has a long history, it has only been in the last fifty years that the quest for self-governance has been abandoned, and he pointed out the implications of this. Essentially, it has meant that there is no requirement for a public philosophy that could uphold a conception of the good life and no requirement for people to be educated to be good citizens able to defend their liberty and participate in debates about what is the good life and how it could be realized. This transformation has been associated with not only the attenuation of political philosophy, which now focuses on questions of rights, a focus which, as Alasdair MacIntyre revealed in *After Virtue*, has failed completely to rationally resolve conflicts between opposing claims to rights, but concomitantly, a growing hostility to philosophy as such. Attempts to revive democracy have met with the objection that, given the scale, complexity and interconnectedness of the modern world along with the mobility of people, it is impossible to revive the republican ideal of self-governance. More fundamentally and far more significantly, however, proponents of liberal individualism argue that such self-governance would not be desirable if it were achieved. It would be too coercive because of the intellectual and ethical demands it would place on people.

For those defending the ideal of self-governance, citizens are not born but are made, cultivated through education which requires appreciation of the history and value of institutions, ideas and cultural achievements and a preparedness to defend and further develop them. It involves the cultivation of a strong sense of responsibility for oneself, one's communities and the institutions which structure them, and the beliefs on which they are based. As Cornelius Castoriadis pointed out in his study of Ancient Greek democracy, such citizenship engenders philosophy. Here people explicitly deliberated about the laws and changing those laws. This led to questions

⁵ Michael J. Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy*, Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1996. Sandel provided a lucid summary of the argument of this book in 'America's Search for a New Public Philosophy', *The Atlantic Monthly*, 277(3), (March, 1996): 57-74.

such as What is it for a law to be right or wrong? Or more broadly, What is justice? People for the first time explicitly questioned the instituted collective representation of the world and proposed alternatives. They quickly moved from questions about the truth of certain representations to truth itself. This involved an imperative to believe what had been ascertained as truth and to live accordingly, at least until it could be shown that there were other beliefs with a better claim to the truth.

For liberal individualists, this is coercive and oppressive. The focus on rights has expanded the range of rights called for while at the same time encouraging people to look upon the public institutions that are supposed to deliver these rights as alien and coercive, to be taken advantage of where-ever possible. The demand for more rights has not expanded the range of rights accorded, however. Liberal individualism has suited those with wealth, particularly those with power bases in global corporations, since it has facilitated and justified their domination of public institutions and public opinion, further augmenting their power and wealth. But at the same time, liberal individualism has rendered the rest of the population powerless. Focussed on demanding rights while avoiding responsibilities they are incapable of comprehending the significance of the changes that are taking place, or achieving any solidarity to organize or to protect public institutions from corruption and thereby prevent their own domination by these power elites. Effectively, the vast majority of former citizens are becoming enslaved to the power elites in control of global corporations, and through them, of public institutions. One right after another that had been fought for and won over a century or more is being dismantled: the right to form unions and achieve security of employment, to a forty hour week with an income that would enable people to raise a family and participate in public life, to an education that would develop their full human potential to participate in their communities, to gain respect as members of a profession, and to the knowledge required to understand what is happening to them and their communities and to thereby participate in governing themselves. All these are being taken away as corporations plunder public property, take control of or subvert public institutions, avoid taxes and defy efforts to control them by controlling the media, manipulating public opinion and moving capital to where-ever in the world labour is cheapest and regulations are at a minimum.

There is one new right that has been advanced successfully, however: the right to have one's own beliefs, preferences and lifestyles without obtrusive intellectual elites questioning them. That humanity should be cultivated, as Martha Nussbaum

argued,⁶ implies that people should be different from how they now are, and this, coming from someone with no scientific credentials, is offensive. People have a right not to be exposed to judgmental intellectuals who argue that people have an obligation to pursue the truth and that some beliefs and values are better than others, that some ideas and ways of reasoning are better than others, that some ways of living and past-times are better than others, that some works of literature and music are better than others, that beauty is not merely subjective but is a quality of reality that should be appreciated and augmented, and that they have duties to their communities. They have been liberated from the burden of responsibility for the future of their institutions, communities and societies and from the obligation to understand their history and their present state and to participate in creating the future. They are no longer required to cultivate their humanity, their virtues or their abilities to bear their civic responsibilities, or to reflect on themselves, their society or life or to justify their beliefs. They have been liberated from philosophers and philosophical reflection, and have embraced this liberty. They have become unreflective, ignorant, self-centred egoists easily manipulated and controlled through advertising and public relations and, partly as a consequence of this, permanently insecure and dependent upon the owners of the means of production for their livelihoods. As the ancient Romans understood the term, they have become slaves, and they have developed the minds of slaves. As such they are vigorously defended by those who have enslaved them from demands that they take responsibility for the future. Scientific experts, ranging from engineers to economists and human resources managers, have a privileged position among these slaves, providing the specialized knowledge required to keep the system functioning.

While these developments can be seen as the triumph of positivism, scientism and liberal individualism, these in turn are manifestations of a longer tradition of thought and a longer project, a project identified by Stephen Toulmin in his book *Cosmopolis as The Hidden Agenda of Modernity*.⁷ This project began when Descartes turned his back on the civic humanism of the Renaissance with its commitment to the ancient idea of liberty as self-governance, defined in opposition to slavery where slavery was understood as being in a position of dependence on others who could harm them, and developed his 'new mechanical philosophy' based on the identification of physical existence with extension completely knowable and describable through analytic

⁶ Martha C. Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997.

⁷ Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

geometry. The agenda of this philosophy was not only to develop a form of knowledge that would facilitate control of nature but would also facilitate government of society through such knowledge. It would facilitate complete control over people. In a similar vein, Quentin Skinner has shown in a series of books that at the same time Thomas Hobbes also turned his back on civic humanism and, inspired by the physics of Galileo, defended a similar agenda. He set out to transform language to make the republican notion of liberty unintelligible and defended a science of social control. The second generation of mechanistic thinkers, Isaac Newton and John Locke, building on the work of Descartes and Hobbes, consolidated this agenda. Adam Smith's economics inspired by the ideas of Hobbes, Locke and Newton, and Henri de Saint Simon's proposal to govern the whole of humanity by a Grand Council of Newton on the model of a factory, further articulated this project. It is against this background that it is necessary to understand the work of Auguste Comte, a one-time secretary of and disciple of Saint Simon, and the founder of positivism and sociology. Ultimately, the hidden agenda of modernity is the project based on a particular philosophy that involves eliminating all alternatives; a philosophy hostile to questioning of its own assumptions and thereby hostile to philosophy. As the celebrated Eighteenth Century Scottish philosopher, David Hume, wrote in the concluding paragraph to *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*:

If we take in our hand any volume; of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance; let us ask, *Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number?* No. *Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence?* No. Commit it then to the flames: for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion.

While many philosophers have supported this project, and in the process have worked to undermine and eliminate any questioning of the dominant philosophy, the greatest philosophers since the Eighteenth Century have resolutely opposed it. In the past there were good reasons for this, and there are more reasons in the present. Apart from the incoherencies, intellectual poverty and ultimately, nihilism of this whole tradition of thought, the triumph of mechanistic materialism, instrumental reason and positivism led to the tyrannies of the Twentieth Century and have culminated in the rise of the global corporatocracy which, when all the ramifications of its actions are understood, is the most oppressive oligarchy the world has ever known. Not only are they undermining democracy and so massively concentrating wealth that the entire world economy is being destabilised; they are undermining the regime of the global ecosystem that has provided the conditions for human civilization. At the same time they are impoverishing the cultures of nations through

which this situation could be understood and opposed. Far from scientism advancing science, it has only advanced techno-science. This is a caricature of genuine science, the systematic effort, inseparable from philosophy, to comprehend the world in all its diversity. Genuine science has progressively exposed the failures of and transcended the mechanistic world-view. As Joseph Ben-David showed in *The Scientist's Role in Society: A Comparative Study*,⁸ every effort in the past by governments to manage science to augment its usefulness to them has crippled it, and this is proving true in the present. Scientism and efforts to manage science are crippling the advance of post-mechanistic science, most importantly, work in areas such as ecology and climate science that do not provide profitable technology but reveal the limits to the quest for profits. The elimination of philosophy from academia and public life is essentially the elimination of any deep questioning of scientism, liberal individualism, the new global order and its ruling elites and where they are taking us. It is eliminating any questioning of the ideas about nature and humanity on which this global order is based, and eliminating any investigation or consideration of alternatives. It is eliminating any questioning of the agenda of modernity, whatever its consequences.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that there has been a reaction against the marginalization and trivialization of philosophy, and a good proportion of papers submitted to *Cosmos and History* are concerned in one way or another with the fate of philosophy and its future and with how philosophy can be reconstituted to revive its challenge to prevailing forms of thinking. The present edition is a collection of such papers.

The first paper of this edition by Murray Code 'Vital Concerns; Or: Beginning to Think About Life and Thought' begins by invoking Hannah Arendt's observation that 'A prerequisite for hard thinking ... is a complete letting go of one's fondest hopes and beliefs; that is, those which underwrite what is generally taken to be "normal" in everyday life and thought.' Following Northrop Frye, Code suggests the false myth of progress is a virulent disease associated with a form of mob rule, where the self-policing mob has embraced a hatred for thought and contempt for life. What is required, Code argues, are cultural physicians (as Nietzsche characterized philosophers) who would foster imagination to prepare the ground to grow a healthier good sense, drawing on myths other than the Grand Myth of Scientific Superrationality which underwrites what might be called a regnant mythology of unconcern. Thus in holding up the possibility of creating a philosophy of concern,

⁸ Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1971.

Nietzsche evokes the possibility of a new, life-enhancing mythology of concern. Code endorses Nietzsche's call for the creation of a new kind of person committed to 'a cosmic project of redemption, taking up arms against doctrines that in one way or another put into question not only the meaning of life but the value of existence'. This will require 'nothing less than the birth of a global will/desire for justice.' There does appear to be an impetus for this, but it is being blocked. Code cites the case of the increasing number of advanced high-school students in Britain choosing to take philosophy, only to be frustrated by what they are taught. Instead of a synoptic vision of human life and its place in the scheme of things they are offered a host of highly technical specialisms modelled on the methods of the natural sciences. Nietzsche's suspicion, that modern philosophers are especially prone to betray the future of life and thought through a systematic narrowing of perspectives, is confirmed. It is as though the ills of this world were of no concern to truly serious thinkers. To counter this, Code calls for a radical rethinking of the nature of philosophical reasoning based on an artful choice of imagery that might prove in the long run to be a reliable guide for the necessary movements of thought. In this he argues philosophy is akin to poetry. And as Alfred North Whitehead, after a lifetime of deep reflection, defined the goals of philosophers and poets, 'both philosophers and poets seek that ultimate good sense which we term civilization.'

The marginalization of philosophy in Anglophone countries over the last century is largely due to the fragmentation and trivialization of philosophy by analytic philosophers, philosophers who rejected any place for speculation and any quest for comprehensiveness. The second paper in this edition by Andrew James Taggart, 'On the Need for Speculative Philosophy Today', revives Hegel's characterization and defence of speculative philosophy. While following Hegel in arguing that the ultimate aim of philosophy is to provide us with higher-order consolation, Taggart conjectures that the rational form of inquiry he has undertaken is a propaedeutic to 'philosophies of action': philosophy of life and public philosophy.

Alain Badiou has emerged as one of the most vigorous defenders of philosophy in the world today, and it is hardly surprising that a number of papers in this edition have been devoted to his work. Working in France with its heritage of Cartesian thought, Badiou has engaged with advanced mathematics, arguing through a study of the implications of set theory and category theory that mathematics does not imply determinism; Being is not unitary but multiple and there is a place for events. Most importantly, there is a place for events of truth outside ontology which recasts ontology in a new light. In his most widely read and most accessible work, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, Badiou defends an heroic ethics of fidelity to such

events of truth, a post-Cartesian decision and commitment to these events against forces trying to suppress them, but without totalizing the recasting of ontology occasioned by such events. As the translator of Badiou's *Ethics*, Peter Hallward summed up Badiou's project:

Badiou's philosophy seems to expose and make sense of the potential for radical innovation (revolution, invention, transfiguration ...) in every situation. Simplifying things considerably, we might say that he divides the sphere of human action into two overlapping but sharply differentiated sub-spheres: (a) the 'ordinary' realm of established interests and differences, of approved *knowledges* that serve to name, recognize and *place* consolidated identities; and (b) an 'exceptional' realm of singular innovations or *truths*, which persist only through the militant proclamation of those rare individuals who constitute themselves as *subjects* of a truth, as the 'militants' of their cause.⁹

Badiou's work is not easy to understand; however some appreciation of his philosophy can be gained by examining his approach to the history of philosophy. This is the focus of the paper by Edvard Lorkovic in 'The Politics of Presentation: On Badiou as Reader of Rousseau'. Lorkovic shows the centrality of Badiou's concern with the conditions for philosophy. To begin with, Lorkovic quotes Badiou's claim that 'justice is done to philosophy only if philosophy itself does justice to its conditions and accepts being exposed to their inventive violence.' Philosophy invents itself by violating itself, by transforming its terms – its concepts, questions and problems, and it can succeed only if it remains exposed to itself and its own violence. That is, philosophy should be attuned to its origins if it hopes to continue being philosophical. This is illustrated by Lorkovic through an examination of Badiou's study of Rousseau. Badiou's Rousseau is not engaged with political philosophy as a normative theorist of legitimacy but with the conditions for politics as creative, that is, as an event which creates something new – the unity of a people through their commitment to the common good. This is the creative event that is at the same time the condition for philosophy. Philosophy arises in a political context and is metapolitics. As Lorkovic puts it, 'metapolitics emerges from and directs its philosophical attention to *a* politics, an actual ... political world which is the condition of philosophizing here and now... In other words, metapolitics is philosophy turned towards its own political situatedness.' It is the comprehension and fidelity to the creative event which makes philosophy possible.

⁹ Peter Hallward, 'Translator's Introduction' to Alain Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, [1998] London: Verso, 2001, p.viii.

Jason Barker, the author of *Alain Badiou: A Critical Introduction* and the translator of Badiou's 'Metapolitics', in his contribution to this edition, 'Wherefore Art thou Philosophy?' focuses on Badiou's *magnum opus*, *Being and Event* and the essays that followed it. This work, Barker suggests, 'in its radical rethinking of the philosophical mission and the status of ontology, purports to change the nature of philosophical practice itself.' For Badiou, philosophy is the seizure of truths, but more importantly it is an intervention against the dominant paradigms. His philosophy is a direct assault on post-Kantian relativism and anti-foundationalism. The question raised by this assault as an event of truth is Why should it elicit fidelity? At this stage it is impossible to know what the outcome of such fidelity will be. The nature and problematic status of this fidelity is illuminated by Barker with the example of the love of Juliet for Romeo, someone she barely knows.

Badiou is only one of a number of recent philosophers looked at by Marianna Papastephanou in her paper 'Ethics After God's Death and the Time of the Angels'. Situating Badiou in a much longer tradition of thought going back to Hobbes and Spinoza and comparing his ethics to the ethical reflections of Iris Murdoch and Hannah Arendt, Papastephanou argues that Badiou's ethics is caught up in a search 'for an ethically creative nihilism in a *self*-referential binarism of human life versus death, where selfishness is associated with the former and selflessness with the latter.' It is caught in an elitist antithesis between the ordinary, conceived as dominated by Hobbesian appetites and the quest for domination, and the 'epiphanic' – the revelatory manifestation of a divine being. It is symptomatic of the effort to compensate for the Death of God. As opposed to such dualism deriving from the impossibility of this, Papastephanou argues for an ethical exploration of the metaphor of the angel. Against the timeless downward gaze, the challenge is to look at eye level, replacing the perspective of the observer with the perspective of the participant, illustrated in Wim Wender's films.

The following two papers, 'Badiou and the Consequences of Formalism' by Paul Livingston and 'Two Paths to Infinite Thought: Alain Badiou and Jacques Derrida on the Question of the Whole' by Lyn Sebastian Purcell, elucidate the core of Badiou's philosophy, revealing its distinctiveness, and in the case of Livingston, defending Derrida against Badiou. Focussing on Badiou's engagement with the political and ontological implications of formalism and subjecting the constitutive structures of ontological being to the rigors of mathematical formalism, Livingston identifies four possibilities for philosophy: an onto-theological position that sees the totality as complete and consistent in itself, the position that has been attacked by a number of philosophers, including Heidegger; a criteriological/constructivist position that

attempts to delimit being by the fixed structure of language, thereby excluding by avoiding the paradoxes of self-inclusion at the expense of accepting a whole hierarchy of metalanguages, the position adopted by Bertrand Russell and Rudolph Carnap; a generic approach which retains a commitment to consistency and overcomes the paradoxes of self-inclusion by denying that being is a unity and accepting multiplicity, the position defended by Badiou; and a paradoxico-critical position which upholds the quest for completeness by accepting inconsistencies. This last position is defended through Graham Priest's doctrine of *dialethism* associated with paraconsistent logic according to which there can be true contradictions. This analysis supports and illuminates Purcell's characterization of Badiou and Derrida. Also drawing on Priest's work, Purcell defends Derrida as a philosopher who maintained a commitment to totality by accepting contradictions in the totality. As opposed to the heroism of Badiou's subject with its commitment to one of the possible consistent truths, Derrida's philosophy leads to a different kind of fidelity, a fidelity open to the fragility, vulnerability and wound-ability of the human condition and in the face of this, manages contradictions well, or beautifully.

Noting the long history of philosophers whose outlook was inspired or influenced by thinking about the meaning of mathematics, in his paper 'Poststructuralism and Deconstruction: A Mathematical History' Vladimir Tasić, a professor of mathematics as well as celebrated novelist, analyses the influence and utilization of ideas from mathematics by Derrida. Derrida presents a problem because he simultaneously utilizes ideas from intuitionism and from formalism, philosophies of mathematics radically opposed to each other. In an earlier and more polemical work, *Mathematics and the Roots of Postmodern Thought*, Tasić offered a devastating critique of the poststructuralist doctrines embraced by postmodernists, doctrines that were used to portray human beings as 'formalistic dummies in the generative grammar of various "brands" and other units of the formal culture-structure.'¹⁰ He concluded that

The intellectual melange characteristic of postmodern culture seems, then, to be a curious simulation of romanticism *and* various reactions to it, thus generating more colorful images than one can shake a kaleidoscope at. Such studied eclecticism makes postmodernism inconsistent from a rational point of view and renders a strictly rational discussion of it practically impossible.¹¹

He went on to characterize postmodern thought as 'dysfunctionalism. Dysfunctional *chic*.' However, while making this argument he acknowledged that Derrida was more

¹⁰ Vladimir Tasić, *Mathematics and the Roots of Postmodern Thought*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, p.154.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.155.

subtle and not so easily dismissed, and in this paper Tasić rejoins the struggle to unravel Derrida's thought.

While clarifying Derrida's ideas, this paper offers much more than an analysis of Derrida. Carrying on from *Mathematics and the Roots of Postmodern Thought*, Tasić takes up again his suggestion that we should examine the broad cultural significance of mathematics, and in particular the philosophical significance of the insights of mathematicians and mathematical physicists in the debate between intuitionism and formalism. He revisits the philosophical reflections of Henri Poincaré, L.E.J. Brouwer and Hermann Weyl, among others, pointing to a tradition of thought that goes back to Justus and Hermann Grassmann, who in turn were influenced by Schleiermacher and Schelling. He notes that Hermann Grassmann influenced Whitehead and points out the radical philosophical commitments of Brouwer, who was strongly influenced by Nietzsche. He shows how Husserl was aligned with Brouwer and Weyl against Hilbert, how Heidegger was influenced by this debate and how it illuminates the work of Derrida. Tasić argues that a recovery of the largely ignored philosophical insights of these mathematicians could assist in addressing philosophical problems and rekindling the hermeneutical dialogue between science and philosophy.

Anglophone philosophers concerned to defend the importance and revive the broader project of philosophy commonly take David Hume as their point of departure rather than Descartes, and are less concerned with the problem of identifying physical existence as that which can be described mathematically than the problem of causation bequeathed by Hume's extreme form of empiricism. One of the most important of such philosophers, a philosopher who has inspired a whole school of philosophy, transcendental realism, is Roy Bhaskar. In 'Reconstructing Bhaskar's Transcendental Analysis of Experimental Activity' Dustin McWherter shows how Bhaskar's critique of regularity theories of causal laws and defence of a realist ontology of causal powers deals a serious blow to the anti-metaphysical agenda of logical positivism and subsequent philosophy of science. Metaphysics is shown to be implicated in natural science's most central features. In fact, Bhaskar's ontological naturalism and metaphysical boldness could appropriately be deemed a philosophy of nature in which nature is characterized by stratified, interacting generative mechanisms in which new levels emerge which are not reducible to, although they are dependent upon, more fundamental strata. This provides the basis for a comprehensive and critical social philosophy.

Quite independently of Bhaskar, Adam Scarfe in 'Kant and Hegel's Responses to Hume's Skepticism Concerning Causality: An Evolutionary Epistemological Perspective' also takes the deficiencies in Hume's philosophy as a starting point to

present an anti-reductionist form of evolutionary naturalism. Showing how Kant's transcendentalism overcame Hume's scepticism while Hegel's dialectical approach to categories overcame the static conclusions of Kant's thought, Scarfe shows how Hegel's dialectics can ground the neo-Kantian evolutionism of Konrad Lorenz. This in turn is used to show the place of scepticism and critical thought in the evolution of life and humanity.

A somewhat different path to speculative thought has been taken by the speculative realists. The speculative realists, while a diverse group rather than a philosophical movement, are united in their opposition to Kant's 'correlationism', that is, as Quentin Meillassoux put it, 'the idea according to which we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, and never to either term considered apart from the other.'¹² In developing his own version of speculative realism, Iain Hamilton Grant turned to the philosophy of Schelling, arguing against the interpretation of Schelling as an Idealist and characterizing his project as a 'naturalization of the transcendental'. In other words, Schelling anticipated the transcendental realism of Bhaskar, but unlike Bhaskar, made process the centre of his ontology rather than generative mechanisms. Wesley Phillips in 'The Future of Speculation' acknowledges the value of the philosophical turn to speculation, which he characterizes as the traditional concern with envisioning the unseen whole; however, taking Grant as his focus, he argues from an historical materialist perspective that speculative realism has misplaced speculation. Re-examining the context and debates surrounding the development of Schelling's philosophy, Phillips argues that naturalism cannot account in any systematic way for world-historical change. It is the production of knowledge *with* nature, *as* history, that marks out Schelling's task from that of Kant, and according to Phillips, Grant fails to do justice to this in his interpretation of Schelling. Counterposing Hegel's speculative project with that of Schelling's, Phillips suggests an alternative future to speculation through historical materialism, but an historical materialism that requires speculation to justify it.

The next two articles are reactions against what could be argued to be a cause of philosophy's marginalization, its differentiation by Plato from rhetoric and art. In 'Semiotics, Rhetoric and Democracy', Steve Mackey uses John Deely's resurrection of the semiotic theories of the scholastics, most importantly, of John Poinsett, who anticipated much of the work of Charles Sanders Peirce, to interpret rhetoric in Ancient Greece as it was characterized by Werner Jaeger. From this perspective, rhetoric can be understood as the deliberate harnessing of semiotic effects to change

¹² *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, trans. Ray Brassier, London: Continuum, p.5.

subjectivity. Mackey supports Deely's argument that the eclipse of Poincaré's philosophy by Descartes was an unfortunate deviation in the evolution of Western culture, a deviation that has led to one intellectual dead-end after another. At the same time he supports Werner Jaeger's famous argument that rhetoric is not opposed to philosophy but is a philosophical tradition that has upheld and played a central role in paideia (education) and is central to upholding the most important ideals of Western civilization. Kathleen O'Dwyer in her paper 'A Poetic Perspective on Subjectivity' argues that 'the poetic word enables a creative and insightful perspective on philosophical issues through a mode of expression which is less curtailed by the academic and traditional conventions more commonly assumed in philosophical works.' To make her case she examines how T.S. Eliot in his poetry grappled with the apparent absence of meaning in modern life. Together, these papers suggest that philosophy would be in a far stronger position to assert its importance if philosophers embraced related discourses and availed themselves of their resources, and would also benefit from using these discourses to overcome the heritage of mechanistic and positivistic thought that has brought civilization, humanity and terrestrial life itself to the brink of catastrophe.

In the following paper Seán O Nualláin, taking as his point of departure Stuart Kauffman's effort to introduce 'God' into respectable discourse (in *Reinventing the Sacred*), offers an ambitious and broad ranging exploration of the role that religion could and should play in the modern world, suggesting 'it may be intellectually responsible to engage in forms of thought and practice that engage the whole of life in a manner heretofore addressed by "religions".' Arguing against both Abrahamic notions of God and efforts to base religion on insights into the nature of physical reality, he argues that 'since humanity is the cutting edge – for good and evil – of emanation/revolution, it is human development that we must focus on.' He defends mystical philosophical and religious traditions, including the work of Gurdjieff, Krishnamurti and Jacob Needleman, among others, for this task. These traditions are then defended and illuminated through work in neuroscience to which the author himself has contributed. At the same time O Nualláin argues for the importance of developing this form of religion in order to address the major ethical problems of the world, including the damaging effects of the global economy, the undermining of universities and the global ecological crisis, illustrating its power with examples of exemplary behaviour by various individuals and groups in the past.

In the next article, 'The Triumph of Virtual Reality and its Implications for Philosophy and Civilization', Glenn McLaren examines the effects of the internet on culture, arguing that the triumph of virtual reality, by destroying the capacity for deep

and prolonged reflection, is destroying the conditions for philosophy. Unless we can find ways of distancing ourselves from this technology, he argues, we will become trapped in our high-tech representations without the capacity for critical distance that philosophy requires. This could herald the end of philosophy, and ultimately, civilization. In opposition to this enveloping world of the internet, McLaren defends print media as the condition for 'apocalyptic' intellectuals who can distance themselves from existing conditions and examine possible futures, both dystopias and utopias.

The final piece in this edition is a review article on Iain McGilchrist's recent book, *The Master and His Emissary*. The importance of this work is that it explains the tunnel vision, mechanistic thinking, fragmentation of thought, blindness to context and the domination by society of instrumental reason, all of which are associated with the marginalization of poetry, art, history and philosophy characteristic of the present age, as due to the domination of people with malfunctioning brains. With malfunctioning brains, people's left-hemispheres, specialising in manipulation and control, have subordinated and suppressed awareness of the contributions of their own and others' right hemispheres to experience through which they could appreciate context, life and its meaning. Combining recent advances in neurophysiology on the roles of the left and right hemispheres to experience with a study of the history of writing, art, architecture, music and philosophy, McGilchrist argues that the really creative periods in European civilization, such as Ancient Greece and the Renaissance, were periods in which the synthetic forms of awareness, empathy, appreciation of life and openness to the world contributed by the right hemisphere dominated while giving a place to the instrumentalist thinking of the left-hemisphere. Similarly, he has adduced overwhelming evidence to show that modernity since the Reformation, despite the reaction by the Romantics, has been characterized by increasing cultural dominance by the brain's left hemisphere. The drive for reductionist explanations, culminating in neuroscience, has been shown by McGilchrist on the basis of the findings of neuroscience to be itself a symptom of malfunctioning brains. Where will these malfunctioning brains take us? McGilchrist concluded, 'if I am right, that the story of the Western world is one of increasing left-hemisphere domination, we would not expect insight to be the key note. Instead we would expect a sort of insouciant optimism, the sleepwalker whistling a happy tune as he ambles towards the abyss.'

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