

INTERVENTIONS IN CONTEMPORARY  
THOUGHT

To my family,  
as well as to all of my friends and mentors who have cultivated  
practices of intervention

INTERVENTIONS IN  
CONTEMPORARY THOUGHT  
History, Politics, Aesthetics

Gabriel Rockhill

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## NOTE ON SOURCES

All of the texts printed below are circumstantial pieces anchored in specific moments and debates. I made an effort to keep modifications to a minimum in order to preserve the specificity of their conjunctural inscriptions. This is particularly important to emphasise in the case of chapters dealing with living philosophers (such as Badiou and Rancière). Updating these in order to integrate more recent publications would have required significant revisions, and the intellectual gain would have been minimal or none at all (particularly because their basic positions on the topics discussed have not changed). Moreover, it is true that I do not currently agree with all of the nuances of every individual position taken in the chapters below. However, attempted interventions always carry a certain risk with them, as well as their own specific historicity, and it is important for this project to accept both of these.

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- Chapter 6: ‘La Démocratie dans l’histoire des cultures politiques’, in Jérôme Game and Aliocha Lasowski (eds), *Jacques Rancière ou la politique à l’œuvre* (Paris: Éditions Archives Contemporaines, Collection ‘Centre d’Études Poétiques’, 2009), pp. 55–71. All rights reserved. Republished by permission.
- Chapter 7: ‘Recent Developments in Aesthetics: Badiou, Rancière and their Interlocutors’, in Alan Schrift (ed.), *The History of Continental Philosophy*, vol. 8: *Emerging Trends in Continental Philosophy*, ed. Todd May (Durham: Acumen Press, 2011), pp. 31–48. All rights reserved. Republished by permission.
- Chapter 8: ‘The Politics of Aesthetics: Political History and the Hermeneutics of Art’, in Gabriel Rockhill and Philip Watts (eds), *Jacques Rancière: History, Politics, Aesthetics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), pp. 195–215. All rights reserved. Republished by permission.
- Chapter 9: ‘The Forgotten Political Art *par excellence*? Architecture, Design and the Social Sculpting of the Body Politic’, in Nadir Lahiji (ed.), *The Missed Encounter of Radical Philosophy with Architecture* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), pp. 19–33. All rights reserved. Republished by permission.





## *Introduction*

# WHAT IS AN INTERVENTION? METAPHILOSOPHICAL CRITIQUE AND THE REINVENTION OF CONTEMPORARY THEORY

### INTERPRETATION AND INTERVENTION

This book is the result of a longstanding concern with the status and modalities of contemporary theoretical practice and, more specifically, the ways in which it engages with the intertwining themes of history, politics and aesthetics. Written over the course of nearly a decade, all of the chapters testify – to varying degrees and from diverse vantage points – to a profound and unresolved malaise with many of the established models of philosophical thinking. They each address particular issues and were written in specific contexts, as well as in two different languages and cultural milieus (francophone and anglophone). For this reason, they can very much be read autonomously. However, they all bear the marks of an ongoing preoccupation with the logic of practice of intellectual work, as well as with the possibility of radically reconfiguring it. In the pages that follow, I would like to tease out some of these deeper methodological concerns, as well as articulate the ways in which they contribute to a rethinking of the historical relationship between art and politics.

One of the central preoccupations of this book can best be described in terms of a heuristic distinction between two types of theoretical practice. An interpretation, first of all, abides by the rules of an established discourse. It works within the general normative, praxeological and epistemological framework of an institutionalised set of activities. An intervention, by contrast, seeks to contest these operative norms and guiding parameters in order to introduce alternative forms of intellectual practice. There are, of course, varying degrees of interpretation and intervention. The major difference between them remains, however,

that an interpretation plays by the rules of a recognisable social ritual, whereas an intervention challenges them.

The activity that we might schematically refer to as normal theory strongly encourages the work of interpretation, and a weighty set of institutional mechanisms, social norms and professional pressures profoundly and often imperceptibly format intellectual work. These forces are anchored in a deep history that has normalised particular activities in which a set of self-evident givens has become sedimented. Interpretations, as innovative as they may be, nevertheless work within the implicit and unquestioned boundaries of a particular theoretical universe. Interventions, insofar as they seek to tap into a largely imperceptible scaffolding in order to reconfigure the very parameters of intellectual activity, are generally discouraged by the institutional apparatus. In fact, there are often powerful gatekeepers who maintain the sanctity of particular theoretical endeavours by refusing, dismissing or sidelining those who raise questions about the very nature of the social game that is being played. Interventions are therefore inherently dangerous, and even incendiary, not only because they call into question the rules of consecrated rites and customs (and those who benefit from them), but because they risk provoking the indiscriminate repression and suppression of those who undertake them.<sup>1</sup>

Since these are heuristic labels, it is important to insist on the fact that they have their source in a socially and historically specific theoretical proposition that is, itself, a form of intervention. These are not natural objects or transhistorical forms, but rather conceptual schematisations that, within the current conjuncture, hold the promise of gaining traction over the contemporary field of intellectual activity. In other words, they are specific tools for practical leverage rather than conceptual absolutes or rigid binary categories. In this regard, it is also essential to recognise that they are open to social negotiation, and that they are relational phenomena in the sense that their assessment depends on one's vantage point. There is no pure form of interpretation, nor is there something like a crystalline intervention. These pragmatic terms, as I propose to understand them, refer to an entire gamut of possibilities. Regarding interpretations, for instance, some are certainly more consensual than others, and there are often social values affiliated with those that appear more inventive within a certain spectrum. In theoretical circles, for example, new interpretations are often valorised as impressive forays into a particular game. However, these remain

spectacular moves on a well-trodden playing field. Interventions, by contrast, seek to change the nature of the game by shifting the very terrain upon which one plays. This is not simply a matter of questioning presuppositions or thinking otherwise for what is ultimately at stake is changing the structural conditions of possibility of thinking and thereby altering the very activity of thought. In other words, interventions are never purely intellectual endeavours or thought experiments. They are practical incursions into the social rites and rituals of theoretical work.

Providing examples of interventions is a particularly delicate task because they are always forays into specific domains.<sup>2</sup> There is no such thing as an intervention in itself, which could be captured by an ideal exemplar, since any intervention is necessarily related to and intertwined with a given conjuncture. Its very comprehensibility requires, in fact, that it be socially legible (at least for some). It is, as the etymology of the term itself indicates – *intervenire* and not simply *venire* – a coming *between, in or among*. It needs to gain leverage *inter* a particular field of forces, to get a grip on them, to latch on. In challenging the rules of sanctified rites, an intervention thereby has to walk a fine line by putting forth alternative practices that ‘come’ from elsewhere and simultaneously attempting to gain traction over the situation into which it comes. It is in this sense that an intervention is never a purely speculative proposition, a leap of faith, or a philosophic programme invented from scratch. It is an anchored struggle to immanently reconfigure a socially and historically specific set of practices. Such reconfiguration is not, moreover, intermittent or ephemeral but requires a patient and resolute construction of alternative practices, communities and institutions.

In titling this book *Interventions in Contemporary Thought: History, Politics, Aesthetics*, it was not my intention to suggest that interpretation should be a thing of the past. This is an important practice for developing theoretical possibilities within particular parameters. However, there are socio-historical conjunctures that beckon for broader and riskier engagements that can potentially displace or even reconfigure the norms of intellectual practice. In the current case, there is no presumption to have invented something that is entirely new or to have magically reset the historical stage. The essays that follow have clear and identifiable limits, and they do not pretend to present a project that has sprung forth all at once, fully formed, from the mind of an isolated individual. Instead, they evince a trial and error method

of struggle within and between particular intellectual communities, as well as a nomadic but resolute trajectory from the time of my doctoral studies and teaching in France to my present work in the American academy. Crossing and cutting across the roads of established social practice, they attest, above all, to an ongoing effort to chart out – in collaboration with a number of diverse theoretical projects, intellectual groups and alternative institutions – an orientation that parts ways with many of the extant models of intellectual life. It is in this sense that the title indexes the dual objectives that structure the book as a whole, even if certain aspects of these objectives still remain beyond the reach of the analyses that follow, like beacons on the horizon that beckon for future work. On the one hand, it aims at intervening methodologically in order to call into question a specific set of regularised activities and propose concrete alternatives, in part by drawing on important, but often less visible, counter-practices. On the other hand, it attempts to intervene thematically into a particular set of debates on history, politics and aesthetics. On both of these fronts, some of the essays are more interventionist than others. Indeed, in certain instances, it was necessary to articulate my claims in very close proximity to established hermeneutic strategies, and there is certainly still a place for this. Nevertheless, the overall thrust of the studies that follow is in the direction of a reconfiguration and reinvention of contemporary theoretical practice.

#### ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE DISCIPLINES AND THE CONSTITUTION OF CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY

The disciplinary matrix, in our day and age, plays a crucial role in the formation and perpetuation of the institutionalised norms of intellectual life. Interesting interpretive work can be and is done within it, but the deep-seated conventions of the social rituals in place tend to function as structural givens. A given, it should be noted, is not the same thing as a presupposition. Whereas the latter refers to a theoretical assumption that could be made explicit, the former is a constitutive aspect of practice that is never questioned (or rather which cannot be questioned without seriously interrupting the practice itself, for it is akin to the act of pulling an intellectual emergency break). One of the significant limitations of much of the work that is referred to as interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, transdisciplinary, cross-disciplinary or pluridisciplinary is

that the givens of the disciplinary matrix largely remain intact. Certain presuppositions might be questioned or challenged, but the deep normative, praxeological and epistemological structures of disciplinary practice often remain the unquestioned playing field upon which these presuppositions are interrogated. As the terms themselves suggest, like many of the other neologisms that have been introduced, theoretical work is done between, across or within a plurality of disciplines, but the very categories of knowledge claims remain largely unaltered. There is a horizontal engagement in which one attempts to move between disciplines or even break down the walls that separate them. However, this type of lateral movement nonetheless tends to take them as given elements of the very practice of thinking.

Interventions, insofar as they affect the material practices of intellectual life, cannot avoid, at a certain level, incursions into the normalising procedures of disciplinary matrices (at least within our socio-historical conjuncture). Disciplines themselves have, of course, been forged over time and are largely bound up with the intricate history of the institutionalisation of knowledge. They have changed significantly over the years, and they are intertwined in important ways with a larger social, political, economic and cultural world. They are also deeply anchored within the institutional habitus of intellectuals. For all of these reasons, a vertical engagement is necessary that mines the disciplines in order to unearth both the deep history of their formation and their profound incorporation into the pre-theoretical dispositions of intellectual practitioners. Such a task aims at plumbing the depths by undertaking both an archaeology of the disciplines and an ethnology of ourselves, thereby introducing much-needed distance from present practices.<sup>3</sup> Rather than seeking a facile exit strategy, like many of the horizontal movements between or amidst disciplines, vertical engagements recognise that changing the disciplines is not like moving partitions or repainting walls, because the only real way out – which is a relative term – is actually down and through. Since disciplines are so profoundly anchored in the powerful institutional structures that sanction intellectual work and are intimately intertwined with the pre-theoretical inclinations shaping subjects, archaeological and ethnological work is necessary to reveal the historical contingency of these naturalised frameworks and bring to light the interstices in which one can gain leverage over them. This opens space, at least potentially, for architectonic displacement rather than sophisticated sidestepping.

Let us consider the case of contemporary philosophy, which in many ways is the result of a deep reconfiguration of the disciplines over the last two and a half centuries. The rising power and social prominence of modern natural science was one of the forces that significantly altered the field of philosophic inquiry. Whereas the practice of *philosophia* prior to the eighteenth century, and particularly the late eighteenth century, included what we would today qualify as scientific investigations into the natural world, philosophy today is no longer coextensive with what is now called science. To take but one noteworthy example, it is revealing that a seventeenth-century philosopher like Descartes wrote extensively on topics of natural science, and that these writings were considered a quintessential part of his *philosophia*. In our day and age, in spite of a renewed interest in cultivating a historical understanding of Descartes's scientific writings, it is still widely assumed that Descartes's philosophy was essentially expressed in so-called properly philosophic texts like the *Meditations* and the *Discourse on Method*. As I have argued in some detail in *Logique de l'histoire: Pour une analytique des pratiques philosophiques*, the very nature of philosophy as a theoretical practice has changed in the course of a few short centuries. It not only ceded the rigorous study of the 'natural world' to the so-called hard sciences, but it also gradually lost the stability of fixed reference points in the metaphysical realm (as well as in the socio-political world).<sup>4</sup> This is, of course, an extremely complex issue, and there was no overnight sea change, but we can say for the sake of argument that metaphysics became – at least within certain circles – an increasingly problematic field of inquiry. Moreover, the relative stability of the socio-political world and the naturalised structures of the *ancien régime* were called into question by modern social revolutions, as well as by significant changes ushered in by the so-called Industrial Revolution, the growth of modern capitalism, the expansion of colonisation, and so forth.<sup>5</sup>

It is within this context that institutions of higher learning began to take on their modern form and a new disciplinary matrix slowly emerged, in a complex force field of agencies that followed no simple pattern. The social sciences pushed through the widening crack between the natural sciences and the humanities, institutionally encroaching or building upon the territory occupied by philosophy. Indeed, as the Gulbenkian Commission has pointed out regarding the historical construction of the social sciences, 'it was primarily within the faculty of philosophy (and to a far lesser degree within the faculty

of law) that the modern structures of knowledge were to be built'.<sup>6</sup> These new forms of analysis aimed at developing secular, systematic and empirically verifiable knowledge to account for the diverse features of a changing social world. The modern practice of history, for instance, parted ways with the tradition of chronicles – which focused on the works of supposed great men within a logic of repetitive exemplarity and circular temporality – by establishing largely linear accounts of an increasingly autonomous, denaturalised, archived, empirically verified and more 'egalitarian' past.<sup>7</sup> Economics, political science and sociology proposed novel tools of analysis that could help account for some of the transformations ushered in by industrial capitalism, modern nation-states and new social struggles. Although figures like Vico, Montesquieu, Rousseau and Wollstonecraft could surely be seen as forerunners, it was really through the course of the nineteenth century – especially the latter part – and primarily the early twentieth century that the social sciences consolidated their modern scientific form and were institutionalised.<sup>8</sup> It was also during this time that two other social sciences emerged in order to examine the supposedly undeveloped or underdeveloped regions of the world. Anthropology was formed, in part, in order to study groups perceived to be undeveloped, often lacking modern forms of technology and living in tribes. Since these peoples were frequently under real or virtual colonial rule, anthropology was seen as being able to provide 'information that could make the governors more cognizant of what they could and could not do (or should not do) in their administration'.<sup>9</sup> Orientalism developed as a discipline that focused on major civilisations outside the modern Western world – such as Persia, the Arabic-speaking world, China and India – that had purportedly arrived at a certain stage of development but never advanced to what is called modernity.<sup>10</sup> The new disciplinary framework, which of course included other fields as well, was enmeshed within the cultural structures of Euro-American colonialism, and it was generally assumed – explicitly or implicitly – that different disciplines were necessary to study the 'modern, developed world' than to analyse 'undeveloped' or 'underdeveloped' regions of the planet.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, as Immanuel Wallerstein has powerfully argued, the three social sciences forged for the analysis of contemporary life in the modern Euro-American world<sup>12</sup> – economics, political science, sociology – are founded on the presumption that one can meaningfully distinguish between three relatively autonomous spheres, which



is one of the key tenets of liberalism: the market, government and civil society.<sup>13</sup> These can be studied, or so it is assumed, by privileging the present, whereas the past remains the special domain of historians. The modern disciplines are thus not only rooted in a very specific politico-cultural geography, but they are also bound up in important ways with a temporal distribution as well as a precise compartmentalisation of communal life. The world is at least implicitly aligned on a linear trajectory leading from the deep past still supposedly present elsewhere (anthropology and orientalism) to the authentic past qua past of the West (history), and finally to a largely dehistoricised present more or less frozen into three distinct spheres of social existence (economics, political science, sociology).<sup>14</sup> A rarely questioned meta-knowledge thereby undergirds the historical constitution of these fields of inquiry. This does not mean, of course, that all of the work in these areas can be reduced to the factors highlighted above. It is true, moreover, that many important changes have occurred since the mid-twentieth century, and numerous contemporary social scientists have sought to struggle against the inherited distribution of knowledge.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, for the continuation and intensification of this struggle, it is vital not to lose sight of the role that the larger politico-economic and cultural world played, and continues to play, in their development.<sup>16</sup>

It is within this changing social and institutional landscape that philosophy took on one of its modern forms in the Euro-American world. As a practice, it was increasingly embedded within institutions of learning, and the question of its shifting relationship to other institutionalised fields of inquiry – from the natural sciences and theology to the emerging historical social sciences (not to mention the traditional practical disciplines of law and medicine) – became crucial, as we will see.<sup>17</sup> Whereas many of the figures identified as major European philosophers in the seventeenth century exercised their professions outside of the academy, philosophers from the end of the eighteenth century increasingly worked as professors and teachers of philosophy.<sup>18</sup> This brought with it significant changes in the fields of inquiry as well as in the very activity of philosophical reflection. The structure and format of classes, the establishment of an institutionalised canon, the solidification of teachable narratives, the exigencies of the accreditation of thinking, the expansion of specialised publications, the formation of unique intellectual communities, the centralised and often circular audience of members of the academy, the branding of academic profiles

and the political economy of ideas, the institutional competition with other disciplines – all of these factors and many more contributed in various ways to formatting extremely unique practices of philosophical reflection. These were intertwined, moreover, with a vast expansion of the archive. Through the increased availability and circulation of the written word, the development of modern libraries, the immense work of translators, the growth of the publication industry and other such phenomena, there was greater access to the texts of philosophic history.

It is within this force field, which is obviously much more complex than these few remarks might suggest, that the early forms of what is now called continental philosophy emerged. Although a lot more could be said about this, including the fact that there is not really a single practice of continental philosophy but rather a constellation of theoretical activities grouped under a problematic heading, I would like to simply highlight three features of the disciplinary configuration of these practices that will be important for what follows. To begin with, it is at this point in time that philosophy largely became a historical discipline in the sense that the very act of doing philosophy came to be increasingly identified with that of providing historical accounts of the work of past philosophers. In general, these narratives have been premised on forging a specifically Western tradition of philosophy, most often with an origin in ancient Greece, a characteristic modern turn around Descartes, and an end in the work of the philosophers recounting such stories. Secondly, philosophy gradually became a hermeneutic enterprise in which one of its primary tasks came to be that of interpreting the major texts of an established canon. Thirdly, the very practice of philosophy, at least in certain circles, morphed into an activity best described as exegetical thinking: philosophers think precisely by *thinking through* the canonised works of the past. These three changes have by no means followed the trajectory of a simple, linear development instigated by a sudden sea change. Moreover, there have been, and there continue to be, rival theoretical practices within the discipline of philosophy. Nevertheless, one of the major constellations of contemporary theoretical practice is indeed characterised by a historico-hermeneutic orientation in which philosophic thought in the present is intimately intertwined with reading and rereading the canonised texts of the past masters.

Although a number of problems plague this orientation, as we will see, it is important to recognise that this specific type of theoretical

practice has particular advantages when it is well done. It can cultivate historical sensibilities, foster critical acumen in the meticulous analysis of texts in their original languages and promote intellectual practices that recognise the extent to which we are deeply enmeshed in the traditions informing our thought and practice. In relation to purely presentist philosophic practices, as well as those that ignore – often with an explicit but uncanny pretension to scientificity, as if excluding evidence was a sign of analytic rigour – the specificity of formulations and context in the name of abstract arguments, hermeneutic and historical approaches can provide extremely powerful tools for critically resituating ourselves, the work with which we engage, and philosophic claims in general.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, one of the major contributions of this philosophic modality is its critical dimension. It has refined various strategies for taking distance from established systems – not only systems of thought, but also political, economic, cultural and social structures – in order to critically interrogate their conditions of possibility, their presuppositions, their limitations, their exclusions. It is not the least surprising, in this regard, that one of the richest traditions of so-called continental philosophy has developed coextensively with various forms of critical theory, radical political economy, feminism, critical philosophy of race, decolonial thought, queer and trans theory, crip theory, animal studies, environmental philosophy, and so forth. This is probably one of the reasons that it has been institutionally marginalised, as Linda Martín Alcoff powerfully argued in her Presidential Address to the American Philosophical Association's Eastern Division Meeting in 2012.<sup>20</sup> Certain forms of what might more appropriately be called dialectical philosophy favour processes of investigation that remain open-ended, reflexive and potentially non-conclusive, and which are thereby capable of powerfully challenging any limits imposed on inquiry, including those of culturally specific notions of scientificity and their purported social and political neutrality.<sup>21</sup> The task of reinventing contemporary theory can – and I would argue *should* in the current conjuncture – draw on these resources in order to cultivate a deep critical sense of its colonisation by other forms of knowledge, as well as by social, political and economic forces.<sup>22</sup> Far from naively seeking to make it into the queen of the disciplines, such an endeavour aims at reinvigorating philosophic practice as not only the gadfly of disciplined thought but also the potential midwife for alternative theoretical practices.<sup>23</sup>

basic intellectual tools. It is necessary to intervene in such a way as to reconfigure the theoretical equipment and methods that we have at our disposal, for it is precisely the forging of new instruments, novel practices, different intellectual communities and ultimately alternative institutions that will allow us to reinvent contemporary theory.

#### NOTES

1. See Pierre Bourdieu's excellent essay on 'The Philosophical Institution', which concludes with the following lines: 'Thus, it is on condition that they take what is indeed the greatest possible risk, namely that of bringing into question and into danger the philosophical game itself, the game to which their own *existence* as philosophers, or their own participation in the game, is linked, that philosophers can assure for themselves the privilege that they almost always forget to claim, that is to say their freedom in relation to everything that authorises and justifies them in calling themselves and thinking of themselves as philosophers' (Montefiore (ed.), *Philosophy in France Today*, p. 7).
2. It would nonetheless be tempting to cite – as reference points for discussion rather than quintessential instances – Michel Foucault's account of the work of Marx and Freud as 'initiators of discursive practices [*fondeurs de discursivité*]' (Bouchard (ed.), *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, p. 131). They did not simply author works, according to Foucault, but they produced 'the possibility and the rules of formation of other texts' (p. 131). In the vocabulary used here, we might then say that they intervened in such a way as to create new spaces of practice, which gave birth to entire traditions. Foucault's own work – like the activities of the early Frankfurt School – could equally be seen as an intervention, though arguably of a different sort, that has contributed to the transformation of the very 'practice of thinking' via a 'de-disciplination' that has opened up new territories, methods and objects of analysis (see Ádám Takács's excellent analysis in 'Between Theory and History: On the Interdisciplinary Practice in Michel Foucault's Work'). We could add to the list of references for discussion the contributions made, in various ways, to the forging of new models of intellectual activity by figures such as Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, Cornelius Castoriadis, Luce Irigaray, Samir Amin, Cornel West, Arundhati Roy, Anibal Quijano and Angela Davis.
3. Since traditional ethnology is often founded on an epistemological separation between the knower and the known, the subject of thinking and the object of action, this ethnology of ourselves might equally be described as a reverse ethnology, meaning an ethnology of the ethnographers.

4. On this point, see Gusdorf, *Introduction aux sciences humaines*, particularly pp. 346–7.
5. All of these changes were not unrelated to what we might call, in conceptual shorthand, a general temporalisation of the world. See Loren Eiseley's important work on this theme, including *Darwin's Century: Evolution and the Men Who Discovered It* and *The Firmament of Time*. Ernst Cassirer's *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* is also a valuable source to consult.
6. Wallerstein et al., 'The Historical Construction of the Social Sciences', p. 7.
7. See Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, Hartog, *Régimes d'historicité*, Koselleck, *Futures Past*, Rancière, *Les Mots de l'histoire*, and Ziolkowski, *Clio the Romantic Muse*.
8. See Gusdorf, *Introduction aux sciences humaines*, Karsenti, *D'une philosophie à l'autre*, Manicas, *A History and Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, Wagner, *A History and Theory of the Social Sciences*, and Wallerstein et al., 'The Historical Construction of the Social Sciences', pp. 12–13.
9. Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis*, p. 8. Also see Asad, *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*, McGrane, *Beyond Anthropology*, and Wallerstein, *Unthinking Social Science*.
10. Although I am here drawing on Wallerstein's depiction of orientalism, Edward Said's magisterial work on the subject, *Orientalism*, which extends well beyond the discipline of orientalism, remains a crucial reference point.
11. There would, of course, be much more to say about other disciplines, such as geography and psychology, and all of these developments varied according to place and time. However, for the sake of concision, I have followed the general parameters put forth by the Gulbenkian Commission.
12. More specifically, these have as their common concern primarily five geographic regions, which correspond to the five colonial powers: France, Great Britain, the United States, and the territories that would later be called Germany and Italy.
13. See Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis*, p. 6: 'dominant liberal ideology of the nineteenth century insisted that *modernity* was defined by the differentiation of three social spheres: the market, the state, and the civil society. The three spheres operated, it was asserted, according to different logics, and it was good to keep them separated from each other – in social life and therefore in intellectual life.' See also 'The Present in the Light of the *Longue Durée*: Dialogue with Alfredo Gomez-Muller and Gabriel Rockhill', in Rockhill and Gomez-Muller (eds), *Politics of Culture and the Spirit of Critique*, pp. 98–112.
14. Despite painting in broad strokes at times and not developing a more radical politico-economic critique, Dipesh Chakrabarty's criticisms of 'historicism' and the deep-seated assumption that Europe is the sovereign

subject of all histories constitute an important contribution to the task of rethinking the disciplines: *Provincialising Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*.

15. The list of such endeavours would be too long to cite in full, but let us signal in passing the work of subaltern studies, postcolonial and decolonial theory, world-systems analysis and the 'ontological turn' in contemporary anthropology. In the last case, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's forceful and innovative invitation to think anthropology as the 'permanent decolonisation of thought' is particularly noteworthy (*Cannibal Metaphysics*, p. 4).
16. Bruno Karsenti rightly emphasises the various ways in which the social sciences also empowered citizens with new tools of analysis, although this is arguably at the risk of significantly downplaying their negative effects. See *D'une philosophie à l'autre*, as well as the discussion of the book that took place on 11 July 2014 at the Critical Theory Workshop in Paris.
17. The precise topography of the institutional landscape, as well as the delimitation of the disciplines, depends on the specific socio-historical force field in question. Immanuel Kant's *Conflict of the Faculties*, for instance, provides revealing insight into the institutional struggles – between theology, law, medicine and philosophy – in the German-speaking world at the end of the eighteenth century. Theodore Ziolkowski has provided an enlightening institutional analysis of the same conjuncture in *German Romanticism and Its Institutions*.
18. See Levi, *Philosophy as Social Expression*, p. 166: 'From the birth of Francis Bacon in 1561 to the death of David Hume in 1776 – that is, for two hundred years – not one first-rate philosophic mind in Europe is permanently associated with a university.'
19. Kwame Nkrumah and Herbert Marcuse have both forcefully lambasted the conformism inherent in logicist and consensual practices of philosophy, which have not surprisingly been widely sanctioned and supported by mainstream institutions. They clearly have in mind some of the dominant forms of philosophy in the anglophone world. Nkrumah highlights, for his part, the social contention operative – explicitly or implicitly – in philosophy prior to the twentieth century and then writes: 'It is therefore not a little amazing that in the twentieth century, Western philosophers should largely disinherit themselves and affect an aristocratic professional unconcern over the social realities of the day' (*Consciencism*, p. 54). Marcuse fixes his sights on ordinary language philosophy and its extensions: 'Paying respect to the prevailing variety of meanings and usages, to the power and common sense of ordinary speech, while blocking (as extraneous material) analysis of what this speech says about the society that speaks it, linguistic philosophy suppresses once more what is continually suppressed in this universe of discourse and behaviour. The authority of philosophy gives its

blessing to the forces which *make* this universe' (*One-Dimensional Man*, p. 175).

20. Alcott, 'Philosophy's Civil Wars'.
21. There are some good arguments in favour of abandoning the expression 'continental philosophy', with all of its Eurocentric connotations (see, for instance, Maldonado-Torres, 'Post-Continental Philosophy'). It is nevertheless important to recognise that it operates as a social signifier within a larger force field, and that much of mainstream anglophone philosophy would welcome its disappearance or dissolution through internal critique, thereby allowing it to colonise the small remaining place that it precariously preserves within certain institutions. In this sense, thinkers like Amy Allen (in personal conversation) have made the equally significant argument that it can be necessary, in certain instances, to maintain the expression 'continental philosophy' as a – perhaps poorly named – place-holder for alternative spaces of thinking.
22. 'Today', as Alcott poignantly asserted in 'Philosophy's Civil Wars', 'philosophy in the flesh has its back against the neo-liberal wall by those forces who want to know what value we add to higher education.'
23. These alternative practices need not necessarily be limited, of course, to ones inscribed within the historical and hermeneutic orientations of so-called continental philosophy.
24. The emergence of what is called analytic philosophy around the turn of the twentieth century surely cannot be separated from the ambition to modify the legitimate realm of philosophic activity, in part by at least partially calling into question this historical and hermeneutic orientation in the name of an examination of logically true statements in the present (which is largely modelled on certain scientific practices). This is not to suggest that we can thereby rely on a simplistic opposition between two different traditions (some philosophers trained in the 'analytic' tradition do the history of philosophy, and many of those trained in 'continental' philosophy engage with 'analytic' work), but rather that we need to be attentive to deep shifts in theoretical practice. It is also not to imply that the investment in identifying logically true statements in the present is purely laudable. The metaphilosophy of this practice is in dire need of a critical investigation that is as expansive and deep as it is structural and political. Although it is unfortunate that he does not seriously engage with the work of Frances Stonor Saunders and others on the minute details of the cultural Cold War, John McCumber has nevertheless made an important preliminary contribution to this project by foregrounding some of the links between the institutional domination of analytic philosophy, which began in the US in the early 1950s, and the post-war conservative hegemony summed up under the label 'McCarthyism'. 'The McCarthy

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