

Negation, Affirmation, the New

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Peter Osborne

New or not new: that's the question which is asked of a work from both the highest and the lowest points of view. From the point of view of history, and of curiosity.
– Friedrich Schlegel, *Athenaeum Fragment*, no. 45 (1798)

The history of philosophy means that we evaluate not only the historical novelty of the concepts created by a philosopher but also the power of their becoming when they pass into one another.
– Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* (1991), p. 32.

What follows are the first two parts of a three-part paper; the (dialectically crucial) third part – ‘Production and Announcement, or, the Inverted Temporalities of Act and Understanding’ – must await another occasion.

1. Problem and Context

What follows are some preliminary thoughts on reconfiguring the relations between two starkly opposed modern European philosophical traditions – broadly, the post-Hegelian and the anti-Hegelian – by re-examining them in the light of their relationships to a common problem: namely, the conceptualization of *the new*. It is thus a presupposition of what follows, first, that ‘the new’ is a philosophical concept, and second, that it is a problematic one – indeed, symptomatically so. These two presuppositions distinguish the two traditions I

have in mind from other, more analytical and scientific traditions in European philosophy, for which ‘history’ is not a central philosophical issue (or even, for some, a philosophical issue at all), and ‘the new’ is consequently not the site of a philosophical problem. For, I shall maintain, ‘the new’ is pre-eminently a category of the philosophy of history, as well as of the philosophies of politics, economics, culture and art. Indeed, it is *the* central category of the philosophy of history of modernity, articulating the relations between those other fields – within which it is *art* that is symbolically privileged, for its institutional embrace of the principle of the historically new (avant-garde, modernism, etc). The temporality of the new *defines* modernity, philosophically, as an historical epoch. Competing conceptions of the new thus serve not only to situate philosophies within the field of the philosophy of history, but also to indicate their differing positionings of that field within broader sets of parameters, such as, for example, those of the concept of nature, and the more basic ontological categories of being and becoming.

Thus, while for post-Hegelian modernists like Benjamin and Adorno, the concept of the new problematizes and transforms the concept of history – rendering it messianic and aporetic, respectively – in contrast, for an anti-Hegelian like Deleuze, it would seem, ‘the question of the new ... *takes the place of* the question of history’.¹ This is one marker of the ontological monism (one might call it a kind of naturalism) of Deleuze’s thinking of time. On this account of Deleuze, ‘difference’, ‘life’, ‘event’ and ‘the new’ become ultimately synonymous. Competing conceptions of the new stand at the crossroads of the philosophy of history and the philosophy of time, struggling over the possibility of ‘history’ as a philosophical concept. Also located at this junction, is that most politically crucial of issues, the *theorization of the future*. For in philosophico-political terms, there is a future to the extent to which there is *qualitative historical novelty*, not merely in the sense of new

occurrences or new ‘events’ (whatever ‘events’ may turn out to be – which is a significant issue here), but in the sense of changes in the dynamics of historical temporalization that effect the existential-ontological character of the human itself – for it is changes of that kind that the concept of history is ultimately required to support. In Negri’s phrase, time is the ‘material from which communism is constructed’.² But quite what ‘time as material’ is here remains obscure. This is perhaps the point at which Deleuze’s Nietzsche and his Bergsonism pull in opposite directions.

At this level of abstraction, then, there is a problematic of the new common to, or at least overlapping between, philosophical trajectories as different as, for example, those of Adorno and Deleuze. In still-extremely-broad but more historically specific terms, each charts a post-Romantic philosophical form forged, in part, by reflection on conjunctions of Marx, Nietzsche and modernism. It is as a result of this formation that each philosophizes the new, albeit in radically different ways.

One important result of modernity’s subjection of history to the temporality of the new is a transformation in the concept of tradition – and hence the sense in which one may speak of philosophical traditions in modernity – post-Hegelian versus anti-Hegelian, for example, in this case. Philosophical traditions cease to be best understood as forms of intellectual continuity forged by the intergenerational transmission of authoritative texts, principles and procedures, and become self-consciously retrospective constructions of continuity *over-determined by the perceived needs of a conjunctural philosophical present* – the products of paradoxical ‘choices’ of philosophical authority, willing different philosophical (and so also social) futures. That is, they become genealogical, in a strong Nietzschean/Foucauldian sense: subjected to, as well as providing the means of articulation for, what Foucault called critical ontologies of the present. Heidegger, Benjamin and Deleuze

are all prime examples of such constitutively genealogical historians of philosophy; although the fate of Heidegger's thought, and of phenomenology more generally (which was for Heidegger 'philosophical *modernity*'), also furnishes the main example of a regression to received authority within philosophical modernity, via certain proto-Catholic institutional forms. (This is an ironic recuperation of the prehistory of Heidegger's philosophical modernism in its internal relations to the 'system of Catholicism'. Heidegger was a theological modernist first, a philosophical modernist second, and a pagan onto-theologian third.)

The genealogical subjection of history to the present is, at the same time, its subjection to the problematic of the subject. For the primary determination of the philosophy of the subject lies not (as might be thought) in its relations to 'consciousness' and 'reason' but in its relations to time – ultimately, this is true even of Kant himself.³ It was through the mediation of the concept of the subject that the problematic relationship between reason and modernity as a form of historical time was played out in early nineteenth century philosophy – paradigmatically, in Hegel, in the self-positing and reflective self-appropriation of *spirit* (*Geist*), that (rational) substance that is 'equally' subject.⁴ For the subject of modernity is a collective one. As Ricoeur has put it: the 'full and precise formulation' of the concept of modernity is achieved only 'when one says and writes "our" modernity.'⁵ And one can say and write 'our' modernity philosophically only by positing an 'I that is We and We that is I'⁶ as its speculative subject. 'Modernity' became a philosophical concept at the point at which it came to denote the experience of this subject: 'history' in the collective singular. However, it becomes the central category of the philosophy of history – transformed into a philosophy of historical time – only *after* the critique of Hegel's absolute, within which, its critics insist, time is ultimately abolished. (Ricoeur himself actually ultimately favours this annulment over

modernity, making the options in the philosophy of history quite clear: modernity *or* the philosophy of religion. There is no third way.).⁷ Schematically, we may say that: modernity becomes the central category of the philosophy of history via *the extraction of the formal structure of temporal negation from the totalizing narrative of necessary development* in Hegel's philosophy of history. This formal structure of temporal negation extracted from teleological narratives of necessary development *is* the new. *Modernism* – as an ism – may be understood as the collective *affirmation* of this formal temporal structure of the new. As such, the concept of the new finds certain of its problems foreshadowed in Hegel's philosophy, problems to which those 'philosophies of the future' that succeeded Hegel – principally Nietzsche's – may be read as a response. These concern, principally, the concept of negation and its relationship to affirmation.

More generally, three questions are raised by the critical confrontation of opposing way of understanding the relations between these two concepts: (1) In what sense can dialectical philosophy survive its recognition of the non-dialecticizable status of its ground (namely, materialism)? I.e. how can there be a 'dialectical materialism'? Adorno would say, 'only as a negative dialectic'; materialist dialectics, but no dialectical materialism. (2) Conversely, in what sense can any anti-dialectical philosophy escape the dialectical recuperation of its opposition to dialectics (via the conceptual character of all thought)? (3) Can the suspicion of a deeper convergence between the two traditions, to which these first two questions give rise, lead to anything more than their mutual self-dissolution into a common ontological ground, leading, at the level of experience, to something like Blanchot's account of Bataille's 'interior experience' as 'limit-experience': that 'experience of non-experience' which 'frees all human possibilities from their meaning', including 'the capacity for dying': the experience of a negation 'that no longer has anything to negate', but which is

nonetheless affirmed as such. [207–10] Freed from all dialectical relations to the negated, could *this* negation be the new as such? And if it were, would we still value it? Bataille offers an alternative – mystical and erotic, rather than Christian – phenomenology of Hegel’s absolute. Not phenomenology versus the Logic (the standard contest of neo-Kantian Hegelianism; transmuted into ‘Western’ versus ‘Soviet’ Marxism); but phenomenology *of* the absolute: Hegelianism ‘without reserve’ (Derrida).

When I speak of ‘two modern European philosophical traditions – the post-Hegelian and the anti-Hegelian’ – then, I refer to two highly constructed competing philosophical lineages (provisionally, we shall say, dialectical and anti-dialectical), which, in their current form, were constructed in France during the *1960s*, in the light of philosophy in Europe since the 1920s, projecting their philosophical antipathies back to the period of the mid 19th century (1830–1870s). Moreover, since 1968, it has increasingly been in the name of the ‘new’ itself that this division has been made and legitimated. Thus, from the standpoint of the anti-Hegelian vanguard, not only was Hegelianism/dialectics/orthodox Marxism (sutured here into a single subject) ‘antiquated’, in its relations to both the philosophical and the political present, it was its conception of the new *as* the product of a dialectical negation that was the primary marker of this antiquation: source of an alleged structural inability to think the so-called ‘radically’, rupturally or ‘creatively’ new. Philosophies of difference, broadly speaking, figure dialectical thought in terms of *identity*, *sameness*, *totality* (all actually dialectically relative terms) in order to credit anti-dialectical philosophies with *difference*, *otherness*, *singularity* and *incompletion*. (For a brief period, a refounded, heterodox ‘Marxism’ survived this critique, via a middle way, by associating itself with a quite different concept of science, but not for long...) Alternatively, from the standpoint of the post-Hegelian position, the anti-dialectical embrace of the new as *pure* difference or *pure* ‘event’

appears as a flight from history (a structuralist or post-structuralist ‘negation of history’) leading, philosophically, only backwards, towards various forms and combinations of ‘the old’: namely, post-Kantian positivisms and onto-theologies of the event. Separating itself out from the Hegelian dialectics that forms the object of the anti-Hegelian antipathy, through the dialectical negation constitutive of its particular afterwardness, the post-Hegelian position identifies itself with new, open or unresolved dialectical forms of experience, be they proto-Romantic (Benjamin), negative (Adorno), or ‘concrete’ (Kosik).

The idea here is not to adjudicate this debate (I am not a neutral observer), but to refigure the relations between the traditions by breaking up their traditionality – that ‘illusion of continuity’ that *is* their continuity (in WB’s phrase); the repetition of certain fixed relations between their component parts – by rearticulating and thereby transforming their conceptual elements; exploiting what, in my epigram, Deleuze and Guattari call ‘the power of becoming’ of concepts ‘when they pass into one another’. The example there is the conjoined production in Kant of new concepts of time, space and the cogito. Here, the suggestion is that one might look towards the *conjoined* production of new concepts of negation, affirmation and the new (although I will not achieve this here). To put it another way: perhaps the new might be made to *work on* and *transform* the concepts of negation and affirmation, from its ambiguous location somewhere *between* the ontological and socio-historical ‘realms’, but without projecting any simple *resolved* sense of the historically ontological – not least because of its radicalization of the problem of the future. It raises the question as to whether ‘history’ is a genuine temporal-ontological category, or the just name for the open totality of positive, empirical manifestations, in time, of forms of being and structures of actualization that are not best understood as themselves temporal/historical, but rather as virtual? (Quote, Alliez, ‘Deleuze’s Virtual Philosophy’, p. 88: ‘the new whose only subject is the virtual – a virtual

whose actual is in turn nothing but a complement or product'.) But what more can there be to such virtualities than the retrospective and imaginary construction of the source of a subject-effect, such a source remaining ontologically unintelligible outside of its theological heritage? These are some of the questions raised by the problematic of the new. But let me return to the new itself.

What is the *problem* of the new? In short, it is very simple: 'How to think the 'newness' of the new?' That is, how to think the new's transcendence of its conditions, as 'novelty', without reducing it to either (i) a relation of negation to those conditions (i.e. a form of dependence), or (ii) the pure transcendence of a quasi-theological 'creation'? In other words, wherein lies the immanent, rather than relational, intelligibility of the newness of the new? Part of the answer is 'affirmation' – the new is *an affirmative mode of negation*, otherwise called (by Nietzsche, Heidegger, Benjamin and Deleuze alike) 'destruction'. This, it would seem, is part of the philosophical secret of modernism's affirmation of the new. But only a part, for while destruction clears the space for the new, how are we account for the positivity that carries its specific or 'determinate' newness? How, precisely, does the *affirmation* of the new stand in relation to its *negation* of the old? This is the central issue at stake in the philosophical concept of the new, I think. The two main traditions of philosophical modernism – the Hegelian and the Nietzschean – are constituted by their differences on this issue. So I shall proceed from there.

2. Hegel and Nietzsche

Hegel

Broadly speaking, in the first instance, the differences between these trajectories are the differences between an understanding of temporal negation as dialectical negation, in which what is affirmed is affirmed *through* negation (Hegel), and a conception of temporal negation as itself a mode of being of affirmation (Nietzsche's 'becoming' – seemingly very different from Hegel's becoming, but, as we shall see, perhaps not so different from the restlessness of Hegel's absolute). More specifically, in the first case, the structure of the temporal negation constitutive of 'the affirmation of the new' is the result of the *subtraction of the form* of dialectical development from the systematic context that makes such development a progressive definition of the absolute, and hence ultimately a supersession (*Aufhebung*) of finitude itself. Nonetheless, it avoids the neo-Kantian regression of dialectic to a general method, by repositioning this dialectical temporal formalism, historically and ontologically, as the structure of experience of a specific subject: the subject of capitalist modernity. On its Hegelian coding, this subject displays the immanent (self-)transcendence characteristic of dialectical development in general, in which affirmation is the ultimate *meaning* of negation itself: 'The highest form of nothing for itself would be freedom, but this is negativity, insofar as it deepens itself to its highest intensity and is itself affirmation – indeed absolute affirmation.'⁸ For Hegel, then, the highest form of nothing, nothing for itself (which is freedom), is absolute affirmation. There is a dialectical identity of negation and affirmation.

From this perspective, the modernist affirmation of the new may be understood as an enactment of the affirmative essence of negativity itself. This 'deepening of negativity to its highest intensity' takes the logical form of a double negation (negation of negation): the new as the not-old (first negation) must itself be negated in its being-for the old (by a second negation), in order to be understood as something new for-itself. Yet the first negation (its being-for the old as its other) is nonetheless on this model 'preserved' within this process of

supersession, such that the determinacy or *meaning* of the new continues to derive from its negation of the old, within its *independent* positivity. (Hegel was fond of misquoting Spinoza on this topic: *omnis determinatio est negativo*, all determination is negation.)⁹ It is the ontic independence of the third term, once produced, that is the issue here – the annihilation of the superseded, which is nonetheless preserved, as annihilated, relationally, as constitutive of the new term's *meaning*. (There would appear to be something like *memory* implicit in dialectical negation here.) Insofar as the new necessarily involves this double negation, its modernist affirmation must affirm *both* negations together: that is, both its determinate negativity and the negation of its being-for-another that registers its positivity as an independent thing. (The latter, by virtue of its transcendence of its conditions, contains the 'creative' aspect of the new.) Furthermore, this for-itself-ness of the new is the prospective starting point for subsequent negations, and hence transitory. The intensification of the experience of novelty associated with modernism famously depends upon this anticipation of its 'death' (the death of the old 'new'). *This is the Hegelian meaning of Baudelairean modernism, for which both intelligibility and affirmation derive from negativity.* It has the form of what Hegel called a 'spurious or negative' infinity: 'Something becomes an other, but the other is itself a something, so it likewise becomes an other, and so on *ad infinitum*.'¹⁰ The abstract temporal form of modernism is that of the bad infinite: you can always add another 'new'. Furthermore, reflective consciousness of this iteration changes the *meaning* of the new. In Adorno's phrase (glossing Benjamin, glossing Nietzsche): 'the new *represses* duration'. This is the starting point for the Benjaminian-Adornian approach to it: stasis.

From Hegel's own point of view this is a profound defect (one might even call it nihilism), since for him 'the genuine (*wahrhafte*) infinite', freed of its own finitude by being freed of its opposition to the finite, was 'the basic concept of philosophy'.¹¹ From the point of

view of the critique of Hegel's absolute, however, such an endless series both marks the openness of the future and grounds the ultimately allegorical character of the philosophical meaning of the new. This can be discerned in Hegel's own account of Romantic art, on which the modern principle of subjectivity (subjective freedom) dictates that sensuous representation 'be posited as negative, absorbed and reflected into spiritual unity'. The 'sensuous externality of concrete form' of the 'vehicle of expression' of such art thus appears (in Bosanquet's appropriately Baudelairean 1886 translation of the Introduction to the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Fine Art*) 'as something transient [*vorübergehende*] and fugitive [*unwesentliche*]... committed to contingency [*Zufälligkeit*]'.¹² (Baudelaire's famous definition of modernity was of course 'the transient, the fugitive, the contingent' [*le transitoire, le fugitif, le contingent*]) This raises the intriguing question as to whether Baudelaire's phrase might actually contain more than a vague affinity with Hegel, via Bénard's 1840 translation of Hegel's *Lectures*, but sadly, it is not so, the French there is more literal: *inessentielle, éphémère, au hasard.*)¹³ Nonetheless, philosophically, one may say that modernism is an affirmation of Hegel's conception of romanticism, against Hegel himself.

Baudelairean modernism is the consummation of what appears here as the Romantic commitment to a philosophically *subjectively interpreted contingency*. The modernist extraction of the temporal form of dialectical negation from the context of Hegel's system thus profoundly problematizes its relationship to history. On the one hand, history becomes the history of the new, the comprehension of which becomes a condition of further novelty, further negations – since only if the present is properly understood in its novelty can that novelty itself be made an object of meaningful negation. Historical consciousness is thus increasingly important; and modernism is itself a form of historical consciousness, albeit in a peculiarly abstract one, plagued by the threat of indeterminate negation. On the other hand,

however, the production of the qualitatively historically new requires a rupture with the historically comprehended present for which there appears to be no basis or rationale, once the standpoint of the absolute has been forsaken as the ground of the dialectic. In the absence of a systematic determination of development, the question arises as to the source and meaning of the new. The future becomes a void, and into this void flow, first (in the 19th century), ‘philosophies of the future’; and later (in the 1960s) philosophies of the event as *itself* a void.¹⁴ The problem is registered in Nietzsche’s second *Untimely Meditation*, ‘On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life’ (1874) and then purportedly overcome in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883–5) and his 1883–8 notebooks, published as *The Will to Power*.¹⁵ It is the second *Untimely Meditation* that inaugurated a second, anti-Hegelian, anti-historical stream of philosophical modernism.

Nietzsche

‘The Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life’ was a challenge to the increasingly historical culture of modernity, on behalf of modernity itself, which there takes the name of ‘life’.¹⁶ (I follow Paul de Man here in his reading of Nietzsche’s ‘life’.) Life is not a biological category for Nietzsche, but the name of whatever is able *to forget* and thereby *to act*. It is, however, thereby understood as ‘an unhistorical power’. Baudelaire’s experience of the *beauty of the feeling of time* is transformed here into the experience of the *power of life*. The philosophical basis for this move lies, of course, in Kant; not the Kant of rational self-determination, of the *Critique of Practical Reason*, however, but the Kant of the *Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment* (1790), in which ‘an entirely special faculty for discriminating and judging that contributes nothing to cognition’ is grounded upon the subject’s ‘feeling of life’ (*Lebensgefühl*), ‘under the name of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure’.¹⁷ Indeed, Kant maintained: ‘it cannot be denied that *all* representations in us,

whether they are objectively merely sensible or else entirely intellectual ... affect the feeling of life, and none of them, insofar as it is a modification of the subject, can be indifferent ... because the mind for itself is entirely life (the principle of life itself)...'¹⁸ *Lebensphilosophie* begins with Kant.

There is a textual prompt to this connection in Nietzsche's opening quotation in the second *Untimely Meditation*, from Goethe, on 'quicken activity': 'I hate everything that merely instructs me without augmenting or directly quickening my activity' – quickening or animation (*Belebung*) being the word Kant famously used to describe 'the sensation whose universal communicability is postulated by the judgement of taste'.¹⁹ Nietzsche's philosophical modernism is thus 'aesthetic' in a manner that the dialectical tradition is not (at least, not self-consciously); and in a way associated at that time with the work of art. In Nietzsche's view at the time: 'only if history can endure to be transformed into a work of art will it perhaps be able to preserve instincts [*Instinkte*] or even evoke them.'²⁰

Ultimately, however, 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life' itself remains an aporetic *dialectical* text, committed to the position that '*the unhistorical and the historical are necessary in equal measure for the health of an individual, of a people and of a culture.*' For the critical historian does *not* so much forget as *decide against* the historical culture of the present, in the *name of* a power of action invested in a purer present. In severing oneself from the past absolutely, one would sever oneself from the present as well, and hence also from its critique. '[The] same life that requires forgetting demands a temporary forgetting of this forgetfulness; it wants to be clear as to how unjust the existence of anything... is, and how greatly this thing deserves to perish. Then its past is regarded critically, then one takes the knife to its roots, then one cruelly tramples over every kind of piety.'²¹ The association of the future with critical negation thus remains here, at least in part.

Indeed, perhaps the greatest of Nietzsche's legacies to the modernist tradition has been the contribution of his concept of genealogy to its sense of history: '*If you are to venture to interpret the past you can do so only out of the fullest exertion of the vigour the present...*'²² This principle, exemplified in his own 'polemic', *On the Genealogy of Morality* (1887), is fundamental to the modernist historiographies of both Benjamin and Foucault.²³ Genealogy is modernist historiography.

In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, however, the temporalizing self-reflection that succeeded Hegel's logicist 'absolute reflection' of history, and which makes up only one side of the aporia of the second of the *Untimely Meditations*, is itself absolutized. As if in response to Rimbaud's 1873 imperative 'to be absolutely modern',²⁴ with the idea of transvaluation or the transmutation of values Nietzsche absolutizes affirmation: 'life' is philosophically transformed into 'will to power', the '*inner will*' of force.²⁵ In the process, the dialectical account of the relation of the affirmation of the new to the negation of the old is inverted. If everything is affirmation, the difference between negation and affirmation must be internal to affirmation itself, as the difference between a 'reactive', nihilistic affirmation of negation (dialectics) and an 'active' affirmation of affirmation itself (transvaluation). Such an active, 'secondary' affirmation, it is claimed, converts negation into itself an affirmative power. On Deleuze's account of this dynamic:

The negative becomes a power of affirming: it is subordinated to affirmation and passes into the service of an excess of life. Negation is no longer the form under which life conserves all that is reactive in itself, but is, on the contrary, the act by which it sacrifices all its reactive forms. In the man who wants to perish, the man who wants to be overcome, negation changes sense ...

Only affirmation exists as an independent power; the negative shoots out from it like lightning, but also becomes absorbed into it, disappearing into it like a soluble fire. In the man who wants to perish the negative announces the superhuman, but *only affirmation produces what the negative announces*.²⁶

For Nietzsche, to affirm is to ‘make use of excess in order to invent new forms of life’. And what is excess here? Excess of force over intelligibility, excess of production over the current conditions of recognition. As a mode of being of affirmation, the negative thus no longer gives *meaning* to the new (as a conceptually constitutive logical negation), but partakes in its creation through ‘the warlike play of differences’ and ‘the joy of destruction’. According to Deleuze, this is Nietzsche’s great ‘anti-dialectical discovery’: ‘negativity as negativity of the positive’.²⁷ Its modernism lies in its radical transformation of the philosophical meaning of ‘affirmation’ in the affirmation of the time-determination of the new. With Nietzsche, modernism is *ontologized*: history is reduced to a new sense of becoming, the *constant* becoming of the new. This truly is a properly philosophical modernism. However, in rejecting negation as the means to giving determinacy to the new, it immediately runs up against the problem of the transcendental structure of the new as *the same*: the threat of nihilism that lurks within modernism – a negative nihilism without significant differences, as opposed to the reactive nihilism of conceptual difference.

Nietzsche’s solution is the famously obscure doctrine of eternal return: the imperative that, when you will something, you will to do it an infinite number of times. Such a return is itself acknowledged to be ‘the most extreme form of nihilism’, but, in completing (or absolutizing?) nihilism, it is understood to break its connection to reactive forces, negating their function of conservation (‘the same’) and converting them into forces of active self-destruction (as further elaborated by Bataille and Blanchot). To will the eternal return was for

Nietzsche to become active. In the eternal return, nihilism is ‘vanquished by itself’.²⁸ The consequence, however, is that while ‘the new’ may no longer be ‘the same’, it is also no longer new, in the sense of something qualitatively historically new. In the eternal return, Nietzsche’s modernism consumes itself. At their highest points, Hegel’s ‘negativity that is itself absolute affirmation’ and Nietzsche’s ‘negativity as a mode of being of affirmation as such’ are thus perhaps less different than Deleuze supposed – not as a result of any ‘compromise’,²⁹ but as a result of the precise, and rather subtle character of their difference. I am reminded here of Blanchot’s remark that ‘the philosophy of Nietzsche takes its distance from dialectical philosophy less in contesting it than in repeating it’, specifically, ‘in repeating the principle concepts or moments that it deflects... the idea of contradiction, the idea of going beyond, the idea of transvaluation, the idea of totality, and above all the idea of circularity, of truth or of affirmation as circular.’ (IC, 159).

Both Hegel and Nietzsche, in their very different ways, absolutized the temporality of the new to the point of the dissolution of historical time, and with it the very notion of qualitative historical novelty upon which modernism depends. Yet the new itself, qua new, is abstract: ‘it gives no satisfaction’ as Marx put it. And this abstraction is no mental act; it is a real or actual abstraction. The notion of the ‘qualitatively historically new’ harbours a contradiction between the production of qualitative heterogeneities to which it refers and the sameness of its own conceptual form. Yet it is in its very abstraction (‘the negative that announces’) that the new is the emblem of the promise of a future, a future beyond the abstractly new, in which, for Marx, wealth will have become ‘the absolute working out of creative potentialities... the development of all human powers as such [as] the end in itself ... [w]here humanity ... [s]trives not to remain something it has become, but is in the absolute movement of becoming.’³⁰ There is a Nietzschean aspect to Marx’s imagining here, although

‘the absolute movement of becoming’ is as much a projected actualization of the restlessness of Hegel’s absolute as Nietzschean becoming-active; and it has determinate historical conditions, in capitalism’s ‘constant revolutionizing’ of the instruments of production ‘and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society.’³¹ In this respect, modernism is a capitalist cultural form, even – perhaps especially – as it points beyond its current capitalistic conditions of existence.

In this respect, the new is the capitalistic form of the post-capitalist future – ‘the negative that announces’ something that must nonetheless be otherwise produced. Benjamin recognized this when he interpreted Nietzsche’s idea of eternal recurrence as a reflection of the then-current conditions of capitalism, in its transformation of the historical event into ‘a mass-produced article’. Benjamin attributed its ‘sudden topicality’ in the 1930s to the accelerated succession of capitalist crises, whereby ‘it was no longer possible, in all circumstances, to expect a recurrence of conditions across any interval of time shorter than that provided by eternity’, leading to ‘the obscure presentiment that henceforth one must rest content with cosmic constellations.’³² Some appear to feel similarly today.

Notes

¹ Paola Marrati, ‘Life and Event: Deleuze on Newness’, in James J. Bono et al, eds, *A Time for the Humanities: Futurity and the Limits of Autonomy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), p. 21.

² Antonio Negri, ‘Constitution of Time’ (1981), in *Time for Revolution*, trans. Matteo Mandarini (London and New York: Continuum, 2003), p. 47. See also, Peter Osborne, ‘Marx and the Philosophy of Time’, *Radical Philosophy* 147, pp. 15–22.

³ Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (1929), trans. Richard Taft (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).

⁴ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 10. The idea that ‘modern’ philosophy is a philosophy of ‘subjectivity’ is Hegel’s.

G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Volume 3*, trans. E.S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson (1896) (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), p. 161.

⁵ Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, p. 305.

⁶ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 110.

⁷ Ludwig Feuerbach, 'Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy' (1839), in *The Fiery Brook: Selected Writings of Ludwig Feuerbach*, ed. and trans. Zawar Hanfi (New York: Anchor Books, 1972), pp. 53–96.

⁸ G.W.F. Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic*, trans. T.F. Geraets, W.A. Suchting and H.S. Harris (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 1991), p. 140, translation amended; *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse, I, Die Wissenschaft der Logik* (1830) (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), #87, p.187.

⁹ *Ibid.*, No. 91 addition, p. 196; trans. p. 147. The Spinoza (*Epistle 50*) actually reads more simply: *determinatio negativo est*, 'determination is negation'.

¹⁰ Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic* #93-4, p. 149; German, pp. 198–9.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, # 95, p. 152; German, p.203;

¹² Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics* (1823–1829), trans. Bernard Bosanquet (Harmondsworth; Penguin, 1993), p. 87.

¹³ Hegel, *Esthétique*, Tome 1, Livre de Poche, Paris, 1997, p. 142.

¹⁴ Ludwig Feuerbach, 'Principles of the Philosophy of the Future' (1843) in *The Fiery Brook*, pp. 175–245. Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886) – written immediately after *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* – bears the subtitle, *Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

¹⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life', in *Untimely Meditations*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 57–123; *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883–5), trans. Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); *Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.G. Hollingdale (New York: Random House, 1968).

¹⁶ See Paul de Man, 'Literary History and Literary Modernity', in *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (1971) (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1983), esp. p. 146.

¹⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790), trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 90.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 159, emphasis added.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 104. Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, p. 59. Unfortunately, this edition covers over the connection by translating 'zu beleben' as 'invigorating'.

²⁰ *Untimely Meditations*, p. 95.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 63, 21.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 94.

²³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, trans. Carol Diethe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

²⁴ Arthur Rimbaud, *Une Saison en Enfer*, 1873 in Rimbaud, *Collected Poems* (London: Penguin, 1962), p. 346.

²⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.G. Hollingdale (New York: Random House, 1968), p. 619.

²⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1962), trans. Hugh Tomlinson (London: Athlone Press, 1983), p. 176, emphasis added. For the distinction between a primary

(Dionysian) and secondary (Zarathustrean) affirmation, and the claim that only ‘the two affirmations constitute the power of affirming as whole’, see pp. 186, 189–94. For a more comprehensive discussion, see Robert Gooding-Williams, *Zarathustra’s Dionysian Modernism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

²⁷ Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, pp. 185, 191, 198.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 68–72. Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, pp. 1053, 1056, 58, 28.

²⁹ ‘There is no possible compromise between Hegel and Nietzsche’. Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, p. 195.

³⁰ Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft)*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (Harmondsworth: Penguin/New Left Books, 1973), p. 488, translation amended.

³¹ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, ‘The Communist Manifesto’ (1848), in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works. Volume 6* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1976), pp. 477–512. See Peter Osborne, ‘Remember the Future?: *The Communist Manifesto* as Cultural-Historical Form’, in Osborne, *Philosophy in Cultural Theory*, pp. 63–77; and more generally, Osborne, ‘Marx and the Philosophy of Time’. Marx’s modernism was historico-philosophical, rather than ontological.

³² Benjamin, ‘Central Park’, p. 167.