Beginnings of the day – Fascism
and representation

I shall play the Fool to the _sovereignty_ of the rubric ‘Modernity.
Culture and “the Jew”’ hidden in its ethic of ‘non-totalising’ pluralism.

I shall start by questioning what I call ‘Holocaust piety’, evident
across the whole range of responses to Spielberg’s film _Schindler’s List_, and I shall propose instead that we situate ourselves within
what I call ‘Holocaust ethnography’. ‘Holocaust ethnography’
permits the exploration of the representation of Fascism and the
fascism of representation to be pursued across the production, dis-
tribution and reception of cultural works.

The demonstration that Fascism and representation are insepa-
rible does not lead to the conclusion, current in post-modern
aesthetics, philosophy and political theory, that representation is or
should be superseded. On the contrary, the argument for the over-
coming of representation, in its aesthetic, philosophical and politi-
cal versions, converges with the _inner tendency_ of Fascism itself.

Only the persistence of always fallible and contestable repre-
sentation opens the possibility for our acknowledgement of
mutual implication in the fascism of our cultural rites and rituals.
If Fascism promises beginnings of the day, representation exposes the interests of the middle of the day; then the owl of Minerva, flying at dusk, may reflect on the remains of the day – the ruins of the morning’s hope, the actuality of the broken middles.

This chapter falls into three parts: Fascism and Aesthetic Representation, Fascism and Philosophical Representation; and Fascism and Political Representation.

**Fascism and Aesthetic Representation**

*Schindler’s List* has been discussed ultimately in terms of its adequacy as memorial and monument to ‘the Jews’. This involves a deeper argument than the generally agreed point that the film informs audiences, especially young audiences, of matters of which they would otherwise remain ignorant: that it overcomes knowledge-resistance to the Holocaust, a resistance which we know to be growing. Yet, as Freud argued, knowledge-resistance is the first and easiest of the five resistances to overcome. In particular, overcoming knowledge-resistance does not amount to working through the repressed emotions which dominate and inhibit the individual, so as to free the ego and restore effectivity.

At the heart of Bryan Cheyette’s excellent review of *Schindler’s List* (TLS, 18 February 1994), in which he compares the representation of the unequivocally sadistic Nazi, Goeth, with Schindler, *a tabula rasa* on which both the potential for good and evil can be inscribed, lies the following judgement: *Schindler’s List* fails only when it, too [like Keneally’s original fictionalisation *Schindler’s Ark*], becomes a seductive and self-confident narrative at the cost of any real understanding of the difficulties inherent in representing the ineffable (my emphasis). Not surprisingly, one of the published critical replies to Cheyette (Alan G. Gross, *TLS, 18 March 1994*) wholly rejects his nuanced appraisal of the film in the name of this ‘ineffability’, citing Habermas in support:

> There [in Auschwitz] something happened, that up to now nobody considered as even possible. There one touched on something which represents the deep layer of solidarity among all that wears a human face; notwithstanding the usual acts of beastliness of human history, the integrity of this common layer has been taken for granted . . . Auschwitz has changed the basis for the continuity of the conditions of life within history.

It is this reference to ‘the ineffable’ that I would dub ‘Holocaust piety’. How is it to be construed and what is its economics? ‘The ineffable’ is invoked by a now wide-spread tradition of reflection on the Holocaust: by Adorno, by Holocaust theology, Christian and Jewish, more recently by Lyotard, and now by Habermas. According to this view, ‘Auschwitz’ or ‘the Holocaust’ are emblems for the breakdown in divine and/or human history. The uniqueness of this break delegitimises names and narratives as such, and hence all aesthetic or apprehensive representation (Lyotard).

The passage from Habermas indicates a trauma, a loss of trust in human solidarity, that marks the epoch which persists. In this way, the search for a decent response to those brutally destroyed is conflated with the quite different response called for in the face of the ‘inhuman’ capacity for such destruction. To argue for silence, prayer, the banishment equally of poetry and knowledge, in short, the witness of ‘ineffability’, that is, non-representability, is to mystify something we dare not understand, because we fear that it may be all too understandable, all too continuous with what we are – human, all too human.

What is it that we do not want to understand? What is it that Holocaust piety in film and reviews once again protects us from understanding?
In several places in his review, Bryan Cheyette compares Keneally's book unfavourably with the film. The book is said to 'glibly assimilate . . . an unimaginable past in a breathtakingly untroubled manner'. The film is judged to fail when it adopts an analogous filmic style, and to succeed when it has learnt from Primo Levi and from Claude Lanzmann's Shoah: the latter is said to be 'intellectually scrupulous and does not try to represent history in a facile series of cinematic tropes'. Elsewhere, Cheyette has argued that Schindler's List and Shoah are 'mirror images' of each other (TLS, 1 January 1994). I shall return to these comparisons with Levi and Lanzmann.

Keneally's book, I would argue, is not so nice about 'the ineffable'. The work is sceptical about the limitations of its own narrative, and, implicitly about the response of the reader. It opens with the dinner party at Commandant Goeth's attended by Schindler: 'Yet the revulsion Herr Schindler felt was of a piquant kind, an ancient exultant sense of abomination such as in a medieval painting, the just show for the damned. An emotion, that is, which stung Oskar rather than unmanned him' (p. 17). Oskar's, and, by implication, the reader's, participation even in revulsion in what is called 'the corrupt and savage scheme' of a capitalism dependent on slave labour, organised by a system of camps is, indeed, blithely, you could say 'glibly', emphasised. Any good which emerges from these presuppositions will be pragmatic and contingent; it will not be radical.

The book draws attention by litotes to further occasions for our 'ancient, exultant sense of abomination' when it describes the 'philosophic innocence' (p. 136) of Schindler in calling out 'one name', in saving one man (and, by implication, in saving 1,000) from the cattle wagon during the deportation that threatened to deprive him of his office manager, Abraham Bankier. The ruthless-ness of saving one or 1,000, and in our exultant participating in that narrowly bounded victory, is facetiously contrasted with the Talmudic blessing, which is cited at the beginning of the book, not at the end, as in the film, that 'he who saves the life of one man saves the entire world' (p. 52). The book makes clear the pitiless immorality of this in the context: the film depends on it as congratulation.

In the book, political, cultural and religious differences within the formerly dispersed, so-called Jewish 'community' are reflected in the threatening character of the Jewish police, while the progressive brutalising of the Jews is manifest in the growing viciousness of the Jewish police to their people. The contagion of violence spares no one, whether the violence of collaboration or the violence of resistance; yet this is barely evident in the film.

The direct killing of individual children is eschewed in the film. Thus an episode from the book is excluded in which Schindler is 'unmanned'. During the liquidation of the ghetto, he watches the killing of a mother and son within the sight of the tiny, overwise girl in the red coat, who has also been rounded up. Schindler understands the indecency of exposing her to the shootings as the seal of her fate, too. He becomes acutely aware of the indecency of his own status as he stares down from a safe position. In the film, Schindler, a ludicrous saviour on a charger, dominates the liquidation from a promontory overlooking it. The audience is thereby spared the encounter with the indecency of their position.

The parallels between the family backgrounds of Amon Goeth and Oskar Schindler are brought out in the book. Both Austrian Catholics from undistinguished families, they are said to be each other's 'dark brother'. The comparison makes the reader's task harder in figuring out the reasons for the difference between what
Keneally cynically calls their ‘reversible appetites’, the difference in the individual outcome of their common origins.

Such plasticity of history, such pragmatics of good and evil, such continuity between the banality of Schindler’s benevolence and the gratuity of Goeth’s violence, should mean that the reader, and, pari passu, the audience, experience the crisis of identity in their own breasts. Instead, we enjoy vicarious revulsion at the handsome sadist, Goeth, who appears invincible in the film, but is imprisoned much earlier on in the book, and we applaud the bon-vivant Schindler in his precariously outwitting of him.

However, it is the beginning and the end of book and film which diverge most profoundly. The book charts Schindler’s ‘progress’ in the pragmatics of good and evil under the Talmudic irony of saving the entire world by saving one or 1,000 (the Talmud is ironic – the most ironic holy commentary in world literature: for no human being can save the world). At the end of the book, the presenting of the gold ring to Schindler, made from dental bridgework, which we saw earlier, in other circumstances, and knew to be extracted from the dead, marks ‘the instant in which they [Schindler’s Jews] become themselves again, [the instant] in which Oskar Schindler became dependent on gifts of theirs’. The book leads away from Talmudic irony: the film culminates in it and transforms it into brutal sincerity.

While the film informs us in a legend that Schindler’s subsequent businesses and marriages failed, it does not make clear, as the ‘Epilogue’ to the book does, that Schindler thereafter never ceased to be the creature of his Jews. He travelled initially to Latin America with some of them, and was financed there in his various enterprises by them. And when he returned to Europe, he divided his time between penury in Frankfurt, relieved by his former Jews, and an annually celebrated mendicancy in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, where he lived on the charity of his former Jews. This ‘epilogue’ brings out the master’s dependence on his bondspeople at every previous stage in the story. The book, therefore, implies the incipient autonomy of the bondspeople; the film progressively mythologises hero, villain, survivors – the just and the damned.

After the scene of the excursion to Auschwitz, the film is degraded: the salvific waters which issue from the shower heads, as Bryan Cheyette points out, cause a crisis in the viewer who is suspended at the limit of the decency of witness. I would suggest that, from that point, there is no decent position: water not gas – to show the death agonies would exceed the limit of permissible representation; but water not gas induces the regressive identification (‘philosophic innocence’?) with the few women who are saved. It is no coincidence that, from then, Schindler (whose visit to Auschwitz is only conjectural) becomes a demi-god, and the film degenerates into myth and sentimentality.

The sentimentiality of the ultimate predator.

If the book is ‘glib’, it is because the story it tells is glib – the ironic, sustained glibness of the style is its integrity: it leaves the crisis to the reader.

The film depends on the sentimentiality of the ultimate predator. It makes the crisis external: on first viewing, one is perpetually braced in fear of obscene excess of voyeuristic witness. This crisis is not the crisis of representation: it is the crisis of the sentimentiality of the ultimate predator, whose complacency is left in place and wilfully reinforced by the last half hour of the film.

In a nature film, we could be made to identify with the life cycle of the fly as prey of the spider, and we could be made to identify with the life cycle of the spider as prey of the rodent. We can be made to identify with the Peking Opera singer who is destroyed by the Cultural Revolution, and we can equally be made to identify
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with the rickshaw man, for whom the Cultural Revolution was 'the beginning of Paradise'. It is only the ultimate predator whose sympathies can be so promiscuously enlisted. Only the ultimate predator who can be made to identify exclusively and yet consecutively with one link or another in the life cycle, because she can destroy the whole cycle, and, of course, herself. Since she is the ultimate predator, she can be sentimental about the victimhood of other predators while overlooking that victim's own violent predation; and she may embellish her arbitrary selectivity of compassion in rhapsodies and melodramas.

The limits of representation are not solely quantitative: how much violence, or even, what kind of violence, can 1, and should 1, tolerate? More profoundly, the limits of representation are configurative: they concern the relation between configuration and meaning.

It is my own violence that I discover in this film.

Schindler's List betrays the crisis of ambiguity in characterisation, mythologisation and identification, because of its anxiety that our sentimentality be left intact. It leaves us at the beginning of the day, in a Fascist security of our own unreflected predation, piously joining the survivors putting stones on Schindler's grave in Israel. It should leave us unsafe, but with the remains of the day. To have that experience, we would have to discover and confront our own fascism.

The comparison with Primo Levi's If This is a Man and Claude Lanzmann's Shoah will not help here. For the same limitations apply to the way in which they have been discussed. Bryan Cheyette contrasts Schindler's List with Shoah in two contrary ways: on the one hand, Shoah does not, like Schindler's List, represent every aspect of the apparatus of genocide with a 'facile series of cinematic tropes'; on the other hand, Schindler's List translates Lanzmann's Shoah, 'the best cinematic account [of the Holocaust] available' into his own rendering (op.cit.). Subsequently, Cheyette contrasts Lanzmann's 'modernist scepticism' with Spielberg's 'popular realism and sentimentality' (TLS, 1 April 1994). Other discussions of Shoah use categories of 'witness' and 'testimony' uncritically in relation to the unknowable and inconceivable.¹

However, Shoah raises questions of the interestedness of memory and recall on the part of the interviewer and the interviewed. While it does not rely on the filmic immediacy of fictionalised narrative, it depends on verbal narrations and representations which raise the same questions of the limit of representation. This is not the question of the limit of veracity, or of decency and obscenity in the representation of the past. It concerns the positioning of all categories of participants. The very form of question, respondent and historical referent, object of the agony of recall, imply a discrete object of attention, bounded, identified and located in the past. Yet it may be that the means of representation, prima facie, continuous with what they are interested in? This is to propose a critique of pure cinematic reason, where reason would examine its own nihilism, nihilism its own reason. Maybe only a film could explore this hermeneutic circle . . . I do not think that Shoah is 'sceptical': it is not self-referentially sceptical about its own means and form of representation.

The humane, temperate, restrained prose of Primo Levi's representation and witness did not protect or save him from the unexpressed ways in which he felt irrevocably contaminated by his experience, even though he knew that he had been effective in disseminating its witness. His notion of 'the grey zone' in The Drowned and the Saved comes nearest to capturing his sense of
the collusion between executioner and victim. It can be compared with Tadeusz Borowski's account in the selection published under the title *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen* (1967). Borowski was a Pole but not a Jew, who killed himself in 1951. His account of being a prisoner in Auschwitz deals with many things which Levi spares us. Above all, Borowski represents himself, a deputy Kapo, as both executioner and victim, and deprives the distinction of all greatness and pathos. While Borowski never denies his ethical presupposition— for otherwise not one sentence could have been written—he makes you witness brutality in the most disturbing way, for it is not clear—Levi always is— from what position, as whom, you are reading. You emerge shaking in horror at yourself, with yourself in question, not in admiration for the author's Olympian serenity (Levi).

Let us make a film in which the representation of Fascism would engage with the fascism of representation. A film, shall we say, which follows the life story of a member of the SS in all its pathos, so that we empathise with him, identify with his hopes and fears, disappointments and rage, so that when it comes to killing, we put our hands on the trigger with him, wanting him to get what he wants. We do this in all innocent enthusiasm in films where the vicarious enjoyment of violence may presuppose that the border between fantasy and reality is secure. Put starkly like this, this fantasy of a Nazi *Bildungsfilm* seems all too resistible, for the identity of the protagonist has been revealed in advance. If his future allegiances were not known, why should it not be possible to produce a dialectical lyric about such a character?

Compare, for example, Dina Wardi's important book *Memorial Candles: Children of the Holocaust* (Hebrew 1990, trans. 1992) with Joachim Fest's *The Face of the Third Reich* (German 1963, trans. 1970). Wardi reports on the psychology of children, most of whom were born to camp survivors in 1946. Fest explores the psychology of around twenty leading Nazis. Fest produces a political psychology of Nazism, while Wardi is concerned with the internalised psychic pathologies of children of camp survivors. Yet, the books tell the same story: that impotence and suffering arising from unmourned loss do not lead to a passion for objectivity and justice. They lead to resentment, hatred, inability to trust, and then, the doubled burden of fear of those negative emotions. This double burden is either turned inwards or outwards, but both directions involve denial. It is the abused who become the abusers, whether politically as well as psychically may depend on contingencies of social and political history.

We have seen the film, read the book, which represents this story: a film about violence in which not one blow is cast, a deeply erotic film in which not even a wris is visible: the Merchant-Ivory film *Remains of the Day*, based on the novel of the same title by Kazuo Ishiguro. This film explores the ethics of the dedicated service of the head butler—the servant, the bondsman—to a Lord, who tries, from 1923, to lead the British political class to support the Nazi movement, and then the Hitler government. While the story concerns the British class structure, it depicts the attractions of, and arguments for, supporting the Nazi cause to the Lord, and it examines the collusion of the servant in his master's politics.

The servant finds himself in the contradiction of the ethic of service. The career of true service is not solely domestic excellence, but advancement to the employ of the noblest Lord, the morally humanitarian Lord, the Lord who himself most serves the general good. However, once the pledge of service has been vowed to the Lord thus elected, it is staked on disinterested, unquestioning commitment. This commitment presupposes the
inviolable integrity of the Lord’s relation to his counterparts, the international confraternity of diplomatic and governing classes, still drawn in Europe in the 1920s and 30s from the old aristocracies.

The film shows that the dilemma of this inspired and blinkered service, the idealism of which permits a lifetime of total restraint and discipline, arises out of and issues in a personality which is loveless, and which wards off and refuses love. The incapacity of the British upper classes and their servants to impart the facts of life to the next generation (Lord Darlington asks Stevens to communicate these matters to his god-son) is palpably linked to their common inability to express and work through emotion.

The film is almost unbearably moving because it breaks the barrier of passive sobriety or sentimentality of witness, and induces active recognition in oneself of the nihilism of disowned emotions, and the personal and political depredations at stake. To achieve this kind of representation, the film centres on the drama of the relation between the butler, Stevens, and the housekeeper, Miss Kenton. In the book, the political framework and the butler’s story are more evenly balanced.

The attractions of German Nazism are present in microcosm in the organization of the aristocratic household as a fascist corporation. The members of that corporation are free in their initial pledge of loyalty, but become unfree in their consequent total rescinding of the right to criticise. They have espoused the ideal of dignity as unstinting service to the noble Lord, and have rejected the idea of dignity as the liberal, representative notion of citizenship, or as the struggles of socialism. These contrasting ideals of dignity emerge clearly towards the end of the story in the discussion in the pub to which Stevens is involuntarily drawn. In the book, the analogies between the structure and incapacities of the soul of the servant and those of the household and the state are equally foregrounded. In the film, the loveless upbringing of the servant, confessed by his father on his deathbed, is substituted for his unexplained conviction of having inherited the benign but exacting notion of selfless service from his father in the book.

Now, of course, this is not a representation of mobilised Fascism, which breaks the barrier between the fantasy of revenge and the carrying out of murderous feelings on arbitrarily selected scapegoats by joining a movement which has publicly abolished the distinction between fantasy and political action.

The servant bears the burden of his passions: the idea of dignity as restraint, avoidance of ‘unseeming demonstrativeness’ – the notion of corporate dignity which threatens to rob him of all liberal dignity – leads him equally to make ‘mistakes’ in his professional, political and personal life. He bears this burden in a heart which distends to breaking point in his meeting with Miss Kenton, married for many years, when he, once again, restrains himself even in the face of her quasi-confession of undying passion. This moment of controlled but excruciating pain in film and book is not his salvation. But it gives him the remains of the day – ‘dignity’ minimally reassembled out of the ruins of ideals, out of pieces of broken heart (‘the remains’). In the book, the servant resolves to aspire to the idea of human warmth: to be practised by cultivating a bantering, ironic form of civility – the liberal tempering of his former unrelieved servility – towards his new American ‘Lord’ (‘the day’).

This film dramatises the link between emotional and political collusion. Without sentimental voyeurism, it induces a crisis of identification in the viewer, who is brought up flat against equally the representation of Fascism, the honourable tradition which could not recognise the evils of Nazism, and the corporate order
of the great house, and the fascism of representation, a political
culture which we identify as our own, and hence an emotional
economy which we cannot project and disown.

The ultimate predator is not suspended in a saddle on a charger,
overlooking from a promontory, with a piquant revulsion, with the
ancient, exultant sense of abomination, such as, in a medieval
painting the just show for the damned, or joining the queue of sur-
vivors. Instead of emerging with sentimental tears, which leave us
emotionally and politically intact, we emerge with the dry eyes of
a deep grief, which belongs to the recognition of our ineluctable
grounding in the norms of the emotional and political culture
represented, and which leaves us with the uncertainty of the
remains of the day.

FASCISM AND PHILOSOPHICAL REPRESENTATION
The representation of Fascism leaves the identity of the voyeur
intact, at a remove from the grievous events which she observes.
Her self-defences remain untouched, while she may feel exultant
revulsion or infinite pity for those whose fate is displayed. She
experiences those medieval passions which do not ‘unman’ her.
But we are not medi evals, we are moderns: our moral will defends
our particular interests, while we try to eschew those experiences
which expose the common threshold of the will with both our
vulnerable singularity and our hesitant universality.

The fascism of representation, beyond the limit of voyeurism,
provokes the grief of encountering the violence normally legitim-
ised by the individual moral will, with which we defend our own
particular interests, and see only the egoism of the other – these
may be interests of disinterested service, race, gender, religion,
class. This grief expresses the crisis of the dissolution of particular
identity and the vision of the universal. Across the unprotected
exposure of our singularity, of our otherness to ourselves, we sense
the ‘we’, which we otherwise so partially and carelessly assume.

This range of response, the representation of Fascism and the
fascism of representation, is inherent in the media of representa-
tion.

Philosophy would abolish representation. The translation of
modern metaphysics into ontology involves, first and last, the
overcoming of representation as the imperium of the modern
philosophical subject, and as the false promise of universal poli-
tics. Heideggerian and post-Heideggerian ontology seeks to
replace the hubris of the metaphysical subject, which, in its
abstract self-representation represents itself to itself, or, as the will,
actualises itself, infinitely in any object, by an ontology of finite
beings. The giving of Being to beings, who live and die, contrasts with
the subject of representation, abstracted from the finitude and vicissi-
tudes of existence. Ontology claims to open up themes to which
the self-confident subject of philosophy is impervious: the abyss,
anxiety, care.

According to ontology, the discourse of individual rights
depends on this metaphysics of the subject, for the idea of uni-
versal human and civil rights is founded on the assumption of indi-
viduals present to themselves, and therefore to others, as self-relating, so that difference is only the moment overcome in the
assertion of abstract identity. This notion of political representa-
tion is said to have its failure built into it. For what can be
acknowledged is only the other as self-related in identity, or only
difference within self-relation, but not difference proper.

In one recent version of ontology, evil is understood as radical
This flies in the face of the tradition of neo-platonic Christianity,
according to which evil is merely the deprivation of good (*privatio boni*), and has no independent reality. According to this tradition, only good is radical. Hence Hannah Arendt's analysis of Eichmann in terms of 'the banality of evil' implies a reassertion of the tradition of the radicality of the good. (What I have called 'the banality of Schindler's benevolence' amounts to an ironic comment on that tradition.) In the new ontology, evil is the insistence in the face of existential groundlessness on a foundation, the refusal of the abyss. (This argument seems to me to be a typical *privatio boni* argument.) Insistence on ground is said to be the process involved in the Nazi myth of racial superiority.

However, this 'positivity of evil' in its generality becomes indistinguishable from what would be the evil of any positing. Hegel's labour of spirit, which tarries with the negative, knows its freedom only in destruction, and 'secures its self-presence in recollection', is made indistinguishable from evil, once evil is defined as the flight from groundlessness. The *positivity of evil* cannot be distinguished from the *evil of the positive*, since there is no way of distinguishing between flight from ground into the *fixity* of self and other identity, and an initial self-identity which discovers itself to be *fluid* not fixed, which encounters the violence towards the other in its initial self-definition, and undergoes transformations of the initial identity. Ontology can only read experience as identitarian. 'The life of spirit is not one that shuns death, and keeps clear of destruction; it endures death and in death maintains its being.' Ontology sees only the obscene colonising of death in this; for it cannot admit that the subject has any actual experience: that in its posited particularity it may be constantly exposed to *the aporia* - not the self-identity - of its particularity with the singularity and the universality of itself and others.

In its desire to escape the murderous complacencies imputed to representation, ontology, however, falls into paradoxes of its own invention. It must employ the resources of language, that is, the premises of representation, in its attempt to speak ontologically. This accounts for the linguistic licence associated with ontology and its offshoots, post-structuralism and post-modernism. It also produces the crisis of post-ontology, 'beyond Being', as the discourse of Being itself inevitably comes to be perceived as yet another objectification of Being, as self-identical or positive, and hence as partaking in the positivity of evil. Heidegger's Nazism becomes evidence of this insufficient radicalising of the metaphysical tradition, which is intrinsic to the medium of radicalisation itself. The result of these self-perpetuating inversions is that the question whether the ontological relinquishing of representation displays *the same impulse* as the politics it espoused cannot be pursued. (The Jews, after all, were destroyed not for their pretensions as political subjects, but for their sheer existence, their belonging to Being.)

Post-modern ontology misrepresents the development of modern philosophy. For philosophy has *abolished itself in two quite different ways* in response to the claim of the moral autonomy of the philosophical subject. It has *aestheticised* itself in the ontological replacement of critical philosophy, which finds its way to Being via the aesthetics of the sublime. And it has *politicised* itself. By this I do not mean the scientific or utopian method of socialism. I do not mean to set out once again the apparent opposition between nihilism and rationalism.

I mean to draw attention to a construal (which I could call Hegel or Nietzsche) which has expounded the autonomous moral subject as free within the order of representations and unfree within its preconditions and outcomes, and modernity as the working out of that combination. Ontology asserts the contrary: that the subject is
unfree within representation, and, understood as Dasein, ‘free’ beyond its presuppositions and outcomes. In the approach which I contrast to ontology, the nihilism of power is related to the positivity of legal and rational authority by a methodology which is *alive to its implication in both nihilism and reason*, and which *does not know the outcome in advance*. The sovereign subject is not dethroned in the name of the ineffable singularity of Being, but released for the perilous adventures in the always precarious configurations of rationalised domination. In these adventures, the moral will guarding its particular interests is confronted by the excess which it comes to know as its singularity and universality.

If fascism is the triumph of civil society, the triumph of enraged particular interests, then the subject of representation does not need to be superseded: the danger of its experience needs to be exposed. And the same danger will be the means of exposition. Otherwise we remain at a beginning of the day.

**FASCISM AND POLITICAL REPRESENTATION**

In the course of three years we have moved from Francis Fukuyama’s congratulatory and despairing *End of History and the Last Man* (1992) to the despair of Edward Luttwak’s ‘Fascism is the Wave of the Future’ (*LRB*, 7 April 1994). The revolt of ‘the last man’ provides the fatal connection.

The resurgence of Fascism in political bodies with a tradition of liberal constitutional government (Italy) needs to be distinguished from its development in those without such a tradition (Russia, where the Party was the ruler of the USSR). Speculation concerning the proclivity to Fascism in a political body with no history of Fascism (Luttwak speculates about the United States in these terms), needs to be distinguished from its renaissance in political bodies which have a history of Fascism.

It is important to distinguish between fascist movements, fascist seizures of power, fascist governments, and the general thesis that the post-Second World War world has assimilated fascist characteristics into state and society. Whereas in the thirties, fascist movements seized power, what we may be witnessing now is the transition from endemic fascism to the new seizure of power.

If fascist movements and the fascist seizure of power imply the leadership principle, mass mobilisation, mix of legality and terror, then the so-called ‘Fascist state’ implies, in addition, abolition of political parties, rights, representation and voluntary associations, the corporate state, legal-irrational bureaucracy, mix of policing by rule of law and by terror, nationalism and racism. ‘Endemic’ fascism has been analysed in terms of ‘the culture industry’, ‘the administered world’, and the continuities of everyday life in Germany from the 1930s to 1950s – all dramatic overstatements, designed to defamiliarise modern familiarities.

The representation of Fascism and the fascism of representation presupposes the definition of the modern, liberal state as *the monopoly of the means of legitimate violence*; it is thus able to explore the changing configurations of violence and legality on which fascism in all its modes relies. This is not therefore to advance the new teleology of Auschwitz, that all rationalisation is violence. Here, the inquiring voice presupposes its own implication in the stakes of reason and power, and does not know the outcome in advance.

The thesis of the ‘individualization of social inequality’ has been developed by Ulrich Beck as characteristic of what he calls ‘the risk society’ (*Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, trans. 1992). In this society, risks that were formerly absorbed by classes and by families are now borne by individuals, whose lives do not unfold within, and are not protected by, those traditional
categories. As a sociological thesis, this is to offer a description of political ideology as the explanation of social structural change. However, the social consequences of the political conceptualisation of individuals as tax-payers and consumers, and not as workers are critical. As workers, we are all, in fact, increasingly subject to insecurity of employment across the occupational structure, to worsening, systematic, class inequality, which, however, we do not understand or express in terms of traditional class identities and allegiances.

Libertarian ideology masks the concentration of the monopoly of legitimate violence in the centralised state, which, formerly, was effectively delegated and dispersed across the quasi-independent institutions of the middle. And it masks the unleashing of the non-legitimate violence of individualised civil society, which is provoked by the systematic inequality arising from that concentration. Fascist movements seek the monopoly of non-legitimate violence: that is why they require the rule of law, which they also undermine. They seek to overturn the age-old impulse and wisdom of politics: that to guarantee my self-preservation and the protection of my initially usurped property, I must grant the same guarantees to the persons and property of others. Fascist movements want universal law to apply so that they may have no rivals in their use of non-legitimate violence. They represent the triumph of civil society, the realm of individual need, the war of particular interests. They exploit the already partisan mediation of the instrumentalised universal – the epitome of what Hegel called 'the spiritual-animal kingdom'. This is how it is possible to anticipate that states which combine social libertarianism with political authoritarianism, whether they have traditional class parties or not, could become susceptible to fascist movements.

The representation of Fascism and the fascism of representation contrasts equally with classic and revisionist Marxism, and with Orientalism, the politics of identity.

Marxist theory implies that political practice follows from the analysis of class structure and class interests. This does not mean the derivation of 'ought' from 'is', but that the universal interest is generated in the dynamic of capitalist development itself. There is, nevertheless, room for action, because if theory and practice are inseparable, they also strain towards each other, as classes-in-themselves become classes-for-themselves in the circumstances of crises of overproduction. The proletariat is represented as the potentially universal class, the class which may genuinely claim that its particular interests correspond to the universal interest. The question 'What ought I to do?' is valid within the mesh of theory and practice. Some of my students still pose it: whatever the particular class position of the individual, they yearn to find the mode of effective political action which will necessarily further the universal interest.

The representation of Fascism and the fascism of representation invalidates this approach. Marxism tends to assume that the intellectual, individual or class is somehow innocent of political practice until the theoretical work is accomplished, and the relation between particular and universal interest clarified. According to the representation of Fascism and the fascism of representation, the will to power is already engaged as a political will. We are already politically active, whether or not we embrace programme, party or movement. We are always staking ourselves in the representation of Fascism and the fascism of representation throughout the range of quotidian practices and cultural rituals – when we go to the cinema, for instance.

This differs equally from Orientalism or the politics of identity.
The representation of Fascism and the fascism of representation does not work with the opposition between the agent of imperial domination and the oppressed other. It points out that 'the other' is also agent, enraged and invested; while the idea of the monolithic, imperialist agent amounts to the consolidation and reification of power, the dilemma of which is thereby disowned. The representation of Fascism and the fascism of representation does not oppose the idea of totalising power to the degrading of its others, nor does it propose cultural pluralism as its expiation. It understands all agents in power and out of it to face the dilemma of asserting their moral will solely to guard their particular interests.

For politics does not happen when you act on behalf of your own damaged good, but when you act, without guarantees, for the good of all – this is to take the risk of the universal interest. Politics in this sense requires representation, the critique of representation, and the critique of the critique of representation.

Thus I play the Fool to the sovereignty of the rubric which assembles us: 'Modernity, Culture and “the Jew”' with its freighted and fraught agglomeration of terms.

Yet we have had trust enough to tarry.
Now, dare I hope: it is slightly later in the day.

The general ground for comedy is therefore a world in which man as subject or person has made himself completely master of everything that counts to him otherwise than the essential content of what he wills and accomplishes, a world whose purposes are therefore destroyed because of their unsubstanciality. Nothing can be done, for example, to help a democratic nation where the citizens are self-seeking, quarrelsome, frivolous, bumptious, without faith or knowledge, garrulous, boastful and ineffectual: such a nation destroys itself by its own folly.

Hegel is keen to distinguish the merely laughable from the comical in the sequel to this passage from page 1,199 of the English translation of his Aesthetics.¹ We may laugh at any contrast between subjective caprice and insubstantial action, while vice and evil are not in themselves comic: 'There is also the laughter of derision, scorn, despair, etc. On the other hand, the comical as such implies an infinite light-heartedness and confidence felt by someone raised altogether above his own inner contradiction and not bitter or miserable in it at all; this is the bliss and ease of a man who, being sure of himself, can bear the frustrations of his aims.
on our endurance of the negative and, hence, its movement. The crescendo of active affirmation of eternity in 'be ever dead in Eurydice' places the nihilistic moment of shattering glass in determination, for it rings and resounds. Endurance and eternity meet in this instant, and they issue in the further command, now warranted: 'Be – and at the same time know the terms of negation.' This knowledge does not fall into the opposition of mastery/passivity: it acknowledges the negative as it moves beyond eternal loss to eternal confirmation, and adds itself, without count, to the teeming mass of natural declining determinations.

The rhetoric of virtue, virtue alive to the negative, is discernible in the pathos of syntax, where eternity shines through violence, where transcendence percolates immanence.

This death is not nothing.
I may die before my time.
The Saints are ever failing from the earth and Christ is all but coming.

Without commandment or simple negation, the syntax of this surely heterodox and humorous aphorism from John Henry Newman celebrates the absence-presence of the eternal in figuration – both verbal and earthy.

The falconer is ever failing from the falcons, the Second Bethlehem is all but coming.
Paradise is ever failing from the earth and the wasps are but all coming.

Thanks to Nabokov for that last little inversion of 'all but'.
What time occurs between this 'ever failing' and this 'all but coming'?

My time and yours,
Time to praise all others –
Placeable and unplaceable time

NOTES

1 AThenis And Jerusalem
A version of this chapter was first delivered as the author's Inaugural Lecture at the University of Warwick, 15 February 1993. It was first published in Social and Legal Studies, vol. 3, 1994, 338-48.

2 Beginnings of the Day
This chapter was first prepared for the conference 'Modernity, Culture and "the Jew"', Birkbeck College, University of London, May 1994.

3 The Comedy of Hegel
This chapter was originally prepared for the conference 'Modernism: Politics, Poetics, Practice', King's College, Cambridge, July 1993. A version was first published in Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain, no. 29, Spring/Summer 1994, 14-22.
2 I refer here to Nietzsche's argument that 'complete nihilism is the necessary consequence of the ideals entertained hitherto'; it involves the active transvaluing of values as opposed to passive and incomplete nihilism, 'its forms: we live in the midst of it.' (See The Will to Power,


4 MIDRASH AND POLITICAL AUTHORITY

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8 *The Yale Review*, 51, 52, 53.


10 ‘Religious Literacy’, 32.


13 ‘Religious Literacy’, p. 29.


