beyond passivity', the idea of ethics as the ego-less substitution of one for 'the other'. In chapter 5 I develop these concepts in an examination of the thought of Maurice Blanchot which seems to me to offer an extreme statement of many central post-modern themes.

Finally, in chapter 6, I tackle the Heideggerian reduction of eternity to finite being in the exposition of death. This reduction is all-pervasive in twentieth-century philosophical thought. To this reduction, which I argue goes against the grain of language and syntax, may be attributed many of the peculiarities of the Heideggerian style. Rumi and Rilke, my favourite poets, are here given – I hope not the last, but – the continuing word.

I

Athens and Jerusalem: a tale of three cities

I

We have given up communism – only to fall more deeply in love with the idea of 'the community'.

If 'communism' stood for an ideal community, what does the current idea of 'the community' stand for? Quite contrary things. Consider, we say, 'the European community', and we tried not to say, 'the community charge'; 'the American nation and community', says President Bill Clinton, but he also says, 'the politics of the community'. We say 'the community of nations', and we say, 'the ethnic community', and 'the religious community'. On the one hand, 'the community' retains its universal connotations of the commonwealth, the collective interest, the general will; on the other hand, 'the community' resounds with the particular connotations of the locality, the exclusive interests of specific people, the particular will. This exclusive 'community' implies traditional authority; that inclusive 'community' implies legal-rational authority.

Of course, in classic, liberal political theory, the constitution provides a structure of institutions to represent and mediate particular wills and the general will, to generate the commonwealth out of the
clash of competing interests: from the premise of the sovereignty of the people emerges the theory of the representative modern state. In de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, the local community is held to be the source of tyranny; we have forgotten, too, that *Deutschland über alles* was originally intended to affirm the general, liberal state, based on universal rights, the *Rechtsstaat*, against the myriad regional jurisdictions of Princes and privileges.

Our new affirmation of the local community arises from our equal distrust of the spurious universality of the liberal state and of the imposed universal of the former state-socialisms, two ideals of political community. We judge and believe that both modernity and the critique of modernity have broken their promises. And yet we revert to the *equivocal promise* harboured in the idea of ‘the community’.

What do we hope for from the ideal of the community?

We hope to solve the political problem; we hope for the *New Jerusalem*; we hope for a collective life without inner or outer boundaries, without obstacles or occlusions, within and between souls and within and between cities, without the perennial work which constantly legitimates and delegitimates the transformation of power into authority of different kinds.

Consider the case for community architecture, developed by Nick Wates and Charles Knevitt in their book published in 1987. Their case rests on the opposition between the evil empire and the perfect community, between *imperium* and ecclesiology, the perfect church. But who was to be the guarantor of this new community? Prince Charles.

All alien power is to be dissolved in community architecture: yet the regality and majesty of the ‘popular’ sovereign are needed to legitimise this proclaimed dissolution of power. In effect, all the paradoxes of power are transferred back into the community.

---

The argument for community architecture is summarised in a chart which appears in the book, entitled ‘What Makes Community Architecture Different’. The chart sets out the contrasts between ‘conventional architecture’ and ‘community architecture’.

For conventional architecture, the user is passive, for community architecture, the user is active; for conventional architecture, the expert is imperious, for community architecture, the expert is companionable;
for conventional architecture, people are manipulated,
for community architecture, people manipulate the system;

conventional architecture is large-scale and requires wealth,
community architecture is small-scale and situated in decaying
decaying locations;

conventional architecture has a single function,
community architecture serves plural functions;

conventional architecture draws on the international style and
employs cold technology,
community architecture draws on regional and vernacular
building traditions and employs convivial technology;

conventional architecture is preoccupied with financial and
political profit, community architecture is concerned with the
quality of life;

the ethos of conventional architecture is hieratic and
totalitarian,
the ethos of community architecture is demotic, mutual and
pragmatic.

Yet the cover of the book bears an image of Prince Charles, shoul-
der-to-shoulder with a casually dressed architect, whose emphatic
élan of arm and hand and pursed lip contrasts with the Prince’s
corrugated forehead and incredulous, gaping mouth. These two
gesticulating figures appear freestanding against a background
montage of photographs, one of apparently ordinary women, who
are conversing over a table covered with architectural plans, and
the other of three, grubby, labouring lads, in what looks like an
ordinary backyard.

What is going on here? The argument throughout the book

seems to have an oppositional and dualistic structure: the idea of
the community-in-architecture is developed in opposition to the
coercive domination of modernist, bureaucratically managed,
conventional architecture. Through every item on the stark list
comparing conventional with community architecture, rationality
is opposed to community, power abused is opposed to power
dissolved and shared – old Athens is opposed to New Jerusalem.

On the cover, the idea of a small-scale community, with no clash
of particular wills, with, among the women, an ideal-speech
situation, among the lads an ideal work situation, the idea of a
non-coercive social cohesion, is insinuated by the montage of
images. The idea of community depends, however, not only on its
contraries, which are demonstrably attributed to conventional
architecture, but also on the implied opposition of the commu-
nity to the political and social totality. The inevitable political
predicaments of sovereignty and representation have been pro-
jected beyond the boundaries of the community onto the pre-
supposed but not thematised environing body-politic. Conceived
without the politics of clashing interests and without the
sociological actuality of how domination, including local
domination, is to be legitimised as authority, all the oppositions
held at bay in the chart will be reproduced within the commu-
nity-in-architecture, and will take their revenge all the more for
being unacknowledged.

The personality of the Prince is to provide the legitimating
charisma for the community-in-architecture, as he rubs his con-
trapposto regal shoulder with the newly enhumbled expert – the
architect. Could it be that this New Jerusalem is polluted by the
third city, the fairy godmother who was not invited to this holy
wedding of Prince and people? For does not each ‘citizen’ bear
within herself two agonistic lives? As a member of civil society, she
is legally autonomous and pursues her ‘natural’, individual and particular interests; and as a member of the community, she imagines her participation in a collectivity; she imagines it all the more when she is confronted by legitimate authority which seems to exclude her.

Doesn't community architecture encourage us to imagine a sham-community, a false Jerusalem? The opposition between the needs and interests of the people and ‘conventional’ architecture, the latter presented as continuous with the interest of the rationalised, coercive, modern state, is phantasmagorically overcome in the allegory of the Prince – the monarch-to-be serving his apprenticeship as the genie of every locality. Should we not in fact see ourselves in the architect, just as much as in the women or in the lads? The evils of civil society and of the state are merged in the figure of ‘the architect’, who takes on the anxiety of the separated life of each citizen – following his particular interests, he is vulnerable yet ruthless; aspiring to community, he is frail and self-fearing. An ethical immediacy, a community, is claimed for the people, while the separation between particular and universal is visible in the fraught bearing of the architect. And it is the architect who is demoted: the people do not accede to power.

II

I propose that, in the wake of deconstruction and post-modernism (how I wanted to write this lecture without letting those words pass my lips), we have lost all sureness of political discrimination. We no longer know where power resides – in social institutions? in organised knowledge? in the grand critiques of that knowledge? in ourselves, as will-to-power? The confusion in identifying the source and location of power goes together with the impossibility of analysing its structure. When a monolithic or plural character is attributed to power, conceived, for example, as patriarchal, this attribution perpetuates blindness to the reconfiguration of power which we may be assisting by our unarticulated characterisation of it.

It has become commonplace to argue that all social institutions, especially those based on knowledge, represent ‘powers’ (from the central state to local government, from professions – medicine, law, architecture – to the critical traditions in philosophy and in sociology). But by renouncing knowledge as power, we are then only able to demand expiation for total domination, for we have disqualified any possible investigation into the dynamics of the configuration and reconfiguration of power – which is our endless predicament. The presentation of power as plural yet total and all-pervasive, and of opposition to power thus conceived as equally pluralistic, multiform and incessant, as the anarchic community, unwittingly and unwillingly participates in a restructuring of power which undermines those semi-autonomous institutions, such as knowledge or architecture, which alleviate the pressure of the modern state on the individual. The plural but total way of conceiving power leaves the individual more not less exposed to the unmitigated power of the state.

Athens, the city of rational politics. has been abandoned: she is said to have proven that enlightenment is domination. Her former inhabitants have set off on a pilgrimage to the New Jerusalem, the imaginary community, where they seek to dedicate themselves to difference, to otherness, to love – to a new ethics, which overcomes the fusion of knowledge and power in the old Athens. What if the pilgrims, unbeknownst to themselves, carry along in their souls the third city – the city of capitalist private property and modern legal status? The city that separates each
individual into a private, autonomous, competitive person, a bounded ego, and a phantasy life of community, a life of unbounded mutuality, a life without separation and its inevitable anxieties? A phantasy life which effectively destroys the remnant of political life?

Recently, I discovered a painting by Poussin, which illustrates the unintended consequences of our substitution of New Jerusalem for the missing analysis of old Athens. This substitution puts the idea of the community, of immediate ethical experience, in the place of the risks of critical rationality. Critical reason is discredited as domination, yet, at the same time, its authority, which was always drawn from absent but representable justice, is borrowed in the reduction to the immediate community or immediate experience.

Some of you may also have seen this painting not long ago. It was the first painting which was presented and discussed by Sister Wendy Beckett, in her recent series of ten-minute television programmes, ‘Sister Wendy’s Odyssey’, on BBC 2. Now I don’t want you to think that I do my research only by watching television. I had in fact attempted to video a film on ITV, but, instead of the film, which I was longing to watch, ‘The Heart is a Lonely Hunter’, I got – a nun.

What is more, Sister Wendy Beckett is an anchoress – she belongs to an order of nuns who permit her to live and eat alone. She has lived in a caravan by herself for twenty years, devouring fine art from postcards. The programmes follow her ‘Odyssey’, her first visits to galleries all over the country where the originals of her postcard reproductions are located. Anyone who has seen these programmes cannot fail to be struck by Sister Wendy’s celebration of the entwining of human spirituality and human sexuality in the paintings she chose to present.

I was so struck by her discussion of the painting that I am going to show you, that I wrote to Sister Wendy, and attempted to set out my disagreements with what she said. To my delight, after several weeks, she replied, and we have entered into a lively correspondence on these and related matters.

The painting by Poussin, which hangs in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, is called, Gathering the Ashes of Phocion. Poussin’s source for the painting is Plutarch’s Life of Phocion. According to Plutarch, Phocion was an Athenian general and statesman, who offered a model of civic virtue in his public and in his private life. During a period of deep unrest and political ferment in Athens, Phocion remained above reproach, and even refused the handsome benefices offered him by the king of Macedonia. He served as governor of Athens forty times, and often saved the city from destruction.

However, Phocion was eventually accused of treason by his enemies, and was sentenced to die, like Socrates, by taking hemlock. As an additional disgrace, Phocion’s burial within Athens was forbidden, and no Athenian was to provide fire for his funeral. His body was taken outside the city walls and burnt by a paid alien; his ashes were left to burn inside the pyre.

In the middle of the story of Phocion, Plutarch introduces the character of Phocion’s wife. Not named, she is, nevertheless, individuated by her virtue: her modesty and simplicity are said to have been as celebrated among Athenians as Phocion’s integrity.

The painting shows Phocion’s wife with a trusted woman companion. They have come to the place outside the city wall where the body of Phocion was burnt so that Phocion’s wife may gather his ashes – for if they are left unconsecrated, his unappeased soul will wander forever. As she cannot bury the ashes in the tomb of his fathers, according to Plutarch, she takes the ashes
to her home and buries them by the hearth, dedicating them to the household gods. According to Sister Wendy – although I can’t persuade her to reveal the source for this – Phocion’s wife consumes the ashes of her disgraced husband, and thereby gives his unhappy soul a resting place, a tomb, in her own body.

Sister Wendy presented the gesture of the wife bending down to scoop up the ashes as an act of perfect love – as Jerusalem. She contrasted this gesture of love with the unjust nature of the city of Athens, which she saw represented in the classical architecture of the buildings, rising up in the combined landscape and cityscape behind the two women. According to this argument, the classical orders as such stand for the tyranny of the city of Athens. In this presentation of the rational order in itself as unjust power, and the opposition of this domination to the pathos of redeeming love, I discerned the familiar argument that all boundaries of knowledge and power, of soul and city, amount to illegitimate force, and are to be surpassed by the new ethics of unbounded community.

To oppose the act of redeeming love to the implacable domination of architectural and political order – here, pure, individual love to the impure injustice of the world – is completely to efface the politics of this painting.

Phocion’s condemnation and manner of dying were the result of tyranny temporarily usurping good rule in the city. The tension of political defiance appears here in the figure of the woman servant, whose contorted posture expresses the fear of being discovered. The bearing of the servant displays the political risk; her visible apprehension protects the complete vulnerability of her mourning mistress as she devotes her whole body to retrieving the ashes. This act is not therefore solely one of infinite love: it is a finite act of political justice.

The magnificent, gleaming, classical buildings, which frame and
focus this political act, convey no malignant foreboding, but are perfect displays of the architectural orders: they do not and cannot in themselves stand for the unjust city or for intrinsically unjust law. On the contrary, they present the rational order which throws into relief the specific act of injustice perpetrated by the current representatives of the city – an act which takes place outside the boundary wall of the built city.

The gathering of the ashes is a protest against arbitrary power; it is not a protest against power and law as such. To oppose anarchic, individual love or good to civil or public ill is to deny the third which gives meaning to both – this is the other meaning of the third city – the just city and just act, the just man and the just woman. In Poussin's painting, this transcendent but mournable justice is configured, its absence given presence, in the architectural perspective which frames and focuses the enacted justice of the two women.

To see the built forms themselves as ciphers of the unjust city has political consequences: it perpetuates endless dying and endless tyranny, and it ruins the possibility of political action.

That is what I wrote to Sister Wendy.

III

New Jerusalem, the new ethics, has been developed from a dangerously distorted and idealised presentation of Judaism as the sublime other of modernity. I shall return to this later. At the same time, a fourth city, emblem of contemporaneous Jewish history and now of modernity as such, has emerged from the ruin of theoretical and practical reason to provide the measure for demonic anti-reason – the city of Auschwitz.

Now, how can Auschwitz, the death camp of death camps, be a city? Philosophical, sociological, and architectural work on modernity and the Holocaust displays an intensification of the opposition between Athens and Jerusalem. Much of this work judges that generalising explanations are in themselves a kind of collusion in what should not be explained but should be left as an evil, unique in human and in divine history; and it calls for silent witness in the face of absolute horror. But to name the Nazi genocide ‘the Holocaust’ is already to over-unify it and to sacralize it, to see it as providential purpose – for in the Hebrew scriptures, a holocaust refers to a burnt sacrifice which is offered in its entirety to God without any part of it being consumed. The familiar structure of argument then runs as follows: a tight fit is posited between the Holocaust and a general feature of modernity – its legal-rationality, its architectural history, the logic of meaning itself. This leads to the judgement that the feature in question made the Holocaust possible or realisable. Sociologists, architectural historians and philosophers conclude that the methods and means of their own disciplines are principal actors in the Holocaust. The devastation of the respective discipline is declared; paradoxically, the sociologist then invokes the new ethics, the philosopher turns to social analysis, and the architectural historian breaks off his book after 500 pages, and relapses into a desperate, dramatised silence.

In each case, the same reversal of logic has occurred: critical rationality conceives and organises the investigation and provides the causal or conditional arguments which are developed in the light of the relevant historical evidence; for example, architectural planning and architects were crucial for the conception, organisation and execution of the Holocaust. Then the roles are reversed: the protagonist, reason, becomes the antagonist, anti-reason. The Holocaust is now seen as the immanent telos of those procedures, and itself becomes the measure, the limit, the criterion, of the
in invalidity of those modes of organised thinking; for example, the Holocaust demonstrates the corruption and corruptibility of the architectural tradition from the classical Athenian orders to the modern movement. Reason is revealed by the Holocaust to be contaminated, and the great contaminator, the Holocaust itself, becomes the actuality against which the history, methods and results hitherto of reason are assessed. The Holocaust provides the standard for demonic anti-reason; and the Holocaust founds the call for the new ethics.

In the architectural version of this argument developed by Robert Jan van Pelt in his book written with Westfall, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Historicism* (1991), Auschwitz plays a special role. At the other five death camps in Poland, all the buildings were destroyed by the Nazis; at Auschwitz, the only death camp which was also a labour camp, 250 buildings or their remnants remain to this day. The Nazi retreat in the face of the advancing Russian army was too hurried for them to be destroyed – only the four crematoria were blown up. In the architectural argument, Auschwitz is called a ‘post-historical city’, and is shown gruesomely to fulfil the five functions of the classic model of the five-square city – Athens. These five functions are said to be veneration of the dead, celebration of the future, government, which concerns the active present, dwelling, which concerns the passive present, and sustenance or trade. In the same order, the Athenian *stelai* or grave markers are said to correspond to the Nazi racial laws; the *acropolis* or shrine is said to correspond to the crematoria; the *agora*, *stoa* or *portico* are said to correspond to the roll calls; the *domus* is said to correspond to the barracks; the *taberna* or *emporium* to the part of the camp known by the inmates as Kanada, because it was the store for the precious belongings brought with them on the transports by Jews who believed that they were to be settled in new lands, in new communities. I shall return to assess this strange, functional argument later.

Since 1990, I have been acting as one of a number of consultants to the Polish Commission for the Future of Auschwitz – a deeply equivocal nomenclature. This Commission was set up by the Polish Ministry for Culture in 1990, when the Polish government had just taken over the running of the museum and site of Auschwitz from the Soviet Union for the first time since the end of the war. Our continuing brief, in meetings which have taken place in Oxford, Krakow and Auschwitz, has been twofold. One, to advise the museum staff on the restructuring of the museum at Auschwitz I. The exhibitions in the former barracks have remained unchanged for thirty-six years and were originally designed to document Nazi crimes in a way which legitimised Soviet Communism. Two, to advise on the organisation of visits to Auschwitz II Birkenau, the twenty-acre camp, three kilometres from Auschwitz I, with the infamous selection ramp, men's and women's camps, and the ruins of the four crematoria, built by the Nazis from scratch on the site of the demolished Polish village of Bzézinka.

On average, there are 750,000 visitors a year to Auschwitz, the overwhelming majority of them teenagers. No one under the age of thirteen is allowed on the site. We have been asked to reconsider the balance of cognitive, political, emotional and spiritual experience, which might be induced by the way a visit to the camp is organised. This reflection needs to be translated into the exhibitions at the museum at Auschwitz I and into the way visits are routed through Auschwitz II Birkenau. As it is currently organised, the main exhibition at the museum traumasises people so much that they never get to Birkenau, or if they do, they spend very
little time there, even though it is by far the more important site.

This work at Auschwitz, 'the future of Auschwitz', raises in an acutely direct and practical way the question of the relation between knowledge and power. Are our attempts at independent critical reflection merely another stage in the culture industry which Auschwitz has become? While each consultant was invited on an individual and international basis, we soon became aware that our work is taking place in a theatre where Polish, American and Israeli interests clash. A number of Holocaust museums are currently being opened in America, the grandest of which in Washington DC was opened last year. We were horrified to learn that these museums have been outbidding each other for the acquisition of the last remaining, original, wooden barracks from Auschwitz-Birkenau. The Holocaust has become a civil religion in the United States, with Auschwitz as the anti-city of the American political community.

Working at Auschwitz has, however, convinced me that the apparently intransigent and expiatory opposition between reason and witness, between knowledge/power and new ethics, or between relativising explanation and prayer, protects us from confronting something even more painful, which is our persistent and persisting dilemma, and not something we can project onto a one-dimensional, demonic rationality, which we think we have discovered. New Jerusalem, the second city, is to arise out of Auschwitz, the fourth city, which is seen as the burning cousin – not the pale – of the first city, Athens. Might not this drama of colliding cities cover a deeper evasion – fear of a different kind of continuity between the third city and Auschwitz, which itself gives rise to the ill-fated twins of the devastation of reason and the phantasmagoric ethics of the community? For the perfection of the idealism of the political community is at the same time the perfection of the devastation of theoretical reason and of political action.

IV

Let us approach this third city by reconsidering the fourth city: Auschwitz. A Dutch colleague of mine, who now teaches in Canada, Robert Jan van Pelt, recently spent three months working in the archives of the museum at Auschwitz and living in the town of Oswiecim. Oswiecim is the Polish name for Auschwitz. However, it acquired its German name around 1272 and re-acquired it when it became part of the Austro-Hungarian empire. Auschwitz I was originally a barrack of the Polish army, a cluster of thirty or so well-constructed, brick buildings on the main road out of the town of Auschwitz. The Nazis took over the buildings, added a further brick storey to each and installed the perimeter fencing with the infamous watch-towers. As, today, you drive through the Polish town of Oswiecim, you suddenly come to the Nazi quarter (now inhabited by Poles). It is a town within a town, built in the German vernacular, with homes, schools, churches and a market, a stage-set phantasy of an idealised, gemütlich, familiar, German community.

In the museum itself, my colleague opened and analysed 300 archival boxes of architectural plans which have not been seen since the War – no architectural historian has worked at Auschwitz. Van Pelt has discovered that, before the Nazis began to lose the war, they had prepared plans for the town of Auschwitz to be developed into a major German city. Auschwitz was to become the administrative centre for the Germanisation of eastern Upper Silesia, in the Nazi version of the medieval German ambition to civilise the Slav lands by colonising the territories between the River Oder and the River Bug. The problem which
Max Weber analysed in his famous essay, *Capitalism and Rural Society in Germany*, of replacing the large, moribund, Junker estates of the East with a small-holding, vigorous, independent peasantry, was to be solved by transferring peasant families from Germany through Auschwitz to establish this new blueprint of land tenure to the east. Auschwitz was chosen for this role because of its situation at the hub of railway connections which ramified across Europe – which was why Auschwitz, rather than the other five death-camps in Poland, became the destination for transports of Jews from all over Europe. Unlike the other Polish camps, Auschwitz was planned primarily as a labour camp, and it continued to operate as a labour camp throughout the war.

The extent of the planning was demonstrated by van Pelt last term when he visited Warwick University; he spent three hours showing my MA students, who are taking a course in Holocaust sociology and theology, about 200 slides of plans and photographic material from the museum archive. We saw plans for the Germanification of nature – Polish forests were to be replanted with German trees; plans for German dog-kennels for German dogs; designs for German arm-chairs for off-duty German officials. We saw photographs of German soldiers with large canisters of chemicals fumigating the former houses of Jews who had been transported further east – it was called ethnic cleansing – and then we saw normal, happy, German peasant families sitting comfortably and securely in their new homes. We also heard evidence of inefficiency: of the poor design of barracks causing unplanned disease and death; of theft and improvisation by the Nazis, necessitated by the deficient supply of barbed wire for the perimeter fencing.

Now the argument which might be developed from this kind of evidence that Auschwitz qualifies as a city has a fundamentally different logical structure from the strange argument, which I outlined earlier, that the five functions of the classical city of Athens have their functional equivalent in the organisation of Auschwitz as a death-camp, with the conclusion that the project of classical architecture and of architecture as such is implicated and condemned by Auschwitz. That argument, I suggested, sets Auschwitz up as the measure for demonic anti-reason. It rests on a dubious premise: that the meaning of the city is to be defined transhistorically, according to listed functions, rather than historically, according to the rule of law. According to the functional approach, the built types or forms of the city are classified by their eternally fixed function; according to the approach which would see the city as requiring the rule of law, the variable types and styles of building could be analysed as re-presenting the changing configuration of power and its legitimation. There was no rule of law at Auschwitz; and so, while the camp can be analysed as a social system – for the overthrow of normal expectations by the unpredictable mix of rules and terror required the socialisation of both SS and prisoners into a hierarchy of brutality – Auschwitz cannot be functionalised as a city.

The plans for Auschwitz as the administrative centre for the Germanification of central Poland present a different challenge. These scores of unrealised plans cannot be simply understood as the indictment and condemnation of classic architecture, modern planning or modern rationality as such. That is too easy, and, I want to argue, in its blanket condemnation, too exculpatory, for it eliminates the possibility of any specific investigation into the contingencies of collusion by making collusion already a foregone conclusion. Instead, the plans can be analysed, first, in terms of the attempt to legitimise a colonisation which has a long history in the relation between German capitalism and land tenure in the east, and an even longer history in the German medieval mission.
to the Slavs. Secondly, they can be analysed in terms of the emphasis on political community – the cosy German quarters in Oswiecim, the planned communities of German warrior-peasants in the east which, it was calculated, would have to defend their newly acquired land by force for generations against the Soviet Union. Thirdly, the plans can be analysed in terms of a reassessment of the identity of Auschwitz as a camp: it was designed to provide an endless supply of human slave-labour, and, according to van Pelt, became only secondarily a death camp, when the fresh supplies of labour included persons not suited for work.

Analysis of this kind, as opposed to the refusal of analysis implicit in the demonising argument, does not see Auschwitz as the end-product and telos of modern rationality. It understands the plans as arising out of, and as falling back into, the ambitions and the tensions, the utopianism and the violence, the reason and the muddle, which is the outcome of the struggle between the politics and the anti-politics of the city. This is the third city – the city in which we all live and with which we are too familiar.

Although van Pelt's work is as yet unpublished – he hopes it will be ready for the fiftieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz in 1995 – it already provokes opposition. The discovery of the extent and ambition of the planned colonisation and change in land-tenure to be administered by the development of Auschwitz into a city seems to detract from the master-plan of the Final Solution, the plan to destroy the European Jews, which was carried out, and at Auschwitz, above all. Moreover, as I have tried to demonstrate, this approach also challenges the now-sacralised opposition between demonic reason and new ethics, between old Athens and New Jerusalem. According to that perspective, the new argument would normalise, or at least relativise, the evil which it explains. And why should it not? The answer would be:

because that shows no respect for those who died such terrible deaths, and, that it depends on discredited methods of knowledge, which also expired, as it were, in the gas-chambers. Against this, I discern in this refusal to 'relativise' a deeper fear: that we would then be part of that relativity without there being any overarching law determining our participation. And that would return us to a reflection on the boundaries of the city and the boundaries of the soul, which we would like to think we have overcome in the opposition between Athens and Jerusalem.

Let us return to the boundary wall of the city of Athens – here, just outside the boundary we find mourning women: Antigone, burying the body of her fratricidal brother in defiance of Creon's decree, witnessed by her reluctant sister, Ismene, who urges her to desist in the name of conformity to the law of the city; and the wife of Phocion, gathering the ashes of her disgraced husband, with her trusted woman companion, who, as the look-out, bears the political risk in her own contorted posture.

What is the meaning of these acts? Do they represent the transgression of the law of the city – women as the irony of the political community, as its ruination? Do they bring to representation an immediate ethical experience, 'women's experience', silenced and suppressed by the law of the city, and hence expelled outside its walls? No. In these delegitimate acts of tending the dead, these acts of justice, against the current will of the city, women reinvent the political life of the community.

By insisting on the right and rites of mourning, Antigone and the wife of Phocion carry out that intense work of the soul, that gradual rearrangement of its boundaries, which must occur when a loved one is lost – so as to let go, to allow the other fully to
depart, and hence fully to be regained beyond sorrow. To acknowledge and to re-experience the justice and the injustice of the partner's life and death is to accept the law, it is not to transgress it – mourning becomes the law. Mourning draws on transcendent but representable justice, which makes the suffering of immediate experience visible and speakable. When completed, mourning returns the soul to the city, renewed and reinvigorated for participation, ready to take on the difficulties and injustices of the existing city. The mourner returns to negotiate and challenge the changing inner and outer boundaries of the soul and of the city; she returns to their perennial anxiety.

To oppose new ethics to the old city, Jerusalem to Athens, is to succumb to loss, to refuse to mourn, to cover persisting anxiety with the violence of a New Jerusalem masquerading as love. The possibility of structural analysis and of political action are equally undermined by the evasion of the anxiety and ambivalence inherent in power and knowledge. Why, I asked myself, did the large audience applaud so vigorously at the conference to celebrate the Centenary of Walter Benjamin’s birth, held at University College London, last July, when told by a speaker that the masses have been anaesthetised by mass culture and mass media? What satisfaction, intellectual and political, is there in hearing the affirmation of total control? The active investment in power and anxious projection of it are exhibited in the response of that angry, anarchic audience to the proclamation of their own ineluctable disempowerment. This is to exhibit the same phantastised desire for political community without boundary walls at which to mourn; and without a soul, with its vulnerable and renegotiable boundaries, to bring to wail at those walls.

The hope of evading the risks of political community explains the appeal of one widespread version of the new ethics – the ethics of the other. The thought of the French Jewish philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas, has fast acquired the canonicity in modern philosophy that Maimonides has in medieval Jewish philosophy. His thinking, above all, has made Judaism available to the end of philosophy – philosophy which has discovered that it has no ethics, and which turns to Judaism as the sublime other of modernity. Levinas’s Buddhist Judaism offers an extreme version of Athens versus Jerusalem. Knowledge, power and practical reason are attributed to the model of the autonomous, bounded, separated, individual self, the self within the city, ‘the alliance of logic and politics’. The self, according to this new ethics, cannot experience truly transforming loss, but plunders the world for the booty of its self-seeking interest. To become ethical, this self is to be devastated, traumatised, unthroned, by the commandment to substitute the other for itself. Responsibility is defined in this new ethics as ‘passivity beyond passivity’, which is inconceivable and not representable, because it takes place beyond any city – even though Levinas insists that it is social and not sacred.

This new ethics denies identity to the other as it denies identity to the actor, now passive beyond passivity, more radically passive, that is, than any simple failure to act. But the other, too, is distraught and searching for political community – the other is also bounded and vulnerable, enraged and invested, isolated and inter-related. To command me to sacrifice myself in sublime passivity for the other, with no political expression for any activity, is to command in reseentment an ethics of waving, whereas, as Stevie Smith put it in her poem Not Waving but Drowning.

Nobody heard him the dead man
But still he lay moaning
I was much further out than you thought
And not waving but drowning.
MOURNING BECOMES THE LAW

Stevie Smith drew a picture of him, too: with long, bedraggled tresses falling forward over his torso, erect above the indifferent waves. Without the soul and without the city, we cannot help anyone.

The presentation of this Buddhist Judaism as the sublime other of modernity, as the New Jerusalem, detracts from basic features of Judaism which are directly contrary to Levinas's thinking. First, rabbinic Judaism sees man as God's co-creator, not as creature, but as sublimely passive; secondly, prophetic Judaism stakes itself on transcendent justice that legitimates political activity, and does not place ethics beyond the world of being and politics; thirdly, rabbinic Judaism rests on the study of the law, Talmud Torah: it rests not on the devastation but on the growth of the self in knowledge. Learning in this sense mediates the social and the political: it works precisely by making mistakes, by taking the risk of action, and then by reflecting on its unintended consequences, and then taking the risk, yet again, of further action, and so on. Finally, far from being the sublime other of modernity, Judaism, in all its different modern forms, is immersed in the difficulties of modernity just as much as the philosophy, the sociology and the architectural history which have invested so much in its other-worldly beatification.

Elsewhere, I have tried to develop the idea and analysis of the broken middle in place of the opposition of Athens and Jerusalem (The Broken Middle, 1992). I try to develop the idea and analysis of activity beyond activity, to restate the risks of critical rationality and of political action, in place of this passivity beyond passivity. I do this by presenting the life, thought and politics of three German Jewish women within the political and social crises of their time: for the eighteenth century, Rahel Varnhagen; for the nineteenth and early twentieth century, Rosa Luxemburg; for the mid twentieth century, Hannah Arendt. In her own way, each of these women exposed the inequality and insufficiency of the universal political community of her day, but without retreating to any phantasy of the local or exclusive community: each staked the risks of identity without any security of identity.

Each suffered, struggled, acted and died at the boundary wall of the third city. Three modern women, for each of whom crossing the boundary wall into the city of Berlin was critical in her political and personal formation: I like to think of each of them entering the city, as Rahel Varnhagen had to, at the Rosenthaler gate, and of each returning to mourn and to be mourned at that same Rosenthaler gate – one of the three legal entry-points into the city for Jews in the eighteenth century.

Rosenthal means valley of roses; it is my name – the name that one branch of my family adopted in order to enter German civil society. So with this, I sign and conclude this lecture.