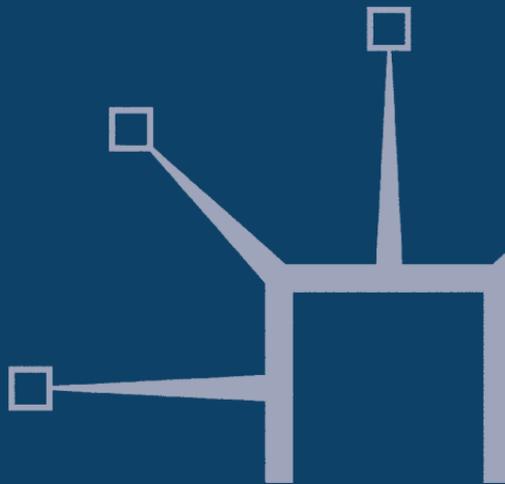


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Modernism and Totalitarianism

Rethinking the Intellectual Sources of Nazism
and Stalinism, 1945 to the Present

Richard Shorten



Modernism and ...

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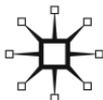
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Richard Shorten

*Lecturer in Political Theory, Department of Political Science and
International Studies, University of Birmingham, UK*

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In memory of Colin Woodward

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Series Editor's Preface

As the title *Modernism and ...* implies, this series has been conceived in an open-ended, closure-defying spirit, more akin to the soul of jazz than to the rigour of a classical score. Each volume provides an experimental space which allows both seasoned professionals and aspiring academics to investigate familiar areas of modern social, scientific or political history from the defamiliarising vantage point afforded by a term not routinely associated with it: 'modernism'. Yet this is no contrived makeover of a clichéd concept for the purposes of scholastic bravado. Nor is it a gratuitous theoretical exercise in expanding the remit of an 'ism' already notorious for its polyvalence – not to say its sheer nebulosity – in a transgressional fling of postmodern *jouissance*.

Instead, this series is based on the *empirically* oriented hope that a deliberate enlargement of the semantic field of 'modernism' to embrace a whole range of phenomena apparently unrelated to the radical innovation in the arts it normally connotes will do more than contribute to scholarly understanding of those topics. Cumulatively the volumes that appear are meant to contribute to a perceptible paradigm shift slowly becoming evident in the way modern history is approached. It is one which, while indebted to 'the cultural turn', is if anything 'post-post-modern', for it attempts to use transdisciplinary perspectives and the conscious clustering of concepts

often viewed as unconnected – or even antagonistic to each other – to consolidate and deepen the reality principle on which historiography is based, not flee it, to move closer to the experience of history of its actors, not away from it. Only those with a stunted, myopic (and actually *unhistorical*) view of what constitutes historical ‘fact’ and ‘causation’ will be predisposed to dismiss the *Modernism and ...* project as mere ‘culturalism’, a term which due to unexamined prejudices and sometimes sheer ignorance has, particularly in the vocabulary of more than one eminent ‘archival’ historian, acquired a reductionist, pejorative meaning.

Yet even open-minded readers may find the title of this book disconcerting. Like all the volumes in the series, it may seem to conjoin two phenomena that do not ‘belong’. However, any ‘shock of the new’ induced by the widened usage of modernism to embrace non-aesthetic phenomena that makes this juxtaposition possible should be mitigated by realising that in fact it is neither new nor shocking. The conceptual ground for a work such as *Modernism and Totalitarianism* has been prepared for by such seminal texts as Marshall Berman’s *All that is Solid Melts into Thin Air: The Experience of Modernity* (1982), Modris Eksteins’ *Rites of Spring* (1989), Peter Osborne’s *The Politics of Time: Modernity and the Avant-Garde* (1995), Emilio Gentile’s *The Struggle for Modernity* (2003), and Mark Antliff’s *Avant-Garde Fascism: The Mobilization of Myth, Art and Culture in France, 1909–1939* (2007). In each case modernism is revealed as the long-lost sibling (twin or maybe even father) of historical phenomena from the social and political sphere rarely mentioned in the same breath.

Yet the real pioneers of such a 'maximalist' interpretation of modernism were none other than some of the major aesthetic modernists themselves. For them the art and thought that subsequently earned them this title was a creative force – passion even – of revelatory power which, in a crisis-ridden West where *anomie* was reaching pandemic proportions, was capable of regenerating not just 'cultural production' but 'socio-political production', and for some even society *tout court*. Figures such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Richard Wagner, Wassily Kandinsky, Walter Gropius, Pablo Picasso, and Virginia Woolf never accepted that the art and thought of 'high culture' were to be treated as self-contained spheres of activity peripheral to – and cut off from – the main streams of contemporary social and political events. Instead, they assumed them to be laboratories of visionary thought vital to the spiritual salvation of a world being systematically drained of higher meaning and ultimate purpose by the dominant, 'nomocidal' forces of modernity. If we accept Max Weber's thesis of the gradual *Entzauberung*, or 'disenchantment' of the world through rationalism, such creative individuals could be seen as having set themselves the task – each in his or her own idiosyncratic way – of *re-enchanting* and re-sacralising the world. Such modernists consciously sought to restore a sense of higher purpose, transcendence and *Zauber* (magic) to a spiritually starved modern humanity condemned by 'progress' to live in a permanent state of existential exile, of *liminoid transition*, now that the forces of the divine seemed to have withdrawn in what Martin Heidegger's muse, the poet Friedrich Hölderlin, called 'The Flight of the Gods'. If the hero of modern popular

nationalism was the Unknown Warrior, perhaps the patron saint of modernism itself was *Deus Absconditus*.

Approached from this oblique angle modernism was thus a revolutionary force, but was so in a sense only distantly related to the one made familiar by standard accounts of the (political or social) revolutions on which modern historians cut their teeth. It was a 'hidden' revolution of the sort referred to by the 'arch-aesthetic modernist Vincent van Gogh, when he mused about the sorry plight of the world in his letter of 24 September 1888 to his brother Theo. In one passage he waxes ecstatic about the impression made on him by the work of another spiritual seeker disturbed by the impact of 'modern progress', Leo Tolstoy:

It seems that in the book *My Religion*, Tolstoy implies that whatever happens in a violent revolution, there will also be an inner and hidden revolution in the people, out of which a new religion will be born, or rather something completely new which will be nameless, but which will have the same effect of consoling, of making life possible, as the Christian religion used to.

The book must be a very interesting one, it seems to me. In the end, we shall have had enough of cynicism, scepticism and humbug, and will want to live – more musically. How will this come about, and what will we discover? It would be nice to be able to prophesy, but it is even better to be forewarned, instead of seeing absolutely nothing in the future other than the disasters that are bound to strike the modern world and civilisation like so many thunderbolts, through

revolution, or war, or the bankruptcy of worm-eaten states.

In the series *Modernism and ...* the key term has been experimentally expanded and 'heuristically modified' to embrace any movement for change which sets out to give a name and a public identity to the 'nameless' and 'hidden' revolutionary principle that Van Gogh saw as necessary to counteract the rise of nihilism. He was attracted to Tolstoy's vision because it seemed to offer a remedy to the impotence of Christianity and the insidious spread of a literally soul-destroying cynicism, which if unchecked would ultimately lead to the collapse of civilisation. The term 'modernism' thus applies in this series to all concerted attempts in any sphere of activity to enable life to be lived more 'musically', to resurrect the sense of transcendent communal and individual purpose being palpably eroded by the chaotic unfolding of events in the modern world even if the end result would be 'just' to make society physically and mentally healthy.

What would have probably appalled Van Gogh is that some visionaries no less concerned than him by the growing crisis of the West sought a manna of spiritual nourishment emanating not from heaven, nor even from an earthly beauty still retaining an aura of celestial otherworldliness, but from strictly secular visions of an alternative modernity so radical in its conception that attempts to enact them inevitably led to disasters of their own following the law of unintended consequences. Such solutions were to be realised not by a withdrawal from history into the realm of art (the sphere of 'epiphanic' modernism), but by applying a utopian artistic,

mythopoeic, religious or technocratic consciousness to the task of harnessing the dynamic forces of modernity itself in such spheres as politics, nationalism, the natural sciences, and social engineering in order to establish a new order and a 'new man'. It is initiatives conceived in this 'programmatically' mode of modernism that the series sets out to explore. Its results are intended to benefit not just a small coterie of like-minded academics but also mainstream teaching and research in modern history, thereby becoming part of the 'common sense' of the discipline even of self-proclaimed 'empiricists'.

Some of the deep-seated psychological, cultural, and 'anthropological' mechanisms underlying the futurist revolts against modernity here termed 'modernism' are explored at length in my *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (2007). The premise of this book could be taken to be Phillip Johnson's assertion that 'Modernism is typically defined as the condition that begins when people realize God is truly dead, and we are therefore on our own.' It presents the wellsprings of modernism in the primordial human need for a new metaphysical centre in a radically decentred reality as well as for a new source of transcendental meaning in a godless universe, and in the impulse to erect a 'sacred canopy' of culture which not only aesthetically veils the infinity of time and space surrounding human existence to make existence feasible but also provides a totalising worldview within which to locate individual life narratives, thus imparting it with the illusion of cosmic significance. By eroding or destroying the canopy of culture, modernity creates a protracted spiritual crisis which provokes the proliferation of

countervailing impulses to restore a 'higher meaning' to historical time that are collectively termed by the book (ideal-typically) as 'modernism'.

Johnson's statement seems to make a perceptive point by associating modernism not just with art, but with a general 'human condition' consequent on what Nietzsche, the first great modernist philosopher, called 'the Death of God'. Yet in the context of this series his statement requires significant qualification. Modernism is *not* a general historical condition (any more than 'post-modernism' is), but a generalised revolt against even the *intuition* made possible by a secularising modernisation that we are spiritual orphans in a godless and ultimately meaningless universe. Its hallmark is the bid to find a new home, a new community, and a new source of transcendence.

Nor is modernism itself necessarily secular. On the contrary, both the wave of occultism, Theosophy, and the Catholic revival of the 1890s and the emergence of radicalised, Manichaeic forms of Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and even Buddhism in the 1990s demonstrate that modernist impulses need not take the form of secular utopianism, but may readily assume religious (some would say 'post-secular') forms. In any case, within the cultural force field of modernism even the most secular entities are sacralised to acquire an aura of numinous significance. Ironically, Johnson himself offers a fascinating case study in this fundamental aspect of the modernist rebellion against the empty skies of a disenchanting, anomic world. A retired Berkeley law professor, some of the books he published, such as *The Wedge of Truth*, made him one of the major protagonists of 'Intelligent Design',

a Christian(ised) version of creationism that offers a prophylactic against the allegedly nihilistic implications of Darwinist science.

Naturally no attempt has been made to impose 'reflexive metanarrative' developed in *Modernism and Fascism* on the various authors of this series. Each has been encouraged to tailor the term modernism to fit their own epistemological cloth, as long as they broadly agree in seeing it as the expression of a reaction against modernity not restricted to art and aesthetics, and driven by the aspiration to create a spiritually or physically 'healthier' modernity through a new cultural, political, and ultimately biological order. Naturally, the blueprint for the ideal society varies significantly according to each diagnosis of what makes actually existing modernity untenable, 'decadent' or doomed to self-destruction.

The ultimate aim of the series is to help bring about a paradigm shift in the way 'modernism' is used, and hence stimulate fertile new areas of research and teaching with an approach which enables methodological empathy and causal analysis to be applied even to events and processes ignored by or resistant to the explanatory powers of conventional historiography. I am delighted that Richard Shorten, a major expert on the evolution of the term totalitarianism, has contributed a volume to this series which presents it in a refreshingly unfamiliar context.

Roger Griffin
Oxford, UK

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Introduction

In light of its title, there is a temptation to begin this book with an overstated ambition: to heroically challenge a rigid ‘orthodoxy’ that totalitarianism is a throwback to a pre-modern, unenlightened past. In truth there is no such orthodoxy. Or at least, among serious commentators, there has not been one for what is by now a considerable amount of time. But this is not quite the same as saying that a consensus exists about exactly how totalitarianism *is* modern. That raises a different question, and it is the question that this book seeks to explore.

To do so the book starts out with the following set of claims. The first is that ‘totalitarianism’ has all too often been treated as a marker for structural commonalities in particular systems of political rule; typically, ones that veer towards an extreme form of top-down domination.¹ This is not so much wrong as analytically unhelpful. Rather, what should be foregrounded, so this book argues, is the ideological dimension: in its two ‘classical’ expressions – Hitler’s Third Reich and the Stalinist Soviet Union – totalitarianism was anchored in a common intellectual trajectory, which cut across more parochial political traditions like fascism and communism, traditions which (unlike totalitarianism

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itself) political actors actively identified with. There is an irony in the fact that where totalitarianism gained the most traction as a term of positive self-conception was Mussolini's Italy – where in practice, according to the argument made here, its necessary conditions (intellectual as much as material) were actually missing.² Regardless of the irony, it is the primary status of 'totalitarian' as a term of criticism or abuse rather than self-identification (Mussolini's Italy aside) which, to date, has helped to obscure the ideological dimension. The would-be analyst faces a problem. He is certainly at a disadvantage compared, say, to the analyst of late twentieth-century social democracy; unlike the analyst of social democracy, who has Anthony Giddens' *The Third Way* at his disposal, he is deprived of access to any explicit declaration of 'principles' by those understood to subscribe to those principles.³ This means that in the present study there are, initially, two stages of analysis, which must follow in sequence. The basic elements of totalitarianism's intellectual trajectory are far from a given and so must, in a prior stage, be carefully identified and separated. Only once that prior task is completed will it become possible, in a second stage, to begin locating the sources of these elements. For this reason the book spends some time at the outset outlining the kind of 'model' of totalitarianism that will be up to the job of capturing its ideological dimension. This I contrast with the structural model, represented archetypically by Friedrich and Brzezinski's 'six-point syndrome'.

The book's second claim is that totalitarianism does indeed have modernist sources (to the chagrin of our imagined orthodoxy). Yet the Enlightenment – a

favourite target – has little to do with it, despite what the shrillest rebels against this orthodoxy would have us believe. The main ideological elements of totalitarianism derive from particular currents that run through modern thought. These are all, though, currents of thought that in the philosophical sense are antagonistic towards Enlightenment ideas, and which in the historical sense were formed either in opposition to the Enlightenment, or else after disillusionment with it had set in. Modernism, on the account this book advances, is both a ‘counter-’ and ‘post-’ Enlightenment phenomenon, and it is in the corresponding period of intellectual innovation – principally in the nineteenth century – that the intellectual sources of totalitarianism must be located. A subsidiary aspect of this claim is that totalitarianism is formed out of three currents of *secular* modernism. It is important to spell this out at the start because various renditions of the political religion thesis have recently gained considerable support among those seeking an understanding of the careers of fascism and communism in the twentieth century. In brief, this thesis states that totalitarian politics is rooted in the relationship between modernity and the declining social importance of religious beliefs and sentiments, with the effect that these beliefs and sentiments find expression in alternative outlets.⁴ The broad outline of this thesis is rejected in the account offered in this book (for reasons that are discussed in Chapter 1). However, as the book also seeks to show, at least some of the arguments made from within the broad parameters of the thesis are compelling. The catch is that, ultimately, they prove quite capable of being translated into more recognisable, secular terms

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of reference, without in any significant way distorting their intended purchase as explanatory accounts. To be specific about this, explanatory accounts that draw attention to the ‘messianic’ aspects of totalitarianism are really just another way of giving expression to the utopian current of modern thought that animates it (which I discuss in Chapter 3). Similarly, the supposedly ‘eschatological’ or ‘apocalyptic’ senses of totalitarianism are continuous with ways of evoking its adherence to the doctrine of revolutionary violence, or the idea that the individual and the collective can both be decisively transformed in the act of upheaval and bloodshed (as I suggest in Chapter 5).

Lastly, a third main claim of the book concerns what it is that holds totalitarianism together as a composite of intellectual elements, or what gives it unity as a coherent ideational product. This is the underlying commitment to the idea of anthropological revolution; in short, the intention to create the ‘New Man’. Totalitarianism, as this book tries to show, is formed of three strands – what the book identifies as ‘utopianism’, ‘scientism’, and ‘revolutionary violence’ – and the notion of the New Man is common to all of them. Utopian thought pictures the new man in harmony and concord with the ‘perfected’ community; scientism provides the knowledge that makes the New Man possible (and also clarifies exactly *who* he is); and revolutionary violence gives him final shape, enabling him to emerge reborn from struggle and conflict. Together, the three strands combine to produce a curious, contradictory image – that of actively (re)constituting a collective political subject in conformity with what historical inevitability

anyway prescribes, and in which a final, violent push towards the new order is required. One significant corollary of this claim is that totalitarianisms of both left and right have valid grounds for being described as revolutionary: 'fascism' is not treated as code for 'reactionary'. The dominant ideological orientation of Hitler's Third Reich is understood here to have been forward-looking not backward-looking. Furthermore, it is not so much that the analytical vocabulary of 'totalitarianism' is substituting for the vocabulary of 'fascism', as it is that the two vocabularies are being employed in tandem, without intended contradiction. In any case, it ought to be noted, the current consensus among historians of fascism is that fascism is 'revolutionary in its own right'.⁵ In the view of this study, then, 'fascism' is *not equated* with 'totalitarian', but fascism *can assume* a totalitarian character (ditto for 'communism'). The working assumption that informs the book's argument, analytically speaking, is that there *are* ideological elements that are exclusive to Nazism and Stalinism respectively, though that nevertheless there is a significant area of overlap between them; on the basis of this assumption, the common intellectual trajectory that the book tries to establish can be pictured in the form of a Venn diagram.

So far then we have a rough sketch of the ways in which this book seeks to provide an account of totalitarianism and, in particular, of the intellectual history behind it. But this is only one half of its ambition. Its second aim (where its ambition might be amplified appropriately, rather than overstated misleadingly) is to make sense of the *debate about* the intellectual history of totalitarianism. Almost as much as the book is

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interested in totalitarianism as 'event', it is interested in (anti-) totalitarianism as a dialogue or conversation in intellectual life. This dialogue or conversation is an important feature of intellectual life in European and North American societies, and it has been so right the way through the historical era from the end of the Second World War down to the present; it had a recent episode, for instance, in connection with political Islamism and 9/11.⁶ One of the things that the book tries to do is to construct a story out of the raw material provided by the broad range of contributions to this conversation, precisely in order to think carefully about totalitarianism's definition, meaning, and causes. To this end the book's second aim is to examine a sequence of theoretical perspectives on the nature of the relationship between modern thought and totalitarianism: How have different schools of thought conceived totalitarianism? What have they argued that is credible? And what have they argued that looks less convincing, either because it fails a test of theoretical cogency, or because it fails to find sufficient empirical support in the historical evidence (which, of course, may simply have been unavailable, or patchy, at the time these arguments were originally made)? The book is in agreement with the rationale recently expressed in a volume of historical essays edited by Michael Geyer and Sheila Fitzpatrick: what the debate on totalitarianism will benefit from is a rereading of its 'master thinkers' in the light of what others – principally archival researchers – have had to say.⁷ 'High' intellectual history and political theory need synthesis with the products of more earthly labours, and this is what is offered here. There is no

pretence to offer new facts; the book merely hopes to offer up a new perspective deriving from a close engagement with these two kinds of literature. The remainder of this Introduction provides a closer commentary on the book's twofold ambition, as well as an overview of the book's arrangement into parts and chapters.

The full title *Modernism and Totalitarianism: Rethinking the Intellectual Sources of Nazism and Stalinism, 1945 to the Present* is chosen deliberately. It conveys a sense of some further contentions made in the book, beyond the three main claims mentioned already. These contentions are often made rather implicitly, so teasing them out a little might help by way of setting the scene.

Why 'modernism', it might well be asked? The 'continuity' theses, as they are often described, which make German fascism and Soviet communism the products of the perpetuation of pre-modern characteristics, are rejected: the important elements of fascism in Germany were not the outcome of a *Sonderweg* (special path) that protected authoritarian traditions; and the important elements of Soviet communism were not the outgrowth of pre-1917, tsarist statecraft like centralisation, or 'revolution from above' to overcome backwardness.⁸ In addition, as said at the outset, there ought to be no illusion that to state so is to overturn any reigning orthodoxy. However, 'modernism' is apposite precisely because the pre-modern/modern dichotomy is best set aside as an analytical tool, in order that totalitarianism's currents can become duly recognised as being, in crucial ways, constituted out of *counter-* and *post-*Enlightenment ideas. In fact, the

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study of anti-liberal and anti-democratic political ideologies in general might well benefit from this shift in perspective.⁹ The corresponding proposition, which will be apparent from the discussion earlier, is that totalitarianism has no single – or even predominant – modernist source. Rather, the sources are hybrid. Furthermore, they are difficult for the analyst to fix, since they change over time, often in interaction with each other: the ‘voluntarist’ reaction against a ‘deterministic’ strand of Marxism – shaped in response to it, rather than just evolving alongside it – offers one example of some of the points at stake here.¹⁰

Next, why might a ‘rethink’ be called for? And why the timeframe ‘1945 to the present’? In the first place, there are several relevant issues that remain in dispute, even now: the identity of the elements of the ideological trajectory common to totalitarian movements and regimes; the sources of these elements, and their status; and sometimes the basic legitimacy of the concept itself.¹¹ One special motivation for the rethink is, as indicated already, to call for a break once and for all with the tendency, in the older literature, to treat ‘fascism’ and ‘communism’ as distinctive ideological formations, but to employ ‘totalitarianism’, by contrast, to refer to a practice of political rule that corresponds to fascism/communism-in-power.¹² The ‘old “theory” from the 1950s’ is all too often taken to be the final word on the subject.¹³ However, quite apart from the differences that existed in the actual mechanics of political rule in fascist and communist systems,¹⁴ there is an accumulated body of theory since the 1950s that would benefit from recognition in the form of systematic integration. At regular intervals

in the post-war period there have been significant revisions to the received account of totalitarianism, as viewpoints proposed as alternative ways of looking at things have grown into accepted wisdom:¹⁵ Cold War liberalism sustained a particular consensus in the 1950s and much of the 1960s – and was already a departure from the default, standard theory associated with Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski. Cold War liberalism was then subject to the challenge of critical theorists, who saw in its paradigm assumptions and biases that it suspected were a little too uncritical towards the institutions and practices of the ‘capitalist’ West. More lately, anti-totalitarian thought in France – not coincidentally, mainly the purview of ‘revisionist’ historians of the French Revolution – has found critical theory’s emphasis on ‘bloodless’ and ‘hidden’ forms of domination rather less compelling. It is by rereading these three lines of interpretation against one another that the book hopes to construct a combined theory of totalitarianism in its ideological dimension, a combined theory that identifies both what each school of thought got right, as well as where each was mistaken.

The scope of application of the term ‘totalitarian’ is a further issue requiring careful comment. Here the restricted cases of ‘Nazism’ and ‘Stalinism’ – alongside these specific labels – are chosen consciously. I referred above to ‘classical’ totalitarianism. Totalitarianism was embodied in its classical form only in Hitler’s Third Reich and Stalin’s Soviet Union. These are, historically, the only experiences to date that warrant the application of the term, although the designation ‘classical’ is intended to

leave the space for the potentiality that totalitarianism *could* appear again; but that should it do so, it would necessarily assume a different guise from its early twentieth-century incarnations, in light of the vastly different background circumstances that would pertain (especially in the field of media and communications). Some specific political formations other than Nazism and Stalinism do have prospective cases for being ascribed totalitarian status – namely, Fascist Italy and Mao’s China. Accordingly, these are cases that are heard (and then rejected) in the next chapter.¹⁶ However, one recent account of totalitarianism, in something like a ‘post-classical’ form – an ‘inverted totalitarianism’, supposedly epitomised in the ‘managed democracy’ of the United States – is rejected with rather less consideration found to be due to it.¹⁷ The case for bringing Islamic-inspired political extremism into the same conceptual orbit is, once again, more plausible. Neologisms employed in the public realm like ‘Islamofascism’ have tried to do just that, and there is a rough ‘family resemblance’ with the earlier twentieth-century movements: hostility to pluralism, conspiratorial anti-Semitism, and political action by a ‘vanguard’.¹⁸ But the earlier movements renounced God: they were the products of *secular* modernisms. And the failure of terms like Islamofascism to gain serious uptake even among Western audiences otherwise receptive to a public stance of condemnation towards Islamist extremism is good evidence that it really cannot be accommodated within the same analytical vocabulary (at least within the confines of the inherited understanding of key concepts).¹⁹

The scope of application of totalitarianism in this book, then, is narrow rather than broad. Moreover, it is restrictive and precise even within these already quite narrow parameters. 'Nazism' and 'Stalinism' are deliberately selected labels because 'fascism' and 'communism' are too loose, for some of the reasons already discussed. Only the Stalinist period of the Soviet Union fits the category. Leninism has some important ideological continuities with Stalinism but they are eclipsed by the discontinuities, as I indicate in the chapter ahead. The choice of labels employed here by the analyst can often be quite nakedly political and partisan. The following list maps authors' preferences for rendering particular terms synonymous with totalitarian, from right to left along the political spectrum, in broadly descending order: 'Marxism', 'Marxism-Leninism', 'Bolshevism', 'Stalinism'. Preference tends to depend on factors like the strength of an author's inclination to discredit Marxism or, conversely, to salvage it, by disputing Stalin's identification with it, or else by disputing the identification of Stalin and Lenin combined. But to state this is not to disparage the importance of the question of the relevance of Marx to the form that communism took in the Soviet Union. The opposite applies. That question, as the book has cause to turn back to time and time again, is crucial to the matter of the production and consumption of the three totalitarian currents of thought: utopianism, scientism, and revolutionary violence.

Clarifying the book's scope of application is a suitable opportunity for some disclaimers. There is a disclaimer that should be directed at historians. The study is not interested in each and every aspect of

Soviet state and society. It is only interested where there are important points of correspondence with the theory and practice of Nazism (and vice versa, where aspects of the Nazi experience illuminate the theory and practice of Stalinism). The inclusion of topics is necessarily selective. Because, as I show shortly, extreme political violence is the corollary of the ideological dimension of totalitarianism, this study is interested especially in the violent facets of these societies, in combination with the features of the intellectual climate that led to them. Historical surveys of the much broader kind (which try to encompass the full, complex picture provided by both archival research and the build-up of secondary, interpretive source-material) tend to be in danger of losing sight of the woods for the trees.²⁰ There is also a disclaimer that should be directed at philosophers. The intention in treating the 'master thinkers' on totalitarianism is primarily illustrative. Because the approach is to disaggregate thematic accounts of totalitarianism and to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of these accounts in turn, thinkers are used as illustrative of particular theoretical positions, and are made to serve these dual purposes of disaggregation and evaluation. The treatment of thinkers has no pretension to being exhaustive. Note that this is not to say, of course, that it does not hope to interpret thinkers *fairly*. One of the critical observations that the book starts from is that single-author studies regarding totalitarianism in political philosophy are inevitably rather limited. Characteristically, they are concerned with enriching an understanding of a specific thinker, by anchoring his or her philosophical concerns in response to the

Holocaust and/or the Gulag. By design, they tend to fail to move from the particular to the general, and stop short of advancing the debate about totalitarianism itself.²¹

Finally, some attempt at a defence of the book's attention to 'intellectual sources' – in implied exclusion of all other sorts of factors – will be thought to be in order. That only stands to reason. For some there might also be a defence required of treating totalitarianism in connection with the life of the mind *per se*. On the former issue: while the study confines its analytical attention to totalitarianism's intellectual sources, it categorically does not argue that totalitarianism can be accounted for in ideational terms alone. Totalitarianism is also to be accounted for in material terms. There are numerous social, political, and economic factors that are relevant, though these are factors that deserve the proper scrutiny of historical sociologists, political scientists, and economic historians working in their respective fields. The book leaves these issues to those practitioners. Geography is also a consideration, alongside the more usual material factors. Timothy Snyder has advanced a very compelling argument that the relationship between Nazism and Stalinism – the 'synergy' between them – was in important ways territorial, as well as ideological: 'Hitler and Stalin rose to power in Berlin and Moscow, but their visions of transformation concerned above all the lands between,' the 'bloodlands' stretching over modern Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, and the Baltic states.²² However, just as all complex social and political phenomena have their material dimensions of various kinds, once these are abstracted there remains

an ideological dimension that deserves analysis on its own terms. The relative weighting of this dimension, and its parcelling out, is considered important enough to constitute the sole concern of the book's second chapter: What kind of causal significance should be assigned to ideational terms of reference? And precisely which terms of reference are relevant?

Detractors are still likely to be dissatisfied with this defence if they think that totalitarianism is a specially non- (anti-?) intellectual phenomenon, that it can have no connection with the life of the mind at all. One response would be to suggest that rather proving the opposite of this was the attraction of National Socialism for Martin Heidegger and Carl Schmitt, or the appeal of communism for Jean-Paul Sartre.²³ But that is really not the point. 'Intellectuals', in the sense of a distinct profession, could have been left wholly unmoved, and that would not in the slightest diminish the claim of these movements to express coherent ideological commitments: objects have intellectual content, independent of whether members of this particular social grouping choose to endorse that content or not. Sincerity is a different matter. Sometimes dictators are sincere, sometimes they are not – and in these latter instances, we may say that the pertinence of intellectual sources lies in lending themselves to appropriations that transpire to be strategic and instrumental. Yet irrespective of intention on any given occasion, this book would argue that it is plausible – paramount – to think in terms of coherent analytical units like 'Hitler's political thought' and 'Stalin's political thought'. Something important to the exercise of understanding is missed

in the refusal to extend that interpretive generosity.²⁴ The three intellectual groupings surveyed in this book were all adamant that totalitarianism was an ideological project. They only disagreed about the identity of that project.

In this last section of the Introduction, it remains to spell out what is not implied at all in the book's title and subtitle: some specific points of departure, a more specific comment on method, and structure.

The book cannot claim to produce its account of totalitarianism's threefold intellectual trajectory out of thin air. Plenty of previous authors have gestured in the direction of a mix of quite contradictory sources. They have usually, though, made the point in observing one of either fascism or communism, in isolation of the other. Writing on communism, for example, the Polish poet Czesław Miłosz remarked, as early as 1953, that 'the rationalism of the doctrine is fused with sorcery, and the two strengthen each other'.²⁵ Tzvetan Todorov has perhaps done the most to outline a composite account of totalitarianism, and it is an account that approximates the one proposed here. But Todorov's version of the totalitarian synthesis is asserted instead of being argued for and then developed.²⁶ This book looks to describe three strands of totalitarianism rather more precisely. It also looks to make the connections across these three strands more visible; to assign their proportions of influence more explicitly; and to deal with issues of causation with a little more nuance. Hannah Arendt famously gave expression to the contradictory nature of totalitarianism: the paradox of a dynamic that is sustained by inexorable laws of history yet which is simultaneously

animated by a conviction that 'everything is possible'.²⁷ Arendt's thinking on totalitarianism, which remains a very rich source of insight on the subject – not least of all because, ultimately, it perhaps poses as many questions as it provides answers to – is often drawn upon in the chapters ahead. However, no systematic treatment of Arendt is offered, because it is impossible to assign her a determinate place in the three schools of thought I survey. She has something to say about every important line of interpretation pursued.²⁸

As explained already, while the book's first aim is to provide an account of totalitarianism itself, the book's second aim is to give some coherence to the debate about it. A full picture of the book's method here should make it clear that it is, in part, a 'contextual' exercise in the history of political ideas; to render the book's second aim more explicit, it is to show why accounts of totalitarianism have differed significantly according to time and place. Ideological stakes changed over the second half of the twentieth century. When and where *they* changed, the prevailing conception of totalitarianism changed with it. The book takes its cue from the kind of historical approach to the study of political thought that considers both that any given text is an intervention in an ideological debate, and that any ideological debate is examined in misleading fashion if detached from local contexts of articulation and reception, especially the conventions governing political discourse.²⁹ Cold War liberals, critical theorists, and anti-totalitarians in France implicated different currents of thought because they saw totalitarianism from different vantage points – concerns

closer to home. Viewing totalitarianism so that it seems traceable to a single source is one of the factors that has led to scepticism about the very legitimacy of the concept; viewing totalitarianism according to a single source leads to identifying the area of overlap between Nazism and Stalinism – the ‘real’ parallel – in ways that are unnecessarily controversial. The deficiencies of different accounts, therefore, are brought into clear focus if contexts are reconstructed and assessed. The analyst of the ideological dimension of totalitarianism needs to undertake a contextual reading not only of primary sources, like Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* or Stalin’s *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, but of the secondary text-sources as well. Twentieth-century political theory might not, for some, appear to be the obvious place to start from in composing a history of totalitarianism, but to ignore it is to miss an opportunity: detecting the ‘roots’ of modern totalitarianism was, in the twentieth century, a notable ‘school of interpretation’ in the history of political philosophy, alongside engagement with the ethical problems posed by the death camps.³⁰

The structure of the book is such that some nuts and bolts type issues are attended to before it gets to the attempt at a coherent treatment of the post-war debate. It is split into two main parts. Part I addresses the ‘when, what, and how’ of totalitarianism. It addresses two issues separately: the definition and periodisation of totalitarianism; and the conception of explanation appropriate to intellectual history. Part II of the book is concerned with the closer identification of the sources – what it calls the three totalitarian currents. It looks to establish their substantive content

and their significance relative to other sources, including one another.

Chapter 1 examines the problem of 'the modern' in totalitarianism. It argues for the separation of a structural model of totalitarianism from one capable of doing justice to its ideological dimension, and the important features of that model are shown to push consistently towards a 'genocidal' outcome. The ideological elements of totalitarianism are shown to have a point of origin within modernity. However, both parties to the rather sterile impasse that has sometimes characterised the debate on totalitarianism – whereby 'the Enlightenment' is either implicated in responsibility for it or (assumed to be what stands accused) exonerated from that responsibility – are subjected to criticism. Following the arguments of recent commentators like David Roberts and Roger Griffin, the case is argued for turning a close eye over the intervening period *between* the Enlightenment and the age in which Hitler and Stalin actually ruled. This period is the space in which utopianism, scientism, and revolutionary violence all entered into the ideological competition of various 'modernisms' (Griffin) or 'alternative modernities' (Roberts). The sources of totalitarianism, in short, must be periodised across the nineteenth century, gaining traction in its latter part.

Chapter 2 examines the problem of intellectual antecedents in totalitarianism. The causal role of ideas is a complex issue in history and the social sciences broadly speaking. But complexity is wedded to high stakes in the case of totalitarianism, because of the implications attached to holding, say, a particular philosopher responsible for the Holocaust or the Gulag.

The chapter argues that the importance of this issue is real. However, some of the *possible* ways of handling it only cloud things through the obscurantism of terminology: all sorts of sophisticated propositions really boil down to different ways of specifying only that either 'affinity' or 'influence' applies to the relationship between an idea and totalitarianism, and the picture is best conceived bluntly as such.

The first chapter in Part II, Chapter 3, begins the coherent treatment of the post-war debate. It starts with the Cold War liberals. The important figures in this context were Isaiah Berlin, Karl Popper, and Jacob Talmon. Each was tireless in trying to draw attention to the basis of totalitarianism in utopian political ideas. However, each also gave disproportionate focus to the 'problem' of communism, rather than Nazism. In this sense, Cold War liberals were sidetracked by political concerns of their own day. The chapter argues that the result of this is that it is necessary to think carefully about what legitimation by a utopian current of thought meant for Stalinism and Nazism respectively. There are important differences, but there is also an underlying conception in common: the reception of utopianism in both Stalinism and Nazism meant that the idea of community was constructed around the idea of authenticity.

Chapter 4 turns to the tradition of critical theory, and to the ways in which this tradition sought to account for totalitarianism. In quite explicit ways, the chapter seeks to show, critical theorists were often attempting to refute the positions associated with Cold War liberalism. The theorists discussed are Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Michel Foucault,

and Zygmunt Bauman. In common, these theorists characterised totalitarianism as scientism. But they tended to overdo the characterisation. They also, at times, implied that it extended to modern society at large. Once more, though, there is something in the account that is apposite, even if it needs modifying in the detail. It was scientism, so the chapter shows, that provided for the terms of historical justification in the Nazi and Stalinist projects alike.

Lastly, Chapter 5 concludes the survey of the post-war debate, by considering a more recent school of thought. Anti-totalitarian thought in France was late to find sustained expression, for reasons that are discussed in the chapter. But the focus that French anti-totalitarian thought came to lay on 'revolutionary violence' offers a useful jumping-off point for clarifying the content of totalitarianism's third current. Two generations of thinkers are important here. Earlier figures like Albert Camus and Raymond Aron emphasised revolutionary violence in their reflections on communism, but both were by and large ignored. When later figures, like François Furet, came to give more influential expression to the theme, the earlier figures were frequently the reference point. The more pressing concern of Camus, Aron, and Furet was with Marxism/communism, not fascism/Nazism. But close consideration of what is distinctive to a conception of revolutionary violence shows that conception to be highly developed within both alike. Revolutionary violence thereby provided totalitarianism with the necessary intellectual equipment regarding a final issue, the terms for political action.

Part I

Totalitarianism – What, When, How?

1

The Problem of the Modern

In what ways is totalitarianism modern? Does it 'belong to' a particular epoch within the modern? Answering these questions requires prior diagnosis of totalitarianism's elements and sources respectively. Elements may, in principle, consist variously in anything from institutions and practices, to behaviours and actions, all the way through to beliefs, broader attitudes, or even general outlooks. The important point is that elements must be identified before it becomes plausible to locate their own emergence out of prior, given intellectual contexts, or sources (what this book refers to as totalitarianism's 'currents').¹ It is the logical separation of the requirements of identifying elements and locating sources which means that it makes sense to begin with the former, and not the latter. The initial task of the study, then, can be specified, following the image of a Venn diagram, as being that of picking out the significant features of the area of overlap between Nazism and Stalinism, in order to isolate these elements.

Where should the analyst start from in order to pick out significant shared features? Literary accounts are,

it might be suggested, as good as any. More than that, in fact, they have an added benefit: they tend not to think quite so reflectively within various, pre-specified categories of the modern. Such categories can have an unwelcome tendency to mediate an understanding of what totalitarianism is. They tend both to shape the direction of totalitarianism's conceptualisation and, for social and political theorists especially, to confirm already-existing moral-cum-ideological stances: totalitarianism inevitably appears as unconditionally, not to say one-sidedly, 'modern', if it is generic, reified categories that the observer sets about looking to indict – not only 'the Enlightenment', but also categories like 'capitalism' or, even more one-sidedly, 'medicine'.² The literary imagination is, furthermore, not only above being captive to prescribed parameters of investigation. It is also disposed to re-enacting something like the mindset of totalitarianism. Certain literary accounts, it will be shown shortly, prove to be specially tuned to parsing the shared ideological space between Nazism and Stalinism.

A shared ideological space is, of course, not the only area of commonality, or overlap, that the analyst will be interested in. The shared structural traits across Nazism and Stalinism at some stage have to be remarked upon, the kind of traits that are more likely to consist in institutions and practices, rather than attitudes, beliefs, and outlooks. However, the structural model of totalitarianism is, in a small part, inaccurate and, in larger part, of secondary importance only. The structural model misses the most salient elements of totalitarianism. It identifies what is modern about totalitarianism in the technological

sense rather better than it does the ideological sense. The structural model rests on the assumption that the principal definitional criterion of totalitarianism concerns methods of rule (as facilitated by the technological reach of the modern state), whereas a rather more plausible candidate for principal definitional criterion is the commission of political mass murder (as facilitated by a combination of some particular ideological resources of modernity). Picking out political mass murder resonates with generally prevalent moral intuitions regarding what it was that was really specific to the Nazi and Stalinist episodes in the twentieth century. In consequence, so runs the argument to be fleshed out shortly, the structural model needs to be superseded by what might be described as the 'genocidal model'. There is a reverse side to this claim. It is because totalitarianism's significant sources – currents – are, in combination, disposed towards a genocidal outcome, that the genocidal model lends itself, at the same time, to giving adequate space to the ideological dimension (which remains to be filled out in the second part of the book).

Ideological modernity, then, on the reasoning set out so far, provides the background resources for the genocidal practices of Nazism and Stalinism. This violence, moreover, is the core common denominator of Nazism and Stalinism, and thus primary to their ascription of status as totalitarian regimes. But not all ways of tracing this violence to ideological modernity are convincing. Political religion theory is explicitly directed at making sense of the violence of totalitarian ideologies; accounts advanced from within this broad family of approaches have a tendency to make violence

immanent to totalitarian ideologies from the very outset, and for this reason they tend to expand the scope of reference to include historically distant events, such as the Terror of the French Revolution.³ The conceptual limits of political religion theory derive principally from the looseness of its implied causal claims. In the very least political religion theory can really be said to have no *independent* claim to explain totalitarianism, the more plausible accounts being only different ways of giving expression to the particular intellectual currents that feed into totalitarianism.

Unpacking totalitarian modernism

Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* (1940) is one of the best-known literary depictions of totalitarianism.⁴ In its pages Koestler, the archetype of the anti-totalitarian as ex-Communist, draws the reader into the mindset of the beleaguered old Bolshevik, Rubashov, holed up in a Stalinist prison cell yet still captive to History, faithfully resolving to confess to an imaginary crime, which will seal a personal fate, but nonetheless safeguard the infallibility of the judgement of the party-state. *Darkness at Noon* is rightly celebrated. Rubashov is meant to be Bukharin, with the effect that the book has become a fertile source of insight into the Moscow Show Trials. And because Rubashov is Koestler as well – trying to make sense of himself⁵ – the book speaks further to the question of political commitment, particularly the problem of ends and means.

Yet a less well-known novel of Koestler's provides a richer commentary on totalitarian modernism as such. *Arrival and Departure* (1943) imagines the wartime

experience of Peter Slovak.⁶ Peter might also be Koestler. Certainly, he fits the type: the communist activist wrestling with the question of commitment.⁷ But whether Koestler or not, it is through the character instead of Peter's interlocutor, the Nazi agent Bernard, that the narrator gives a careful distillation of the modernist elements of National Socialism, including where they intersect with communism. In Koestler's scenario, Bernard engages Peter in a discussion about the superiority of fascist political belief over communist belief. The importance of this passage of *Arrival and Departure* for an appreciation of totalitarian ideology has not really taken hold in previous studies; nor have the standard commentaries on the conceptual history of totalitarianism taken enough notice of the book's prescience more generally.⁸ The omission is understandable, though still unfortunate. Certainly, novels that let ideas speak for themselves can be accused of betraying their art; there might be some truth in the suspicion that such novels are obliged to sacrifice subtlety in storytelling or character composition to achieve clarity of voice.⁹ But it is precisely this clarity, expressed here in the separation of various totalitarian beliefs, attitudes, and outlooks, that makes the text useful for the purposes of ideological analysis.

The ideological content of communism can be deemed to be more straightforwardly modern than the ideological content of Nazism. Even so there are false assumptions, which often operate to turn the modern character of Nazism into a harder case to substantiate than it really needs to be. Nazism can be falsely assumed to be 'reactionary' – anti-modern – simply because it tends to be defined in the terms of

what it is against. It is true that many of the 'antis' used to define Nazism identify its ideological commitment correctly.¹⁰ Nazism was anti-individualist and anti-liberal; it was anti-Marxist and, at the same time, anti-capitalist; and it was – predominantly – anti-clerical. Nazism's rejection of liberalism followed from the idea that liberalism left human beings 'atomised'. Nazism opposed both capitalism and Marxism alike because it supposed both to be materialistic.¹¹ Nazism also rejected Christianity (although some versions of the political religion thesis dispute this reading).¹² However, the sum total of these 'antis' does not make Nazism anti-modern. For that to be the case, it would have to be confirmed by a picture of what Nazism was actually for – not only against. Moreover, when Koestler's narrative is used as the cloth from which to fashion this picture, it is on balance the modernist orientations of Nazism that take centre-stage, and precisely where they bear proximity to orientations of communism. The detail – and not only the proof – of totalitarian modernism can be unpacked accordingly.

Arrival and Departure

Koestler uses the discussion in *Arrival and Departure* to reveal the aspirations of Nazi ideology steadily, by degrees, in order that he can separate the real aspirations from the disingenuous, the core commitments from the peripheral.¹³ Koestler's Nazi agent begins, first, by imparting to Peter the appeal of his movement to the masses: the masses are not moved by 'ethical abstractions' like 'Justice or Freedom', but by less cerebral forces, by 'tribal energies'.¹⁴ The statement

works to disrobe Peter of some of the intellectual armoury provided by Marxism: 'the realities of mass-psychology are different from the logics of economic textbooks'.¹⁵ Bernard quickly takes advantage of Peter's momentary loss of footing to recognise a similarity elsewhere: 'For an injured nation war is as natural as barricades for the poor.' The German 'tribe' (*volk*), says Bernard, injured not only by the consequences of the First World War, but further back in time by Germany's stunted development since the Thirty Years War, is 'the proletariat of Europe'.¹⁶ A communist, he means, ought easily to recognise the kind of appeal exercised by fascism: the appeal to a collective held together – experientially – by a shared victimhood.

In a second stage of the discussion, Bernard discreetly shifts position. So far he has spoken of a 'tribal energy' left over not only from humiliation in war but also from a kind of deficit in the modernisation process. His movement and Peter's are both modern movements inasmuch as they seek out not elites, but masses, as their projected audience; but his, we understand up to this moment, would have succeeded in its end – would have exhausted the 'energies' that sustain it – precisely at the point of having *achieved* modernity, once having entered the modern world (in all its political, socio-economic, and cultural senses) on equal terms. So far, in other words, communism has a vision, Nazism does not. However, tribal energies are now revealed to be a smokescreen to the ideological substance; they are exposed as a pointer to its consumption, but no key to its content – a sop to the masses on the part of a *new* elite, with privileged access to knowledge of the movement's basis. The Nazi agent

now announces that National Socialism, like communism, has its own 'new, cosmopolitan idea', which amounts to more than merely nationalism.¹⁷ The idea, he expands, is at work in 'History' – capital 'H' – and on route to 'universal recognition'; it is a vision for the future. Where many latter-day commentators on communism and fascism have dissociated the open-ended, inclusive 'universalism' of the former from the insular, exclusive 'particularism' of the latter,¹⁸ Koestler insinuates a close ideological kinship. The point of confusion, he has Bernard state, is that ideas 'shap[ing] the world on an international scale' must begin by 'be[ing] adopted by one particular nation', being otherwise condemned to remain 'sterile utopias'.¹⁹ As an idea, he notes, communism rose, then decayed, before it finally found a Fatherland in 1917. Abstract ideas remain inconsequential without concrete expression, but the substance of that expression shapes the abstraction in turn, Koestler might well have had the Nazi agent state further, without inconsistency. Or, as Elie Halévy put the matter in 1938, commenting on the kinship in the new political departures of the interwar years:

On the one hand, a complete socialism is moving towards a kind of nationalism. On the other hand, an integral nationalism is moving towards a kind of socialism.²⁰

In a third stage of the discussion, Bernard is pressed by Peter to add some more expansive detail to the 'idea'. 'Race' – not 'nation' – and in opposition to 'class', it has already become apparent, is the organising unit of the idea, though Bernard now turns

to what the 'official propaganda' suppresses – clinical, detached planning for a new world order, beyond the comprehension of the masses (who, in any case, have their 'totem poles and tribal forces' to believe in). It is the 'rapid development of science and technique' that makes possible the realisation of the future-oriented vision. With science and technique, 'mankind has entered a new phase of its puberty, a phase of radical, global experiments with total disregard of the individual'. Communism and National Socialism are competing with one another in a post-individualist, collectivist age in which 'rights and privileges' are 'liberal mumbo-jumbo'. Modern technology will provide the means for fundamentally reshaping the map of Central and Eastern Europe. In effect it is *Lebensraum* (living space) that will give the Nazi project cosmopolitan colour, just as, so Koestler could well have spelled out, the expression of communism in a Russian national context provides communism with local colour, in the form of forced industrialisation, collectivisation, and resettlement policies:

Wipe out those ridiculous winding boundaries, the Chinese walls which cut across our fields of energy; scrap or transfer industries which were heedlessly built in the wrong place; liquidate the surplus population in areas where they are not required; shift the population of certain districts, if necessary of entire nations, to the spaces where they are wanted and to the type of production for which they are racially best fitted; wipe out any disturbing lines of force which might superimpose themselves on your net, that is, the influence of the churches,

of overseas capital, of any philosophy, religion, ethical, or aesthetical system of the past...²¹

The discussion dwells, fourthly, on the project simultaneously being carried out in anthropology. 'There are no more impossibilities for man now,' says Bernard; 'we have started to breed a new species of *Homo sapiens*.'²² Historic victimhood now confers a privileged status. At this point, where the Nazi agent's attempt to convert Peter slides into more introverted exposition, biological politics intervene explicitly for the first time: 'We are turning the whole Continent into a biological laboratory', 'we are weeding out its streaks of bad heredity'. Destruction and creation – 'the work of elimination' and the 'building up' of 'a new racial aristocracy' – are running in 'parallel', the one task necessarily implying the other.²³ Ultimately, participation in the 'new, cosmopolitan idea' will mean collective life in a 'supra-state', where 'individuals' will become 'mere cells in an organism of a higher order', and where the collective will acquire 'consciousness' in the 'fullest biological sense of the term'. Accordingly, Koestler's discussion makes it clear that the ideological similarity breaks down when biological racism enters the picture. Communism and National Socialism are utopias informed by 'political economy' and 'the biological revolution' respectively. Further, the 'materialism' of communism is to the disadvantage of inspiring action: 'a pale and nondescript Classless Society – an economist's dry reverie'.²⁴

In sum, *Arrival and Departure* unpacks totalitarian modernism usefully, because it is sensitive to different

meanings of the modern, as well as sensitive to where the beliefs, attitudes, and outlooks of National Socialism and communism might be thought to part company. It is also prescient as much as useful, because where it does not correct specific assertions that have supported the thesis of a fundamental incongruity between the two ideologies (which it does, often), it is frequently confirmed by later readings that have appraised Nazism and Stalinism from a greater distance in time. Overall, *Arrival and Departure* parses totalitarianism's significant elements as follows.

First, totalitarianism feeds off an *emotional appeal*. 'The passions', conventionally counterposed to modernity in conceptions that follow Max Weber's 'rationalisation' thesis, play their part.²⁵ Subsequent commentators have agreed.²⁶ The materialism of communism, suggests Koestler, militates against its practical capacity to discharge this appeal, though there is less reason than Koestler thinks to hold this view. The emotional appeal of communism, as much as that of fascism, is expressed in various typical behaviours and practices: the mass rallies, the personality cults, the participation in cultures of martial solidarity, and so on.²⁷

The second element is a *post-liberal, post-individualist political philosophy*. In this aspect, if the modern is theorised as Enlightenment rights discourse,²⁸ then totalitarianism must be placed in an antithetical relation to the modern. Alternatively, if the modern can be (re)thought so as to expand the conceptual space to include a reaction against its dominant liberal form, as both Roger Griffin and David Roberts have urged, then totalitarianism becomes contained

within the field of its possibilities; it becomes located within the field of competing, systematic alternatives to the modern liberal mainstream that start to appear in the second half of the nineteenth century.²⁹ Koestler finds, without qualification, that National Socialism and communism do coincide in a prescriptive vision, which locates a collective unit as its principal addressee; more importantly, *qua* philosophy, National Socialism and communism make that collective unit key to a conception of historical progress as conflict, since they pinpoint that unit as being both subject to historic victimhood and the main actor in the future arrangements prescribed. A post-liberal, post-individualist political philosophy points to several practices symptomatic of it: the continual mobilisation of entire populations – the ‘permanent revolution’;³⁰ the contempt for the private sphere and the objective of ‘conquering society’, to the point of homogenisation;³¹ and institutional forms of ‘economic–bureaucratic collectivism’.³²

The third element of totalitarianism that Koestler’s discussion makes it possible to extrapolate is the *pursuit of technological modernity*. The means for realising the prescriptive vision consist in modern technology (again, where fascism and communism coincide). The scientific potential to harness natural resources makes the borders of nation-states redundant: ‘Imagine Europe up to the Urals as an empty space on the map,’ implores Bernard.³³ As subsequent commentators have noted, there is an ambitious expansionism implied in the sum total of totalitarianism’s various attitudes, beliefs, and outlooks, which points to a ‘new supranational civilisation’.³⁴ Only lately, in fact, have the territorial spaces

inhabited by Nazi Germany and the Stalinist Soviet Union begun to be recognised – explicitly – as ‘multi-ethnic empires’, as opposed to cohesive, ethnically homogenous nation-states, these spaces serving – importantly – as the sites where ideological ends were implemented and, if necessary, redefined.³⁵ The two concentration camp systems – serving the purposes of slave labour and extermination – are, of course, a crucial aspect of this.

The fourth and final element is the *experiment in reshaping humanity*. The old order is broken; the new order will be made whole. Modern science will supply not only technology, but also the vital intellectual ingredient to Nazism’s attempt to create a ‘New Man’ – biological racism; and it is biological racism that will, once added to the mix, constitute for Koestler the most salient discontinuity with communism. Certainly, though it passes unremarked, it constitutes a discontinuity with Italian Fascism.³⁶ However, the more important point is that communism does share in the project of ‘anthropological revolution’, the aspiration to reshape the individual in mind, body, and soul,³⁷ albeit with an alternative philosophical basis to that end. It is a mark of Koestler’s foresight that even relatively recent studies of totalitarian political thought have perpetuated a false contrast regarding this issue. It is not persuasive, as Simon Tormey has done, to contrast Nazism’s ‘bleak vision of competition and struggle between races’ with communism’s optimistic attempt to tap distinctly human capacities for development, if the individual as racial prototype logically presages the future prescribed, in the same way as does the communist New Man (or at least, the contrast

does not work insofar as the internal consistency of the two ideologies is concerned).³⁸

Koestler, therefore, provides the analyst with an enumeration of four totalitarian elements, cutting across many of the established denotations of the modern. There are expressions of both ideological modernity and technological modernity. There is also, on Koestler's account, a novelty to totalitarianism, which is such that it appears as a kind of *renewal* of the modern – the product of a combination of reactions against the previous incarnations of ideological modernity which, even while often informed by a mental picture of the past, can hardly be said to be conservative or anti-modernist demands for the past's restoration in simplistic form. The four elements could, in order, be rendered as:

- (i) a reaction against a rationalistic model of human conduct
- (ii) a reaction against individualism
- (iii) a reaction against nationalism in the prior, civic sense
- (iv) a reaction against an indeterminate conception of the political subject.

Accordingly, totalitarianism does not reject reason *per se*. But it has a post-Enlightenment character in the sense that it rejects the assumption that human beings conduct themselves solely on the basis of a rationalistic appraisal of means and end (or the assumption of 'formal rationality', as Weber called it). Rationality does not exhaust the scope of human motivation in a modern context and, in particular, totalitarianism

takes note of the pull of emotion. Totalitarianism also expresses a rejection of individualism. It sees the Enlightenment emphasis on individual autonomy and on the expansion of the private sphere as leading irreparably towards the loss of meaningful social cohesion. However, it locates the recovery of social cohesion in a vision of the future, not the past. The rejection of liberal individualism is partnered further by the rejection of liberal, civic nationalism. The realisation of self-determining nation-states is superseded, in the alternatives to the modern mainstream, by projects in which conventional nation-states become redundant, or in which nations are reconceived, more grandly, as substantive actors in the historical process. At the same time, totalitarianism finds an indeterminate conception of the political subject to be the *diagnosis* of the modern problem, not its solution, as the mainstream finds it: free and self-determining subjects are, rather, understood in various ways as frustrated in the development of coherent identities.³⁹

So much, then, is the totalitarian mindset as depicted by Koestler. In fact, judged as a distillation of totalitarian attitudes, beliefs, and outlooks, Koestler's discussion has only two limitations. Both of these limitations, moreover, are really only the result of Koestler's Nazi agent not seeing his points through to draw the logical conclusions. One is that the ideological proximity between National Socialism and communism is actually understated. The other is that the ideological proximity between National Socialism and Italian Fascism is overstated; or, at least, the Nazi agent misses the opportunity to distance them explicitly, on the basis of his general observations. A second

literary treatment of totalitarianism, a far more recent treatment, can be read in discrete places so as to rectify these two limits in perspective.

The Kindly Ones

In *The Kindly Ones*, first published in France in 2006, and since translated into English, Jonathan Littell tells the story of the wartime experience of his narrator, former SS officer Maximilien Aue. Aue's wartime experience takes him right the way across the dark geography of the Holocaust, from the open-air massacres of the *Einsatzgruppen* (task forces) in the Ukraine to the death camps in Poland. At the time of publication, *The Kindly Ones* divided critics, for whom the book either revelled in the 'pornography of violence' or, conversely, manifested a deep insight into the bureaucratic mechanisms of the Nazi extermination project.⁴⁰ But in places the book is also a commentary on the mental universe of totalitarianism. At one point Littell stages a scenario that is nearly the exact imitation of Koestler's: Aue, working for the SD (Security Service) somewhere behind the Eastern Front, strikes up a conversation with a high-ranking Soviet prisoner of war, a 'Regimental Commissar' in the Red Army.⁴¹ This time around it is the communist who entreats the fascist to see the similarities between their two movements:

In the end, our two systems aren't so different. In principle at least. ... What difference, at bottom, is there between National Socialism and socialism in a single country? ... you took everything from us. ... I'm talking about the concepts that are

dearest to your *Weltanschauung*. ... Where communism aims for a classless society, you preach the *Volksgemeinschaft* [people's community], which is basically strictly the same thing, reduced to your borders. Where Marx saw the proletariat as the bearer of truth, you decided that the so-called German race is a proletarian race, incarnation of Good and morality; consequently, for class struggle, you substituted the German proletarian war against capitalist governments.⁴²

Where Koestler's Peter recoils at the idea of juxtaposing historical materialism with biological racism, in Littell's dialogue, Aue comes very close to accepting the juxtaposition. The reader could well believe that he might, only where the Commissar looks upon Nazism as a 'perversion' of Marxism, Aue sees race as a deeper, more permanent reality than class:

Classes are a historical given; they appeared at certain moment and they will likewise disappear, harmoniously dissolving into the *Volksgemeinschaft*, instead of tearing each other to pieces. Whereas race is a biological given natural, and thus undeniable.⁴³

Ultimately, the direction that the conversation takes suggests the following, highly plausible thought: that the shared ideological ground summarised earlier as the experiment in reshaping humanity is an equivalence in form not substance, but that *that* is really the fundamental point. That a future, classless society might be an idea that is substantially more morally attractive than a society purged of the racially inferior

is secondary. As the Commissar sums up: 'I tried to show you that the ways our ideologies function are similar. The contents, of course, differ.' The commonality is the shape of the ideological configuration. Within this configuration, the division of humanity into collective units can be either vertical or horizontal. As Aue reflects to himself later on in the novel, 'we differed from the Bolsheviks only by our respective evaluations of problems to be resolved: their approach being based on a horizontal reading of social identity (class), ours by a vertical one (race), but both equally deterministic'.⁴⁴

In a second section of *The Kindly Ones* that is pertinent to totalitarian modernism, Littell's narrator recalls the lecture on proper interpretation of Party doctrine supposedly delivered by SS-Oberführer, Otto Ohlendorf ('one of the best minds of National Socialism'), sometime in the years between the Nazi takeover of power and war. The thrust of the lecture was that the Party had to guard at all costs against attempts to introduce fascism along Italian lines into the philosophy of National Socialism. The two were at odds in a very important respect. Where one valued the *volk* (or people), the other valued only the state; and erecting the state as the supreme value could lead only to the exercise of power for its own sake, not the good of individual and community:

Italian fascism [...] was guilty of deifying the State without recognising human communities, whereas National Socialism was based on community, the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Worse, Mussolini had systematically suppressed all institutional constraints on the

men in power. That led directly to a totalitarian version of State control, where neither power nor its abuses knew the slightest limit. In principle, National Socialism was based on the reality of the value of the life of the human individual and of the *Volk* as a whole; thus, the State was subordinate to the requirements of the *Volk*. Under fascism, people had no value in themselves, they were objects of the State, and the only dominant reality was the State itself.⁴⁵

This is a very rich précis of the Nazi worldview, for two reasons: first, because it calls attention to the disingenuousness of a state-centred model of totalitarianism (which will be explained fully below); second, because it identifies the right reason for excluding Italian Fascism from the category of classical totalitarianism. Typically, the wrong reason is identified for excluding it: Mussolini's Italy is described as totalitarian in theory, but non-totalitarian in practice.⁴⁶ The shortcomings in practice are described as the authority of the Church, the continuation of the monarchy, and the existence of pockets of corruption within the regime. Sometimes, the theory/practice distinction is applied to Nazi Germany and the Stalinist Soviet Union as well, to fend off the 'revisionist' criticism that a variegated empirical reality – occasional, scattered 'islands of separateness' free from political domination – discredits the concept.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, this masks a more consequential point, the point expressed by Littell's SS-Oberführer. Italian Fascism may have been exceptional to the interwar regimes in expressing a positive, totalitarian self-conception;

in Germany, Hitler seldom used the term 'totalitarian', and it was left to Carl Schmitt to develop, largely unsuccessfully.⁴⁸ However, the conception of totalitarianism theorised by Mussolini's intellectuals – above all, but not exclusively, Giovanni Gentile⁴⁹ – was fundamentally inconsistent with the vision Hitler and Stalin shared in common.

Mussolini's intellectuals may not have been realists who endorsed power for power's sake, as Littell's passage could be taken to imply. Rather, they expressed a principled set of commitments, which, in their own way, were directed at the good of the 'community'. They celebrated a 'total conception of life'. They invoked 'the ethical state' of Hegel in preference to the 'agnostic State of the old liberalism', pledging to give fullness to the human personality and to transcend the state/society divide of pluralist democracy. And most famously, Mussolini has the reputation of having proclaimed 'everything is in the State, and nothing human or spiritual exists, much less has value, outside the State'.⁵⁰

However, regardless of how the matter was conceived in abstraction, the state as end-in-itself was an ideological proposition fundamentally discontinuous with the propositions common to Nazism and Stalinism. In Hitler's Germany, *volk* – and, in a further step, 'race' – was supreme over state (which is also the reason why Schmitt's efforts to reconcile the two different vision was always likely to fail).⁵¹ Hitler himself explained in *Mein Kampf* that 'in the state [the *völkisch* philosophy] sees in principle only a means to an end and construes its end as the racial dimension of man'.⁵² This is where Littell's character corrects Koestler's: Koestler's

Nazi agent is mistaken to think that his totalitarian 'New Man' will come to recognise himself only as constituent part of a 'state-organism' – the 'supra-state', 'a million-legged, million-armed cyclopean colossus' – rather than a constituent part of the racial community reborn.⁵³ Stalinism follows the same rationale. In Stalin's Soviet Union, the 'race' of Nazism had its counterpart in 'class' as the supreme value – it was the code, variously, to the Soviet Union's prescriptive vision, to its conception of historical progress and, indeed, to its justification for an extension in the power of the state. In short, 'state' is only superficially interchangeable with 'race' and 'class' in totalitarian political thought.

Emilio Gentile has argued otherwise. For Gentile, totalitarianisms are political religions, the distinguishing mark of which is to seek to 'confer a sacred status on an earthly entity' and to 'render it an absolute principle of collective existence'.⁵⁴ Part of the weakness of this explanation of totalitarianism is generic to political religion theory, and so it is treated as such in the final section of this chapter. But for now the salient point is that Gentile thinks that 'the state' is as eligible as are 'race' or 'proletariat' to serve as this venerated earthly entity; and by implication, it is 'the state' that supposedly served as the core value of totalitarianism in Italian Fascism.⁵⁵ The reasoning above would strongly suggest that the state could do no such thing or, in the very least, not in anything like the same way.

'Nation' poses a more difficult issue, should the rejoinder be to substitute 'the nation' in the place of 'the state', in order to demonstrate the nuance

of the 'Italian road to totalitarianism'. In the Fascist understanding, to be devoted to the service of the nation was at the same time to be devoted to the service of the state; and nation has a more straightforward connotation as community, as opposed to an institution, or set of institutions. Yet even if the focus of the interpretation is made to fall on nation instead, this only highlights the separation from National Socialism from a different direction still.⁵⁶ National Socialism was characterised not only by post-civic, integralist nationalism, like Mussolini's Italy, as well as the abortive fascist movements elsewhere in interwar Europe, but also by racial nationalism.⁵⁷ To say that this exempts National Socialism from any meaningful identification with fascism insofar as it pertains to a 'general European phenomenon' is an overreaction;⁵⁸ in the analytical sense, perhaps 'fascism' (small 'f') is most fruitfully located as a prior philosophical context that shapes Nazism, in much the same way that Marxism is a prior philosophical context that shaped Stalinism. Nevertheless, the disjuncture is fundamental to a coherent understanding of totalitarian modernism.

Two models of totalitarianism: structural and genocidal

The discussion in this chapter so far has sketched out a conception of totalitarianism that will not be the familiar one. On the standard accounts, totalitarianism's elements have been cashed out in terms of institutions and practices rather more often than they have in terms of beliefs, attitudes, and outlooks. The

upshot is that totalitarian modernism has conventionally been constructed in a divergent way. It is not the case that, on the standard accounts, totalitarian modernism has passed wholly unacknowledged; to imply as much is only to fixate on a falsely imagined 'orthodoxy' that totalitarianism is a throwback or an anachronism. However, what is the case is that the standard accounts have been more adequate to the job of capturing the modernity of totalitarianism in modernity's technological senses than in its ideological senses. Technological modernity is rightly viewed as crucial to a proper understanding of totalitarianism, as Arthur Koestler's account has convincingly demonstrated.⁵⁹ Yet an appreciation of the role of modern technology makes little sense if is divorced from a picture of its interaction with totalitarianism's prescriptive vision. The standard accounts converge on what can be described as the 'structural model'. An explanation of what is wrong with the structural model will help to clear the space further for a more creditable model. At the same time, it will help to clarify further the scope of application of 'totalitarianism' when it is viewed coherently; which, as is apparent already, should really exclude Mussolini's Italy.

The structural model

The structural model proceeds from institutions and practices – or, in short, 'traits'. 'Traits' is the rendition of 'elements' associated with Friedrich and Brzezinski's *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (1956), which in turn is the foundation of the structural model.⁶⁰ Friedrich and Brzezinski discerned a 'syndrome' – or 'pattern of interrelated traits' – that was characteristic of

totalitarian regimes, amounting to six in number.⁶¹ Only the first of these traits, which effectively reproduces what Koestler identified as possession of a post-liberal, post-individualist political philosophy, indicates the beliefs or outlooks inherent in totalitarianism: 'an official ideology, consisting of an official body of doctrine covering all vital aspects of man's existence, to which everyone living in that society is supposed to adhere at least passively'. All of the other five traits refer to institutions and practices; all of which, moreover, are directed at coercion and repression. (Equally, the reference to 'passive adherence' towards an official ideology suggests that the ideological dimension itself primarily relates to coercion, rather than prescriptive vision.) The five institutions and practices each relate to technological modernity: 'a single mass party', typically led by a single individual; 'a system of terroristic police control', assumed to 'exploit modern science'; and three monopolies – a communications monopoly, a weapons monopoly, and a centrally directed economy – each taken to be 'technologically-conditioned'.⁶² At the crux, therefore, the structural model of totalitarianism foregrounds the technological reach of the modern state. One can say, indeed, that the principal definitional criterion of the structural model is the exercise of total control, emanating outwards from a political centre, in the specific sense in which this is facilitated by the technological reach of the modern state.

The structural model can reasonably be described as the familiar conception of totalitarianism because, even now, nearly all of the invocations of the term, made by either social scientists or historians, will routinely reflect the assumptions of the structural model.

Consider, for instance, Leszek Kolakowski, in the course of applying the label to the Soviet Union: 'The totalitarian character of the regime – i.e. the progressive destruction of civil society and absorption of all forms of social life by the state – increased almost with interruption between 1924 and 1953.'⁶³ Or consider Richard Overly, actually rejecting a 'totalitarian model': a 'political-science fantasy', which presupposes 'domination through fear by psychopathic tyrants' who wield total, unlimited power.⁶⁴

It is worth labouring at this point that the standard, structural model is by no stretch entirely discreditable, for at least two reasons. First, the structural model gives recognition to the novelty of totalitarianism: the model starts out from the claim that twentieth-century dictatorships are *sui generis*. Second, the model ascribes this novelty to the role played in the twentieth-century dictatorships not only by technology but by ideological production and consumption: as Friedrich and Brzezinski put the matter, modern totalitarian regimes are autocracies 'based on modern technology *and* mass legitimation'.⁶⁵

However, the complaint that ought to be directed at the structural model concerns its state-centredness. The issue might be put as follows. The construction of the structural model entails two definitional moves, the first of which can be broadly accepted, the second of which should be rethought. The first definitional move identifies totalitarianism, on the one hand, by contrast with the properties of democracy and, on the other, by contrast with those of authoritarianism, the form of dictatorship familiar to the past. The political scientist Karl Deutsch articulated the main lines of this contrast

as early as 1953, and it is a formulation that remains broadly valid, as well as rhetorically rather elegant:

In a democracy ... everything that is not forbidden is permitted; under an authoritarian regime, everything that is not permitted is forbidden; under totalitarianism, everything that is not forbidden is compulsory.⁶⁶

The second move – the suspect move – entails the matter of specifying totalitarianism’s definitional properties more precisely. In the main, the structural model imagines that what separates totalitarianism from authoritarianism are degrees of social control. As such, the operative image is that of a continuum demarcating distinct systems of rule, that runs right the way from democracy to authoritarianism, and eventually to totalitarianism; and which, at its poles, locates two extremes: minimal control and total control. Authoritarian regimes, on this image, fall short of exercising ‘total’ control, though the presence of a number of features distinguishing authoritarian regimes from democratic regimes works to inhibit the ‘bottom-up’ articulation of political demands (for example, the absence of free elections and rule of law).⁶⁷

The separation of democratic, authoritarian, and totalitarian regimes is credible and useful, but the flaw in the structural model can be found in the detail of the configuration of this continuum. The optimal degree of social control – ‘total control’ – is the point of origin of Overy’s ‘political-science fantasy’; the definitional requirement of a society totally pervaded and shaped by those in power is a fiction that falsely

opens the door to the 'revisionist' rejection of the totalitarian thesis *tout court*. As one commentator has summarised,⁶⁸ there is a thesis of 'monopolisation' in the structural model – which amounts to a set of empirical assertions about the role of the unitary party, the control of media and art, the management of all public associations, and state-command of the economy⁶⁹ – which does not (if it ever could) match reality. Hitler's Third Reich, for instance, fell short of achieving an economic monopoly, and the unitary party did not occupy the same position as it did in Stalin's Soviet Union, in light of the differences between the immediate Bolshevik and Nazi political traditions. Yet, if the discussion earlier of the restricted scope of classical totalitarianism – excluding Italy – is persuasive (that, properly speaking, the state as end-in-itself does not even match totalitarianism in theory) – it should be of even less consequence that complete domination by the state should not match practice. Accordingly, the corollary is not that totalitarianism should be jettisoned as a conceptual resource: it is still logically consistent to claim that the totalitarian thesis identifies a very real political innovation that, in the twentieth century, constituted a decisive departure from both democracy and authoritarianism. Rather, the corollary is that 'totalitarianism' ought to be rethought in the aspect of its chief definitional properties.

Where, then, do the distinguishing features of (this) totalitarianism reside? It is a bad mistake, once having pulled apart three types of political regime, to advert to methods of rule as a chief definitional property of totalitarianism. It was only *after* the collapse in

confidence in Friedrich and Brzezinski's six-point syndrome that totalitarianism defined by total control came to be regarded with circumspection. However, prior to that, the structural model was always out of step with operative moral intuitions – intuitions that continue into the present, and which continue with good reason. This intuition is that, at base, what justifies the addition of a new word to the political lexicon is the experience of political mass murder, being sponsored by the leadership of a modern state, and being exceptional in both intention and scale.⁷⁰ Furthermore, it is an intuition that picks out the particular moral significance of Koestler's fourth element of totalitarianism, the experiment in reshaping humanity, and elevates an aspect of it to the place of core definitional criterion; namely, the physical destruction of ideologically specified opponents. The upshot is that rather more compelling than the structural model of totalitarianism is what might be called the 'genocidal model'. The separation of these two models has only occasionally gained explicit attention but the separation is paramount, both for the purpose of validating the concept, and for the purpose of giving coherence to what then becomes a self-contained, post-war intellectual discourse about its meaning and implications.⁷¹ On the one hand, 'totalitarianism' as 'total control', or else 'bureaucratic totalitarianism', has sometimes been contrasted, on the other hand, with 'totalitarianism as extermination', or 'annihilatory totalitarianism'.⁷² Importantly, the identification of totalitarianism with genocide requires a more sophisticated defence than might the identification with alternative denotations of

political violence – annihilation or extermination, say. Furthermore, it is worth setting out this defence presently, for the reason that it finalises the scope of application of the term.

The genocidal model

‘Genocide’ is a word that was originated in the attempt to come to terms with the Nazi extermination of European Jewry and which, since the end of the Cold War, has played an important part in Western moral sensibilities.⁷³ The actual meaning of the term, though, is disputed. Demonstrating the coherence of its application to Stalin’s Soviet Union requires, in the first instance, clarifying its meaning in a particular direction. The generally accepted definition is the one contained in the UN Convention on Genocide. This specifies ‘the intent to destroy’ – ‘in whole or in part’ – a group that may be defined according to its ‘national, ethnical, racial or religious character’.⁷⁴ The first sticking point regarding genocide’s application to the political violence of Stalinism has always been the group identity of its victims: at most, a social class; in the least, a group with an identity only internal to the mind of the perpetrator. Conceptual issues like these have even led Anne Applebaum to speculate that ‘perhaps we need a new word, one that is broader than the current definitions of genocide and means, simply, “mass murder carried out for political reasons”’.⁷⁵ However, something like the meaning that Applebaum wants to convey can be imparted with a modest adjustment within the terms of the concept itself: as long as the analyst is open to the idea that a policy of genocide may be either racially or class-oriented,

then there is no obstacle – in principle – to describing Stalinist violence as genocidal. To be open to this idea is, in a certain sense, to endorse one of the central claims of the controversial *Black Book of Communism*: that ‘the techniques of segregation and exclusion employed in a “class-based” totalitarianism closely resemble the techniques of “race-based” totalitarianism’.⁷⁶ Equivalence in technique, though, need not necessarily imply an overall ‘moral equivalence’, and so asserting it leaves open the space for confirming the ‘uniqueness’ of the Holocaust on various, other grounds.⁷⁷

A second obstacle would appear to relate to practice, not theory. It requires a rough empirical assessment of the actions perpetrated under Stalinism that are eligible to be registered as genocidal. There are at least four actions eligible here: the campaign against the *kulaks* (landed peasantry), the Ukrainian famine, Soviet policies towards the nationalities, and the ‘Great Terror’. Conventionally, each has been distanced from genocide as such.⁷⁸ Other accounts challenge the accuracy of this historical picture.⁷⁹ Adjudicating between these competing interpretations, however, soon transpires to be really a theoretical issue before it is a matter of empirical assessment. There are a whole set of relevant considerations concerning genocide’s own definitional requirements. The group identity of victims – or, more broadly, victim/perpetrator status – is only one of these considerations.

There are also considerations of intention, scale, and process. *Intention* – if, say, genocide requires a maximal expression of ‘the intent to destroy’, then the absence of clear premeditation on the part of

Stalin and the Soviet leadership would, if empirically demonstrable, exclude any of the four actions just listed from being meaningfully described as genocidal. This is what could be called the quantitative aspect of intention – its presence rather than absence. There is a further qualitative aspect that is relevant – the type of motivation. Does the perpetrator aim to destroy the group physically, or culturally – by destroying whatever it is which sustains the group's shared identity? Next, *scale* – if genocide implies destruction 'in whole or in part', what is the threshold? How many victims are implied? Lastly, *process* – which is not, strictly speaking, specified in the UN Convention, although it is implied in virtue of the precedent of genocide's application to the Holocaust: through what sequence of stages does the destruction of the victim-group proceed, and is this a sequence that approximates the Nazi treatment of victim-groups?

How, then, might this set of considerations guide a proper understanding of Stalinist political violence? The outcome is necessarily rather indeterminate because it rests on decisions about the meaning of concepts that must, in the final analysis, remain debatable. But, on balance, the outcome suggests there are more than adequate grounds to assimilate Stalinism together with Nazism under the remit of a genocidal totalitarianism. Consider the following.

First, the campaign against the *kulaks* was directed at a victim-group that, so Nicholas Werth has argued, lacks 'the criterion of stability'; the status of the victim-group, in other words, might seem too vague for genocide to apply.⁸⁰ However, on the other hand: the criterion of presence of intention is met (there is

evidence of 'Stalin's premeditated involvement'); the scale exceeded anything except the most optimal threshold (*kulaks* were eliminated in large numbers – either deported to special settlements, or subject to mass shootings); and, like the victims of Nazism, *kulaks* were exposed to 'dehumanisation' through choice terminology ('enemies of the people', 'swine', and 'vermin').⁸¹

Second, the Ukrainian famine of the early 1930s may, in the type of motivation, have been 'very different from the Holocaust'.⁸² Nevertheless, there is evidence of the presence of intention – Stalin certainly knew about it, even if he did not order it as such, and the Soviet leadership connived in grain shortages and bad harvests.⁸³ Timothy Snyder notes that 'it was not food shortages but food distribution that killed millions in the Soviet Ukraine, and it was Stalin who decided who was entitled to what'.⁸⁴ Moreover, for Raphael Lemkin, the Polish lawyer who was the originator of the concept and the author of the UN Convention, the famine in the Ukraine was 'the classic example of Soviet genocide'.⁸⁵

Third, Soviet policies towards the nationalities in the 1930s and 1940s may not have slipped into 'racial politics' *per se*, as Eric Weitz has argued. Rather, it was national distinctiveness, not racial pollution, that was understood to be obstacle to the communist society envisaged, as Werth has corrected Weitz's position.⁸⁶ Yet these policies come to assume a genocidal character if the wholesale displacement of peoples, like the Chechen-Ingush or the Crimean Tatars, is taken to constitute the intention to effect a kind of *cultural* genocide. In certain other cases, furthermore, these policies assume an even more straightforward

genocidal character: when the destruction of a national grouping takes the form of physical elimination (for instance, the Katyn massacre against the Polish officer class, in June 1940).⁸⁷

Fourth, and lastly, the Great Terror – the mass purges of 1937–8 – lacked the feature of being explicitly aimed at a single group with a coherent identity, being targeted variously at disfavoured communist elites, spies, traitors, and general ‘anti-Soviet’ elements. Nevertheless, scale (lately estimated conservatively at a number of 800,000 executed), rather more than intention and victim/perpetrator status, suggests in the very least that the default designation as ‘terror’ does not locate this episode of Stalinist violence in sufficient proximity to the violence of Nazism.⁸⁸ Not without reason have commentators ventured tentatively towards describing this episode as ‘a Soviet variant of the “final solution”’ or ‘a political holocaust’.⁸⁹

So, in short, if genocide functions as the principal definitional criterion of totalitarianism, then Nazism – the unproblematic case of a genocidal regime – can be joined by Stalinism in inclusion under its remit. What is excluded is the next topic posed. This can be understood to be a matter of drawing out the appropriate implications from the same set of considerations governing the application of genocide already discussed. Is Leninism totalitarian, one can reasonably ask? The continuities across Leninism and Stalinism have long been debated.⁹⁰ In regard to the structural model, Lenin certainly pointed ‘the way to communist dictatorship’; the Bolsheviks inherited from Lenin the euphemistic principle of ‘democratic centralism’.⁹¹ With more pertinence, because it concerns the

genocidal model, the Soviet concentration camps date back to Lenin's time.⁹² However, the era of the commission of political mass murder in the Soviet Union is rightly fastened to the shorthand of 'the Gulag' (just as the commission of political mass murder in the case of Nazism is fastened to 'Holocaust').⁹³ It was not until 1931, following Stalin's rise to power, that the special settlements and the concentration camps were merged into a single system, known as the Gulag (acronym for Main Camp Administration).⁹⁴ The term, first introduced to the West by Solzhenitsyn, has subsequently come to be expanded in its application, but expanded precisely such that it is rendered synonymous with the violence of Stalinism. As Applebaum writes,

The word 'Gulag' has also come to signify not only the administration of the concentration camps but also the system of Soviet labour itself, in all its forms and varieties: labour camps, punishment camps, criminal and political camps, women's camps, children's camps, transit camps. Even more broadly, 'Gulag' has come to mean the Soviet repressive system itself, the set of procedures that prisoners called the 'meat grinder': the arrests, the interrogations, the transport in unheated cattle cars, the forced labour, the destruction of families, the years spent in exile, the early and unnecessary deaths.⁹⁵

Conceived in these terms, then, genocidal totalitarianism is emblematic of Stalinism, though can scarcely be said to even register as characteristic of Leninism. The same holds for post-Stalinism as for pre-Stalinism. As Norman Naimark has suggested, the period of

totalitarianism in the Soviet Union ends with the death of Stalin because genocide (together with the threat of genocide) quickly dissipates.⁹⁶ It is the absence of mass terror, and the presence only of an individual terror, that is the decisive feature of post-Stalinism.⁹⁷

But does Mao's China have a claim to be included within the terms of reference of a genocidal totalitarianism, even if Leninism, and the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe after 1953, do not? It might come close. Mao's China has been described as 'the worst non-genocidal regime', and a credible argument can be made that Hannah Arendt's exclusion of the Maoist regime from her conception of totalitarianism is an 'anomaly'.⁹⁸ Arendt thought that totalitarian domination required large populations to work on as raw material and, in China, this demographic was in prospect.⁹⁹ The Maoist regime also, as Baehr observes, targeted 'objective enemies' – 'people classified [as] foes in virtue of who they are, as opposed to what they may or may not have done'.¹⁰⁰ However, although the matter must be indeterminate, there is reason on balance to withhold the full designation of 'genocide'. Violence was widespread and systematic but fell below a threshold of genocide since, as Margolin notes, 'the extermination of targeted groups was never complete'.¹⁰¹ Moreover, even for social scientists working within the terms of the structural model, Mao's regime has been described as 'the most controversial of cases'.¹⁰²

Up to this point, to summarise, the significant obstacles to the viability of a genocidal model of totalitarianism, which have been shown to relate mainly to the conceptual definition of genocide, have been removed. The foregoing analysis has also tried to show

why it is that this model has an exclusive purchase on Nazism and Stalinism. What remains are a few issues, which might be registered only as lingering concerns. They are not decisive. However, there is some sense in raising them, and in trying to answer them, to give further clarity to the model. One lingering concern relates to the elevation of the institution of the concentration camp to prominence within the definitional criteria. An opposite kind of concern relates to the downgrading of the importance of the state.

On the issue of concentration camps: social and political theorists like Giorgio Agamben have argued that the camp is not only the representative institution of totalitarianism but of modernity itself.¹⁰³ This position is pernicious though, and often falsely assimilated to authoritative accounts, like Arendt's.¹⁰⁴ Tzvetan Todorov has commented forcefully on this. The concentration camps, writes Todorov, represent an extremity, in two distinct senses of the word; they are 'the extreme manifestation of the totalitarian regime, itself the extreme form of modern political life'. Nevertheless, he continues, this primary claim need not entail two further claims, of the sort lent credence by Agamben's stance: either that the world is one vast concentration camp, or that concentration camps are the inevitable outcome of modernity.¹⁰⁵ While the genocidal model does bring into focus those modern, ideological resources that support extreme forms of political violence, it is sharply dissociated from the position that portrays modernity *per se* in totalitarian terms.

On the issue of the state: to replace the structural model with a genocidal model is to downgrade state centralisation as a definitional criterion, but it is

not to entertain the notion of a so-called inverted totalitarianism, which is supposedly characteristic of contemporary societies like the United States, and which disseminates, delegates, and disguises its power, rather than invests power in a political centre.¹⁰⁶ Not only is the commission of political mass murder central to the identity of totalitarianism, but genocide itself is understood, in definitional terms, to be state-directed and state-controlled.¹⁰⁷ This is another reason why the scope of application of genocidal totalitarianism is restrictive. Less systematic instances of mass killing, ethnically motivated or otherwise, are excluded from its remit (no matter how much they are morally repellent in themselves). At some stage 'genocide', implying the involvement of state institutions, shades off into 'vigilantism', with a primarily 'social character'.¹⁰⁸

To take stock, the discussion in this chapter has now travelled some distance. The shared ideological space between Nazism and Stalinism has first of all been cashed out in the form of four distinct elements, or four beliefs, attitudes and outlooks: an emotional appeal; a post-liberal, post-individualist political philosophy; the conscious pursuit of technological modernity; and the experiment in reshaping humanity. Together these elements suggest the periodisation of totalitarianism as a counter- and post-Enlightenment phenomenon, because they imply a reaction against typical Enlightenment conceptions: of human conduct; of individualism; of civic nationalism; of the political subject. In the first section of the chapter, then, totalitarianism has been shown to grow out of modernity in an ideological sense, as well as in a particular direction. The second

part of the discussion has taken issue with what is instead the standard view: that the modern character of totalitarianism is to be ascribed almost wholly – and not in part only – to its technological aspects. Ascribing priority to technological aspects has been shown to be the result of giving analytical attention to totalitarian institutions and practices, ahead of beliefs, attitudes, and outlooks. Giving principal attention to institutions and practices has also resulted in the misleading impression that state control, rather than the commission of political mass murder, is its primary definitional feature. What might not be so clear is why a genocidal model, proposed to supersede the structural model, should itself give adequate space to the ideological dimension. That can only become clear with the wider thesis of the book in view. But the important point to note for now is that the separate intellectual currents that constitute the explanatory background to totalitarianism, and which bring forth its combination of elements, are each oriented towards a genocidal outcome. Why that is so is shown fully in Part II of the book. Yet the earlier treatment of Mussolini's Italy is indirect evidence of the claim. The absence of genocide excludes Mussolini's Italy from meaningful understanding as totalitarian; and the absence in Fascism of the same kind of ideological commitments that are common to Nazism and Stalinism is connected to the absence of genocide in turn.

The conceptual limits of political religion theory

Both the ideological dimension of totalitarianism and the centrality to totalitarianism of political violence

have been amplified in one prominent approach to its study: political religion theory. It is appropriate to address this approach by way of a postscript to the present chapter, not only in light of its prominence, but also because aspects of the political religion thesis are continuous with some of the issues so far raised; there will still be reason to turn to it at various points later in the book. One important point of this book's thesis is that it would be wrong to add political religion to the set of intellectual currents that merge into totalitarianism. Rather, the more convincing claims about political religion are really claims about the causal role in totalitarianism of utopianism and revolutionary violence. A further important point is that much of the political religion reading of totalitarianism, in fact, is unconvincing, since it does not hold up to careful scrutiny. Nazism and Stalinism overlap in the interaction across and between three currents of *secular* modernism. It is true that political religion theory is not hostile to the crux of this claim since, in the main, it pins the emphasis on what are ultimately only pseudo-religious modernisms. In other words, political religion theory does not emphasise a traditional, religious reaction against the modern liberal mainstream, but emphasises instead appropriations and imitations of religious beliefs and sentiments in secular outlooks. Nonetheless, the intervening period between the Enlightenment and the rise of the totalitarian political movements is better thought of in terms that do not make various religious idioms perform the burden of the work that needs to be done in order to explain the latter.

Only quite marginalised accounts within political religion theory argue for the continuity of Nazism and/or Stalinism with the mainstream of Christianity.

In *The Holy Reich*, for example, Richard Steigmann-Gall tries to show that Nazi belief was largely articulated and understood 'within a Christian frame of reference', borrowing from a repository of long-standing Protestant ideas, and adapting them in the process.¹⁰⁹ Accounts like this may, in some cases, give colour to the detail of the historical record. But they can give that colour, it can well be assumed, without effacing the primary importance of the secular currents of thought. Accounts like Steigmann-Gall's also undermine the conceptual framework that is representative of the core of political religion theory, which is ordered around the idea that modern politics takes on a religious dimension of its own – independent of traditional, revealed religion. Emilio Gentile has described this as the 'sacralisation of politics'.¹¹⁰ This kind of religious vocabulary for modern politics points to the translation of Christian ideas into a *secular* frame of reference, which is typically imagined to operate such that religious energies are diverted into new forms of expression.¹¹¹ It is conceived along these lines that political religion theory either, at a certain point, commits itself to assertions that are unsustainable; or, at a step short of that, succeeds in rendering two totalitarian currents in its own, peculiar terminology – typically, rendering utopianism as 'messianism', and revolutionary violence as 'eschatological'.

Roger Griffin, in *Modernism and Fascism*, has tried to account for totalitarian modernism through an innovative variant of the political religion thesis, a variant that is nonetheless consistent with the representative core of the theory. In Griffin's argument, a 'primordialist' theory of modernism is invoked in order

to provide the missing link between (de)sacralised, enlightened modernity and (re)sacralised totalitarianism. In this theory, the idea of 'canopy loss' is put to especially heavy work. Griffin takes the concept of a 'sacred canopy' from the sociologist Peter Berger, and Berger means by sacred canopy the creation and sustaining of a distinctly 'human world' or 'culture' – a complex of beliefs, practices, and rituals – whereby (in Griffin's words) the members of a given society are guaranteed 'the experiential certainty that their lives are an integral part of a higher reality'.¹¹² In Griffin's extrapolation from Berger, the late eighteenth-century Enlightenment prompts the 'breaking-up' of the West's sacred canopy of Christianity, and in its wake, in the nineteenth century, there emerges an existential need to repair deep-rooted, human meaning. Ultimately, offered up in this vacuum (and excepting, for the time being, some of the sophisticated considerations also factored into Griffin's account) are the 'revitalisation movements' that will point the way to fascism and to Stalinism.

It is only proper to note that many of the moves being made here are appealing. Rightly, this account gives more integrity to the 'aestheticization of politics' in fascism than is given by Marxist accounts, which reduce 'aestheticization' to the 'stage-managed' deceit of the masses ('integrity', that is, in the sense of internal coherence).¹¹³ Furthermore, the account rightly casts Nazism as the product of ideological innovation within modernity in general, rather than the exclusive product of German ideological developments.¹¹⁴ '*Mein Kampf*', states Griffin, 'is a modernist manifesto', and the suggestion that the interpretation of totalitarian

modernism would benefit from a rereading of *Mein Kampf* is apt.¹¹⁵ Finally, the account does not have a restrictive purchase on fascism, since its implications for communism are clearly spelled out: revolutionary socialism, it notes, needs to be comprehended via interpretative lenses wider than those provided by modern political theory alone, to the point that Marxism (as much as fascism) warrants assessment as an 'attempt to re-erect a sacred canopy appropriate to secularising modernity'.¹¹⁶ However, notwithstanding the appeal of all these moves made by Griffin, the account also rubs up against the conceptual limits of political religion theory, to the extent that it brings them nicely into view.

First of all, a primordialist theory of modernism depends upon a 'phenomenological' – or experiential – understanding of (political) religion: religious experience should be understood as that which serves 'nomic needs'.¹¹⁷ Definitions of religion are prone to notorious conceptual problems. In a phenomenological definition, the problem of circularity is particularly acute: is a religious experience simply that which is so because it occurs within a religious frame of reference? When political religion theory associates a religious frame of reference with the presence of the 'sacred', and when it imagines the sacred becoming progressively disengaged from institutional religion, finding its way into the political realm instead,¹¹⁸ problems of circularity are clearly posed, and it must remain an open question whether they are amenable to satisfactory resolution. It might equally be noted that the alternative definitions of religion sometimes adverted to fare little better. Substantive definitions

that emphasise monotheism – and which therefore, in actuality, tend to rule out ‘political religion’ – are in danger of making religion too culturally specific. Oppositely, functional definitions – which do lend political religion credence, by identifying religion on the basis of the role (or ‘function’) it performs in collective and/or individual life – are in danger of making religion too inclusive and broad.¹¹⁹ However, the phenomenological version, which was first applied to totalitarianism in Eric Voegelin’s foundational interpretation *The Political Religions* (1938), is especially revealing of the limits of political religion theory.¹²⁰ Canopy-loss and innate, nomic need imply not only definitional problems, but also imply an assertion about the high importance of a psychological level of explanation for totalitarianism. At worst, political religion theory is therefore in danger of lapsing into the sort of ‘psychological void’ clichés that portray ‘disenchanted’ populaces succumbing to replacement faiths.¹²¹ At best, the emphasis on psychological propensity is ahistorical.¹²² The limit is not at all the diminution of material factors (so much is bracketed off, to remind, from this book’s thesis). The limit is that it has to leave entirely unexamined the ways in which intellectual contexts – totalitarianism’s intellectual sources – change over time.

Second, there is a flaw in the way in which political religion theory handles processes of modernisation. Unsurprisingly, for political religion theory, the process of modernisation that is of first-order importance is ‘secularisation’ (rather than, say, industrialisation or bureaucratisation). By itself this move is defensible, although it might blindside the analyst to a more

open-ended 'chain of responses' to the various problems posed by modern experience.¹²³ Far more problematic is that secularisation theory has long – and correctly – had its detractors in social science.¹²⁴ Secularisation theory states that the social significance of religion necessarily diminishes in response to modernisation, and it pictures levels of religious belief falling off at a steady rate.¹²⁵ As such, secularisation theory has a teleological aspect, which obscures the ebbs and flows of religious consciousness, which cannot be given linear expression. The problem then is that, in the representative core of political religion theory, modernity is ascribed an abstract logic that is rather too neat.¹²⁶ The difficulties that secularisation poses for political religion theory do not end there, though. Also noteworthy is that the meaning ascribed to the term is not even the standard, received meaning. It is more ambitious than that. Political religion theory works with the idea not principally of a decline in religious belief but of a transfer of religious essence – usually theorised as the 'sacred' – from divine to human object.¹²⁷ The implied effect is that secularisation does not *overcome* religious attachments, but instead channels them into new conduits.¹²⁸ Political leaders become for Michael Burleigh, for instance, secular 'gods', or (as discussed earlier in this chapter) 'earthly entities' like nation, state, revolution, proletariat, etc. become, for Emilio Gentile, rendered 'absolute principle[s] of collective existence', and thus 'objects for veneration and dedication'.¹²⁹ Fanaticism is the result and violence is, accordingly, presented as immanent to fascism and communism from their very first conceptual intimations, the French Revolution being a kind of

crucible for all of totalitarianism's important ingredients. In a word, then, secularisation is configured into 'sacralisation' – or, better put, re-sacralisation. The process whereby the transfer operates is the point in contest. Once the problem of abstraction raised above is factored into the analysis, political religion theory comes to operate on the basis of a 'misleading trajectory': an ambitious logic is ascribed to modern political discourse whereby, after a series of neat progressions, totalitarianism becomes the (inevitable?) outcome of secularising modernity.¹³⁰ The strong claim being made about historical derivation – that, over time, theological meanings become relocated into the political realm – is ambitious, to say the least, when viewed up close. As one can draw out from the thinking of Hans Blumenberg, for this conception of secularisation to hold up to scrutiny, a whole set of conditions would have to be met: there would have to be an identifiable substance of ideas, one shared between a theological original and a secular 'derivation'; that same original would have to have a valid claim to 'ownership' of the particular substance of ideas; and a specific sort of process would have to be mapped out, a process in which the substance is 'removed' from the original source before (re)occupying a place in the derivation.¹³¹ In short, the handling of secularisation is a difficulty for many variants of political religion theory, and it is a difficulty in Griffin's *Modernism and Fascism* (even if it is not decisive for Griffin's general argument). An analytical framework in which modernisation is pictured as leading to 'disenchantment', in Weberian terms, which then clears the space for proto-totalitarian attempts to re-enchant modern

experience – or ‘resacralise’ it – must be careful not to crowd out questions regarding change in the intellectual sources of totalitarianism over time (which will not appear fully constituted at any given moment of ‘disenchantment’).¹³²

A third part of a critical discussion of political religion theory can begin to separate out its more convincing claims. Where political religion theory is generally understood to state something about the substantive content of totalitarian ideology, it actually reveals something more credible concerning the shape of its internal configuration. The implications of this revelation for a reading of totalitarianism can be sketched out in terms that initially take a step backwards, since they will not otherwise be readily apparent. These terms are as follows. Once fully constituted out of its significant intellectual currents, totalitarianism acquires political force on the basis of mass legitimation (as we will see shortly, in Chapter 2). One shortcoming of the structural model, as illustrated earlier, is to overplay the role of top-down, state coercion and control, and so legitimation, via public justification, should be given rather more attention. The shape of the internal configuration of totalitarian ideology turns out to be crucial in this matter of legitimation because, as Emilio Gentile’s accounts serves to most make clear, totalitarianism’s emotional appeal is at least partly discharged through the projected identification with a singular, supremely elevated idea: the ‘earthly entity’ around which Gentile declares any political religion must be organised, in virtue of conferring it with a ‘sacred status’.¹³³ In this way, totalitarianism can be said to reproduce the internal

configuration of a religious 'faith'; only in place of God at the centre of monolithic belief systems, totalitarianism elevates (in the case of Nazism) race or (in the case of Stalinism) class. The conferral of sacred status is really the attempt to tap rich stores of emotional investment, to call on intense, non-cognitive attachments – attachments that are buttressed not only by identification with them in the here-and-now, but also by the anticipated participation in the future societies that will be defined by those attachments. Put differently, political religion theory illuminates the issue of ideological consumption rather better than it does ideological production. As such, its advertised emphasis should shift from the substance of belief to the act of believing itself.¹³⁴

The fourth part of a discussion of political religion theory turns now to a final issue: those areas in which political religion theory does successfully identify the substantive contents of totalitarian ideology, albeit in which, on closer inspection, the religious idiom turns out to be surplus to requirements. There are two such areas. The first area concerns the utopian current of thought that finds expression in totalitarianism. The second concerns the origin of revolutionary violence. These two areas can be touched upon briefly, to the extent that touching on them confirms the implausibility of political religion's pretension to offer an explanation of totalitarianism that is genuinely self-standing. A full discussion of them, however, logically awaits treatment until Part II of the book.

First, utopianism: 'messianism',¹³⁵ 'chiliasm',¹³⁶ 'Heavenly City',¹³⁷ and 'New Faith'¹³⁸ are all rough approximations to 'utopia' in the political religion

literature. That there is little here that is truly distinctive is suggested in the fact that even the standard version of the structural model, Friedrich and Brzezinski's, already makes reference to the 'chiliasm' that the 'official ideology' of any 'totalitarian' regime will contain. The meanings, moreover, are loose. 'Chiliasm', in Christian theology, is synonymous with 'millenarianism', and denotes Christ's return to the world to establish a kingdom that will last a thousand years. Likewise, 'messianism', in Jacob Talmon's use, is meant to insinuate the migration of religious hopes to the political realm; hopes that are ultimately directed at salvation in-this-world, or secular redemption, pictured as being satisfied, indeed, in the implementation of grand, utopian visions. Whatever, precisely, might be achieved by framing utopia in these alternative terms can only be decisively offset by the difficulties thereby prompted. All that needs be recalled is the improbably strong claim about historical derivation implied. The extreme example would be Norman Cohn's *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, which postulates an imagined continuity reaching as far back as the heretical, revolutionary movements of Europe's eleventh to sixteenth centuries.¹³⁹ There is, though, an exception to all these other terms – 'palingenesis', as associated with the approach of Roger Griffin. 'Palingenesis' genuinely adds an important facet to the understanding of the kind of utopianism that is at work in totalitarianism, which might otherwise be overlooked. The idea of rebirth after decline and decadence, expanded from the Christian idea of resurrection, captures a crucial way in which Nazism and Stalinism structure the historical process,

arranging together past, present, and future, as we shall see in Chapter 3.¹⁴⁰

The second area, revolutionary violence, is likewise open to being given a religious rendition. The 'eschatological', for example, is to all intents and purposes merely an equivalent of what French thought identifies as the 'revolutionary passion' in totalitarianism.¹⁴¹ The eschaton, the Judeo-Christian doctrine of 'last things', approximates a conception of creative destruction and active nihilism.¹⁴² Accordingly, violence can well be seen as 'sanctified' in totalitarian politics – serving as a crucial instrument of individual and collective regeneration – but whether sanctification has any more substance than that of a metaphor must be moot. There is also a specific connotation of millenarianism that amounts to much the same thing: namely, an 'apocalyptic' view of temporal change, which draws strength from 'demonology' and the hostile depiction of particular groups outside the community of 'the elect'.¹⁴³ In this view of millenarianism, the hostile depiction of such groups – the background to violence – is the inseparable counterpart to the thousand-year golden age envisaged at the same time. Ultimately, however, creative destruction and active nihilism are better treated in terms that do not wed an argument to ambitious causal claims. Again, the full case in support of this argument will wait until later, being set out in Chapter 5.

In sum, to review this chapter concisely, a particular group of claims have been set out, and attempts have been made to substantiate each: that totalitarian modernism can be unpacked coherently in ideological terms, with the effect that there is a finite set

of significant elements; that a structural model of totalitarianism obscures these elements, by prioritising the pretence to total control over a distinctive kind of modern political violence; and that this kind of political violence is not the outcome of modernity's relationship with religion and will therefore, in principle, be better investigated instead as the result of the confluence of a number of independent, secular currents of thought. With the wider thesis of the book in view, these claims are all nuts and bolts type issues. They have addressed the 'what' and 'when' questions of totalitarianism: the 'what' question, because they provide a basic definition; the 'when' question, because they provide a rough periodisation of totalitarianism's sources. On the latter question, as we have seen, this periodisation is such that the secular currents of thought can be understood as currents that gain traction by the late nineteenth century, in response to problems presented by modern experience contingently – as it evolves. There is a final nuts and bolts type issue that remains to be addressed: the 'how' question. This is the subject of the chapter ahead, in which the focus falls on the passage from intellectual source to fully constituted product. The 'how' question, in other words, concerns the modes of transmission of proto-totalitarian ideas.

2

The Problem of Intellectual Antecedents

How do prior intellectual contexts lead to totalitarianism as a concrete political reality? The question concerns the kind of causal significance that should be assigned to ideational terms of reference. The phrasing is inelegant, though in fact, as will be argued in full shortly, the matter of finding a satisfactory answer to this question is in part a matter of confining obscurantist terminology to a minimum. Quite a sophisticated vocabulary has accrued, in the literature, for making sense of the relationship between totalitarianism and its sources. However, this vocabulary really amounts only to providing many different ways of specifying that what applies is either a relationship of 'affinity' or a relationship of 'influence'. Establishing an economy of these two types of intellectual antecedents in abstraction is important when we come to the next part of the study. In Part II of the book, affinity and influence will serve as the benchmarks for evaluating the detail of the causal significance of three currents of thought: their development over time; the separation of their points of

affinity and influence respectively; and their relative weighting in Nazism and Stalinism.

Obviously, splitting the terms of intellectual antecedence requires, before that, an understanding that ideas *have* causal significance in totalitarianism. Much has already been done, it will be recalled, in the previous chapter, to promote that understanding, by staking out a conception of totalitarianism that foregrounds the ideological dimension. It is useful at this stage to unravel the implications of a further, particular term of reference – legitimation. The structural model marginalised the ideological dimension. Yet it still, in Friedrich and Brzezinski's account, gave recognition to the processes of 'mass legitimation' that (alongside modern technology) separated totalitarian regimes from traditional authoritarianism. Even so there is sometimes a reluctance to discuss totalitarianism together with the topic of legitimacy. The reluctance could well be forgiven, if only its cause were not the disdain of high-end political philosophy for the kind of political thought that, in the twentieth century, 'mattered politically'.¹ While one approach to legitimacy is moralised and prescriptive, a more inclusive approach is directed at explaining legitimacy in given historical contexts, and in actual political and social relationships.² The more inclusive approach is appropriate to totalitarianism in several senses. For instance, an idea of legitimation explains how it is that twentieth-century populations could have invested – specifically – certain 'expectations' in totalitarianism, since in the sort of power relationships that obtain in actual contexts, power will generally be experienced as authoritative on condition of conformity

to expectations.³ Likewise, an idea of legitimation makes it possible to at least envisage a political consensus that is not 'manipulated' or 'coerced' but which could, rather, be taken at face value; in envisaging as such, moreover, a strict binary distinction of 'consent/dissent' is usefully set to one side.⁴ In short, the sooner the structural model is discarded, the better the analyst can begin to get a hold on the complexity of the articulation and reception of a political project held together by an underlying commitment to the idea of anthropological revolution.

Of course, the present study is interested principally in articulation, not reception. The focus is on the production of proto-totalitarian currents and the transmission of these currents over time – not their short-term ideological consumption, where the dynamics of popular opinion will bear more saliently. This is not to denigrate the importance of short-term ideological consumption in its own right. Indeed, we saw at the end of the previous chapter that one plausible way of explaining these dynamics might be through the 'sacred' aura emitted, metaphorically, by organising-ideas like 'the proletariat' and 'the Aryan race'. Nevertheless, the point being made here is that the inclusive approach to legitimacy helps to make sense of long-term intellectual antecedents as much as it does of the short-term processes. Certainly, it is only in light of an idea of legitimation that the sort of statement synoptic of this book's overall argument – for example, that 'totalitarianism attains legitimacy in connection with three modernist currents of thought' – is capable of assuming any substantive meaning.⁵ In ruminating on the sources of totalitarianism, students

of the history of ideas have long been grappling with a familiar rogues' gallery of candidates for censure (from philosophers through to biologists). The broad understanding has been that the appropriate marker for censure is to have lent legitimacy 'in some way' to an emerging totalitarian project. What might be meant more precisely by this understanding, therefore, is the matter that, in the present chapter, will need to be teased out more carefully.

A useful initial step towards working through the problem of intellectual antecedents in history and the social sciences is to think about ordinary language use. A conventional assertion takes the form of 'antecedent object caused outcome'. A close look at this sort of assertion implies that there are at least two ambiguities at hand. The first ambiguity is the identities of antecedent object and (projected) outcome. The second ambiguity is nature of the relationship going on between the something-that-happened-before and the something-that-happened-afterwards: the conventional assertion stipulates that the relationship is 'causal', though does so in an unreflective sense. For the present analysis, the identity of the outcome is known in advance: totalitarianism. This leaves two unknowns. One unknown is the antecedent object. Another unknown is the nature of the relationship itself. A good sense of the breadth of the vocabulary that has accrued for framing totalitarianism's sources, by giving abstract names to object and relationship, can be conveyed as follows. On the one hand, typical words and phrases for the status of antecedent objects include 'states of mind',⁶ 'the "social psychology" of ideas',⁷ 'roots',⁸ 'origins',⁹ and 'forerunners'.¹⁰ On the

other hand, typical renderings of the relationship comprise expressions like these: the relevant antecedent objects might constitute a 'cultural preparation' for the outcome,¹¹ or they may 'foreshadow' that outcome;¹² the outcome might be either 'contracted' or 'congenital';¹³ metaphors such as, say, 'fertilisation'¹⁴ or 'filtering'¹⁵ might be said to apply; or, finally, there are more critical expressions employed, that serve to undermine the idea of the relation as such, even as they draw attention to it – 'suprahistorical conflation',¹⁶ for instance, or 'intellectual determinism'.¹⁷ It is fair to conjecture that the sum total of these words, phrases, and renderings amounts to an attempt to fend off the tricky issue of causation by camouflaging that issue. A persuasive way of navigating it, therefore, is to set up two positions; these two positions will either replicate the stances implicit in all the abstract names listed or, failing that, it will at least be possible for the abstract names to be approximated to the two positions on the basis of degrees in kind. To put matters bluntly, all the phraseology can be cut down to ampler size: two basic types of connection shed light on the causal role of ideas in totalitarianism.

If we proceed to navigate the issue as such, then we may state as follows of the relationship that antecedent objects have to any projected outcome. Either the former 'has an "affinity with"' the latter. Or the former 'has an "influence upon"' the latter. The difference between the two positions can be stated concisely for the time being, before the implications of each for a reading of totalitarianism are sketched out in turn. 'Affinity' means that there is 'a genuine similarity in essential features' between antecedent object and

projected outcome.¹⁸ Put otherwise, affinity is synonymous with some kind of likeness or resemblance. Treated in these terms, we may say that something is eligible to be considered as an intellectual source of totalitarianism if that same something expresses either some or all of the finite set of elementary totalitarian beliefs and attitudes that were identified in Chapter 1. 'Influence' is far more easily identified with a causal role. Influence makes something eligible to be considered a source if it can be shown that 'one man was directly influenced in his outlook by the writings of another'.¹⁹ A second man will derive instruction from what the first man has had to say. In this instance, it might well be found that none of the finite set of elementary beliefs and attitudes were at all present in the original, because it is entirely possible that 'the man influenced has put his own interpretation of an idea torn out of context, or has consciously or unconsciously perverted the earlier thought'.²⁰ One complication to infer at the outset of the discussion, therefore, is that discovering intellectual antecedents in practice will not be a straightforward issue of deciding between causally weak affinity and causally strong influence. Affinity and influence *are* causally weak and strong respectively, but influence might well transpire to be not quite as it appears, in light of the high probability that when a source is appropriated, it is simultaneously misrepresented by the agent doing the appropriating. This is only one implication to be inferred. There are a range of further, consequential implications that can be drawn out as well, the overall effect of which is to help compile a check-list of the possible types of affinity and influence, each item

on that list attaching to a caveat about the particular difficulties it raises. A sensible place to begin from in establishing the range of possible types of affinity is the word classically invoked to make sense of the causal background of Nazism and Stalinism: 'origins'.

Antecedents as affinities

Totalitarianism, so we are told by Hannah Arendt, has 'origins'. The meaning of 'origins' raises exactly those issues just set out, because the status of origins as antecedent objects are open to being specified in different ways, as are their relationship with any given outcome. One of these meanings, however, provides an important facet of what might be meant by affinity. Marc Bloch, the *Annales* historian who was shot by the Gestapo for his wartime activity in the French Resistance, is known for having called attention to two distinct connotations of 'origins'. Origins, thought Bloch, could mean 'beginnings'. Or origins could mean 'causes'. To take enquiry into origins to connote strong causal explanation is by far the more problematic inference. For Bloch, though, the two were quite commonly confused, since 'in popular usage, an origin is a beginning which explains'.²¹ Regardless, it is the more modest notion of 'beginnings' that makes it possible to separate the first of three types of affinity. Beginnings require that a starting point be found for any historical reality. The search for the definitive starting point of any given reality is in intrinsic danger of being 'semi-arbitrary'.²² However, the search is nonetheless necessary, because it is functional to the exercise of 'periodisation' – the contextual exercise

of relating historical realities to 'sequential chains of other events or webs of relationships'.²³ It is periodisation, consequently, that requires an idea of the earliest affinity to the reality under investigation. What follows from this? The search for the starting point of totalitarianism, it must be supposed, is the search for the earliest intellectual expression of elementary totalitarian beliefs and attitudes.

Early similarities

In the place of 'beginnings', the literature on totalitarianism has offered up myriad terms to describe a connection of earliest affinity. 'Cultural preparation', for instance, is one of these terms. Cultural preparation, on Roger Chartier's definition, pinpoints certain of the 'conditions' that make an historical reality 'possible', on the grounds that it becomes 'conceivable'. Chartier was talking about the role of the Enlightenment *philosophes* in the French Revolution, who in a specific kind of way provided legitimacy to the Revolution's agenda. But Robert Paxton has applied the same conception to fascism, in describing the role of intellectuals in a preceding period of time.²⁴ In short, cultural preparation amounts to the idea that intellectual developments make it possible to 'imagine' totalitarianism, with these developments exercising a causal role that is equal to that.²⁵ A certain understanding of the term 'genealogy' is also reducible to earliest affinity. Genealogy is usually invoked in order to suspend the straightforward sense of a cause and effect relationship, and has a literal meaning relating to familial descent. More specifically, the term has become established to refer to investigation into the development of systems of thought and cultural practices over time, in which things are taken

to lack stable meanings (or 'essences').²⁶ The payoff from this sort of investigation is usually estimated to be in excess of merely picking out the first meaningful similarities. However, it is not clear whether that estimate is truly accurate. Enzo Traverso, for example, has used the parameters of 'genealogical study' to illuminate the ways in which 'Nazi violence' emerges out of 'certain common bases of Western culture'. Framing historical enquiry thus has, for Traverso, the merit of ruling out the depiction of Auschwitz as a revelation of the modern West's 'fundamental essence', even while facilitating Auschwitz's affirmation as 'one of its possible products and, in that sense, [...] one of its legitimate offsprings' (a 'unique synthesis' of 'the West's various forms of violence'). The careful avoidance of a troublesome kind of essentialism here is commendable. Yet Traverso still infers a causal connection that is stronger than there are reasonable grounds to infer. Certainly, he is adamant that he is rejecting a relation of strict causality. But his argument that this rejection does not 'mean that everything can be reduced to fortuitous and purely formal affinities' lacks substance. Suspended somewhere between strict causality and (mere) affinity, he implies, there is such a thing as 'historical continuity'. (A historical continuity is what he finds running between antecedents like the prison, the factory, the abattoir, and the Nazi outcome itself.) It would seem indicative that, in order to attempt to give substance to this conception of continuity, Traverso is obliged to fall back on metaphoricity in which the modern West is a 'laboratory' and Auschwitz its 'authentic product'.²⁷

Establishing beginnings for totalitarianism has, then, the initial problem of clarifying what these beginnings really amount to. The full extent of this

problem is not, as yet, in view. Misestimates about causal relevance are made even when essentialism is carefully avoided. Unsurprisingly, though it is worth spelling the matter out, the costs incurred by misestimates are greater in the absence of this care. The difficulty, once more, is the result of the baggage that the ambiguous concept of 'origins' brings with it, along the lines indicated by Marc Bloch. The immediate baggage now is the 'evolutionary metaphor' that origin implies.²⁸ The insinuation is that totalitarianism can be traced backwards, through genetic descent, to the point of a single, primary cause – and it is this insinuation that has often mired the debate about totalitarianism in controversy. Eric Voegelin, in reviewing *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, thought that this was a mistake that Hannah Arendt made: to have sought to establish 'a time period in which the essence of totalitarianism *unfolded to its fullness*', so that, in her study, there appeared a '*gradual revelation of the essence of totalitarianism from its inchoate form in the eighteenth century to the fully developed, nihilistic crushing of human beings*'.²⁹ However, rather than guilty of it herself (the point of confusion is her strangely unguarded use of the word 'essence' in the text), Arendt actually gave clear expression to the problem thereby posed. Albeit, when she did so, she overplayed the status of the exceptional character of totalitarianism in accounting for that problem. At issue, Arendt said, was the contradiction in 'deducing the unprecedented from precedents'.³⁰ *Contra* Arendt, the problem does not follow from the proposition that totalitarianism is exceptional. Instead, the problem is inherent in the proposition

that *any* historical reality is the necessary and inevitable consequence of preceding ideas. The 'deductivist approach' to totalitarianism, as it has been called, makes the mistake of crowding out contingency – it renders totalitarianism inferable *a priori* from its intellectual sources.³¹ Worse still, it can be made to validate a process of deduction back to an 'ideological original sin' – usually, Marx.³²

The language of the analysis of totalitarianism in general would do well to be careful here, since language can give the impression of the problem intruding when it otherwise does not. Tzvetan Todorov in *Hope and Memory*, for instance, refers on several occasions to totalitarianism's 'intellectual premises', implying that the relationship is one of deduction, and thus giving a false sense of his intended meaning.³³ Arendt's own care and precision with language led her, eventually, to speak of a process of 'crystallization' of antecedents when (in reply to Voegelin) she came to specify a non-teleological causal account of totalitarianism's sources – not a gradual evolution but an abrupt and unpredictable 'solidification'.³⁴ However, what is needed is a sense of perspective in guarding against the worst excesses of evolutionary metaphor: it is more than feasible to enquire into totalitarianism's intellectual antecedents without lapsing into deductivism, or teleological reasoning. Indeed, as a marker for a family of existing interpretations of totalitarianism, the 'historico-genetic' theories are among the most persuasive rivals to the structural model, and only court controversy when – as in the case of Ernst Nolte's interpretation – a misleading conception of causality intervenes to reduce an outcome

to what came before: in Nolte's case, notoriously, the Holocaust thus becomes the (mere) copy and imitation of prior aspects of Bolshevism.³⁵ In general, the broad family of historico-genetic interpretations has the precise merit of factoring in contingency to the intellectual derivation of totalitarianism, tracing the multiple points of interaction between and across the development of fascism and communism.³⁶

What, next, of attempts *in practice* to find totalitarianism's affinities in this first sense of the term affinity, earliest meaningful similarities? They must not, it will follow, either overstate the case (the first problem that has been discussed) or lapse into deductivism (the second problem discussed). Yet, as much as these problems can be shown to figure, a discussion of a practical case calls attention to one last problem with beginnings: involving hindsight. The most famous attempt to trace totalitarianism to its earliest beginnings was the immediate post-war attempt to trace it back to ancient Greek political philosophy. Karl Popper, Richard Crossman, and others, argued in effect that totalitarianism could be traced back to time immemorial, since totalitarianism had an early intimation in Plato's ideas in particular. Plato, on this view, wanted his native Athens to respond to a crisis in its democracy by re-establishing an aristocracy, albeit one modelled on the militarism of Spartan society, and one that would ride more roughshod over the integrity of the individual.³⁷ That Plato in any direct sense could have *influenced* actual totalitarian thought and practice is, one would reasonably have to suppose, less likely than that his thought would share an affinity with it (though, nevertheless, it is

by no means clear that this was not what Popper and Crossman were driving at). Certainly, at most, *Mein Kampf* contains references to Plato in only three places, and these allusions are so opaque as to not really constitute allusions at all.³⁸

The new potential pitfall intervenes, though, at this point and, in fact, it is also what often accompanies the mistake of deductivism. The error is that of retrospective teleology. 'We can hardly avoid', remarked Arendt, 'looking at [a] close yet distant past with the too-wise eyes of those who know the end of the story in advance.'³⁹ Awareness of the outcome colours perception of the antecedents. At worst here, the observer will make the mistake of thinking that because something happened, it *had* to happen: as Fritz Stern rightly comments, 'no one in 1880 could have imagined a Hitler, any more than in 1933 people could have imagined an Auschwitz'.⁴⁰ But the principal problem is not that of the relationship of antecedents to outcome, rather the actual content of antecedents. When Plato's philosophy is ascribed a 'racialist' character, there is an extension of this problem of retrospection: the affinity becomes forced. That Plato, in *The Republic*, thinks that his citizens will need to be told a 'noble lie' in order that they acquiesce in the philosophic rule he proposes is a startling enough assertion, which is already evident in the text. It is in these terms that it needs to be appraised (whether it is appraised with an eye to its lessons for totalitarian rule itself, or appraised for its general lessons for, say, the ethics of lying in politics). So, when the same 'noble lie' (conventionally translated as the 'myth of metal and earth', since the structure of Plato's myth

is that God put the distinguished metals of gold in the souls of the would-be philosopher rulers, but the more lowly metals of iron and bronze in the souls of those destined to be farmers and labourers in the projected community) is presented instead as the 'myth of blood and soil' – with the insinuation that the qualities symbolised by the metals are really racial qualities – the assumption has to be that the terms of appraisal are being skewed in advance, to pre-empt a particular lesson.⁴¹

Quentin Skinner associated this practice of imposing 'retrospective significance' in intellectual history with what he called 'the mythology of prolepsis'. Simply put, it is the error of anachronism: what the present-day observer finds striking – or *wants* to find striking – about any historical utterance, must not be confused with the intended meaning of that utterance.⁴² None of this means, however, that the retrospective vantage point is only worthy of suspicion. For one thing, it is, obviously, inevitable. Therefore the real issue is how it is handled. For another thing, it is in some sense quite valid. Perfectly good questions about texts and philosophers are asked – consciously – in retrospect, often regarding intellectual responsibility (a theme that is expanded below). How should the 'canon' be read after totalitarianism?⁴³ It is not inconsistent to hold that, while totalitarianism resists plausible interpretation as a *telos* of prior history, it still prompts 'belated recognitions that pose new questions to aspects of history that earlier had a different face'.⁴⁴ The caveat is only that the analyst has to think carefully about what any given answer to these sorts of questions really amounts to.

Analogies

It is expedient at this point to summarise the first type of affinity and its more telling complications. Totalitarianism has affinities in general whenever there are antecedents that share features in common. Within this, early similarities are of the sort that denote, straightforwardly, the first meaningful intimations of totalitarian beliefs, attitudes, and outlooks. The complications are that: their significance should be not overstated; no genetic descent from them should be supposed; and misdiagnosis through hindsight must be avoided. Consideration can now move on to a second type of affinity. How, it should be asked, do affinities measure up as 'analogies'? Do analogies purport to explain? And can analogies apply at all when commentators, like Arendt, describe totalitarianism as 'unprecedented'? Let these two questions be taken in reverse order. Arendt expresses very clear misgivings about efforts to construct 'parallels':

There are no parallels to the life in the concentration camp ... all parallels create confusion and distract attention from what is essential. Forced labor in prisons and penal colonies, banishment, slavery, all seem for a moment to offer helpful comparisons, but on closer inspection lead nowhere.⁴⁵

Of totalitarianism in general, in fact, and not only of the camps (which were, for her, its paradigmatic expression), Arendt was fearful of parallels. Her anxiety was that 'explaining phenomena' by 'analogies and generalities' threatened to diminish 'the impact of reality and the shock of experience'.⁴⁶ Against this,

it might be wondered whether at least *considering* analogies serves, not to diminish an impression of the exceptional, but to underline it. After all, proposing analogies, finding them wanting, and then rejecting them, is a process that can help to clarify the reasons for holding the proposed object of the analogy to be exceptional in the first place. But to justify a role for analogies by drawing attention to their side-benefits is disingenuous. The main bone of contention is whether analogies have explanatory value in the instances when they are not found wanting. Here it would have to be conceded that analogies do not establish causes in the strict sense. What they do is conform to the ordinary, everyday meaning of explanation, by making things clearer or plainer. Along such lines E.H. Carr thought that the recourse to analogies was inescapable since 'the very use of language commits the historian... to generalisation'. How else, Carr wondered, could the unfamiliar be communicated, other than with reference to what is already familiar, for the reason that there are commonly understood words available to describe them.⁴⁷

So analogies explain in the non-causal sense. Yet, to move to the second query, can analogies hope to explain in any sense at all, if totalitarianism is 'unprecedented'? Carr's rough point about language and generalisation directs attention to the meaning of unprecedented, and its attendant problems. Accordingly, Arendt's assertion rubs up against the test that any state of affairs can only ever be said truly to be 'unprecedented' if it is shown to be 'utterly dissimilar' to anything having come before: 'unprecedentedness' is a more rigorous test than 'uniqueness'.⁴⁸ A unique

state of affairs (unlike an unprecedented state of affairs) can still have analogies. In practice, the features in common with another state of affairs may be too few in number, or too insignificant, to support an *apt* analogy. Yet *apt* analogies to what remain unique are to be found, even if they are rare. 'Genocide', for instance, is a term of generalisation that is quite capable of affirming the uniqueness of the Holocaust at the same time, by making the Holocaust genocide's paradigmatic case.⁴⁹ Ultimately, what should be said is that analogies bring a different sense to affinity than early similarities. Analogies raise the bar on similarity. If an affinity is an analogy, it has the precise property that, while the antecedent object will not be identical to the state of affairs in question, it will share more than a basic resemblance to it, because the shared features will be significant to the comparison, rather than trivial.

The relevance of connections is, in fact, more decisive than their number. Take Arendt's example of banishment. It is easy to think of why banishment points only to a connection that is trivial: the forced geographical relocation of a person is very far from being a core feature of the Nazi concentration camp universe (even if present among a general enumeration of features). The more trivial the feature, the more obfuscating the analogy, because the less the analogy explains anything in the ordinary, everyday sense. In practice, of course, the analyst who is involved in analogical reasoning may be confronted with the task of assessing the *aptness* of a particular, already proposed analogy, rather than searching freely for antecedents with potential to serve as *apt* analogical sources. If so,

the same occurs. The analyst will need to establish the precise detail of what is being compared. Take, for instance, the widely purported connection between Marxism and Stalinist totalitarianism. Comparing the two requires a 'baseline' for Marxism against which to measure Stalinism. Is a Marxist baseline Marx's Marxism, Second International 'orthodox' Marxism, Lenin's Marxism – or something else?⁵⁰

So far then, we have two approximations to affinity: affinities-as-beginnings and affinities-as-analogies. Neither, it has been shown, are capable of explanation in the strict causal sense. But are there any further types of affinity, types that perhaps might offer causal explanation? There are at least two remaining possibilities to consider. One possibility is that that retrospection makes it feasible – and valid – to identify totalitarianism's 'representative thinkers'. The other possibility (which is related) is that intellectual sources of totalitarianism that are primarily affinities are also 'indirect' influences.

Representative thinkers

What might be meant by a representative thinker? Prevailing intellectual fashion is hostile towards the exercise of searching for 'canonical sources' of totalitarianism in the history of political-philosophical texts. Sometimes (with little basis) this is because the relevant ideational content is thought to be the stylistic and symbolic – window-dressing – not the packages of assumptions and argumentation contained in texts.⁵¹ Sometimes (with rather more basis) the hostility is because a natural presupposition operates that the search must be for 'unified wholes' – coherent visions

for totalitarian societies – a search that is unavoidably frustrated.⁵² The presupposition is natural, but an obstacle: the prior intellectual content that is relevant is looser, more open-ended, and for those reasons in need of complex disaggregation. Totalitarianism's intellectual sources do not present themselves fully constituted – fixed in any given text – but, instead, evolve and change over time.

Insofar as the hostility towards the canon is prompted by a further issue – a hostility towards privileging the viewpoints of dead, white, Western males – the 'Eurocentrism' at work here is in any case only of the 'inverted' kind: the sources of an outbreak of Western 'barbarism' are being assumed to be indigenous, rather than non-Western imports.⁵³ When it is being asked what it is which particular participants in this tradition share in common with totalitarianism, the viewpoints of dead, white, Western males are being challenged as much as they are being privileged, with the upshot that they are competing for membership in a sort of 'anti-canon'.⁵⁴ It is by pondering answers to the question of what it is that participants in the tradition share with totalitarianism that we arrive at an idea of something like a representative thinker. A representative thinker is not a thinker of whom it can be said that he (not she?) elucidated a full-blown totalitarian political theory *avant la lettre*; it is one of whom it can be said that we find in his thinking something like a preponderance of key assumptions present within at least one of the strands of totalitarian thought.

Accordingly, someone like Thomas Hobbes lacks a persuasive case to be turned into one of totalitarianism's representative thinkers. Hobbes' *Leviathan* was

(like Plato's *Republic*) a favourite target in the war-time years. In general, Hobbes was read as having proposed the totalitarian state as the only reliable answer to the permanence of deep-rooted conflict in social life, the problem of the 'state of nature'. In choicer terms, Hobbes' philosophy was labelled 'a philosophy of Terror and of Tyranny'; his philosophy was encapsulated as one that started from 'individualist premises' but which, thereafter, deduced 'the necessity of totalitarianism'. Perhaps most troublingly, he was said to provide 'not the dictator's justification for his despotism, but the reasons which impel his subjects to accept it'.⁵⁵ However, what Hobbes' philosophy really expresses, even on the most (and therefore *least*) charitable interpretation, is an affinity with the key assumptions behind the structural model of totalitarianism: the conception of totalitarianism as the radical extension of state control. This interpretation is, in itself, strained, since it is forced both to gloss over the differences in the assumptions that inform seventeenth-century absolutism and the twentieth-century dictatorships respectively, as well as to leave out the idea that Hobbes' philosophy is persistently underwritten (and not only in its starting premises) by a concern to establish a notion of basic individual rights. But regardless, Hobbes' philosophy fails to connect meaningfully with totalitarianism in its ideological conception.

So, Hobbes forfeits the title of being one of totalitarianism's representative thinkers. But if not he, then who is? Establishing why will be seen fully in the chapters to come, though it is worth indicating who now to convey a further sense of what the idea of a

representative thinker might entail. It is more fruitful to think of totalitarianism having a representative thinker for each of its principal currents, thereby constituting a canonical source on a more qualified understanding of that term than it was once ascribed. None of these thinkers 'caused' Hitler or Stalin, a formulation that is crude. Rather, a more careful formulation is that, in their own way, each thinker lent legitimacy to specific aspects of Nazi and Stalinist theory and practice. Utopianism, scientism, and revolutionary violence all have archetypal figures with whom they are associated. All these figures give voice, in different senses, to dissatisfaction and disillusionment with the Enlightenment and the modern liberal mainstream; in a word, they are testament to this book's general contention that while totalitarianism has sources that are modernist, the Enlightenment has nothing to do with it.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a fellow-traveller of the counter-Enlightenment movement ahead of his time, is the representative thinker of utopianism. But this is not the Rousseau of whom 'Hitler was an outcome' principally because (in Bertrand Russell's famous statement) his metaphysical doctrine of the general will 'made possible the mystical identification of leader with his people'. Instead, it is the Rousseau who made the impassioned plea for man to lead an 'authentic' existence.⁵⁶

The representative thinker of scientism is Charles Darwin. Admittedly, Darwin has an ambiguous relation to the Enlightenment; precisely as a natural scientist, he would appear *prima facie* to be one of its heirs. However, Darwinism can be said to connate a

set of post-Enlightenment ethics. Its philosophical materialism held that humans were no different from animals and, hence, the Enlightenment's 'anthropocentrism' looked suspect.⁵⁷ Moreover, Darwin's theory of evolution challenges the supremacy of human reason, since from the viewpoint of evolution it is random variation, not human reason, that governs the world.

Revolutionary violence has a representative thinker whose antagonism towards the Enlightenment contains no ambivalence: Friedrich Nietzsche. The current of thought on revolutionary violence that animates totalitarianism bifurcates into two: a leftist strand and a rightist strand. Yet Nietzsche serves as a fulcrum in the structure of both of these strands. The thinking (and occasionally even the practice) of revolutionary violence precedes Nietzsche. Yet neither left nor right revolutionary violence would have developed in the way that they did in the absence of Nietzsche having articulated his concept of the will to power, and all which followed from that: the idea of the transvaluation of values, a conception of violence that was regenerative, and so on. Couched in these above terms, in sum, we arrive at a tidy shorthand for the synthesis of totalitarian currents that is being argued for across this study as a whole: Rousseau plus Darwin plus Nietzsche. Albeit, it is misleadingly tidy, in isolation of the series of qualifications which have been sketched at the same time.

Representative thinkers, thus, add up to a kind of high point of affinity, expressing a distinct set of elementary totalitarian beliefs and outlooks in preponderant form. There is a link to the second possibility, to be considered now: that sources whose

main relation to totalitarianism is that of affinity also possess the type of influence in intellectual history that is indirect. This possibility can be summarised as follows: a thinker can have an affinity with, say, what Hitler said or what the Soviets did, which is actually an indirect influence, because while no one may have read and acted on his words, a later thinker may have absorbed the message, and codified it into the current of thought that exercises the influence in the direct sense. The possibility could be considered further that this is the typical – not an unusual – scenario. After all, given a moment's reflection, the scenario in which a modern political actor is the unequivocal outcome of a preceding thinker would seem rather atypical. As Terence Ball hints at, rather more plausible of the way in which proto-totalitarian ideas are transmitted across the history of political thought is that 'some sort of indeterminate intellectual osmosis' operates.⁵⁸ Something like that is suggestive of the way ideas are acquired from earlier thinkers, lie dormant, and are then taken up in later contexts (it is suggestive, even if it is necessarily quite imprecise).

It could well be imagined that this is just how the production of totalitarian currents proceeds. For example, Lenin dismissed Georges Sorel, the thinker who did most to transmit Nietzsche's philosophy to the Marxist left. However, plenty of others on the left (including, for instance, Antonio Gramsci) found inspiration in Sorel, in creative debate and disagreement with whom the development of Lenin's own thought must surely be placed. Indeed, the dynamics of intellectual osmosis are such that things can turn full circle: there is some evidence that Sorel moved towards Leninism at the

end of his life.⁵⁹ The example of Darwin and Hitler serves as illustrative of the same point. As it has been pointed out by one historian trying to clarify the connection between the two, we do not even know 'if Hitler ever read Ernst Haeckel, the leading Darwinian biologist in Germany' in the late nineteenth century, never mind whether Hitler read Darwin himself. Yet this by no means constitutes grounds for repudiating Darwin's influence out of hand.⁶⁰

Many of the issues in interpretation raised thus are, of course, practical and relate to the source-material. Although it is important, for analytical purposes, to overcome any moral queasiness about thinking in terms of 'Hitler's political thought', once that is done, what remains to be made sense of is one man's curious attempt to 'stitch together... eclectic accumulated knowledge' into some kind of overarching 'philosophical framework'. The problem, as stated by Timothy Ryback, who has systematically investigated Hitler's 'private library', is that, in *Mein Kampf* and elsewhere, 'Hitler presents his ideas with only meagre reference to sources, leaving scholars to speculate with varying certitude on the origin of his ideas, whether they derive from intense and extensive reading or from rummaging through secondary sources and boulevard newspapers'.⁶¹ Stalin's political thought likewise presents an interpretive challenge. Trotsky's damning portrait of Stalin as a talentless, mediocre, and bureaucratic nonentity is, on the evidence of his biographers, increasingly less credible.⁶² As rival successor to Lenin's leadership, Trotsky was blind (quite possibly through envy) to Stalin's capacity to carefully marshal arguments and to make 'effective use of themes to which

wide circles of the [Bolshevik] party were responsive'.⁶³ In short, 'Stalin read widely'.⁶⁴ But sorting the precise intellectual resources that Stalin tapped into is a task that has been judged to require the close inspection of Stalin's assiduous markings across the pages of copious volumes of published text.⁶⁵

The boundaries of affinity, in short, somewhere shade off into indirect influence. The result is that while something is usually either affinity or influence, that same something could, in certain cases, be both. But the topic of influence having now been broached, it makes sense to move to a systematic exposition of its variations and pitfalls. One implication that will now be apparent is that the analyst who wishes to sort affinity from influence will be greatly helped by the best available data on what Hitler and Stalin did (or did not) read or have communicated to them in more covert ways by others.

Antecedents as influences

'It is virtually impossible', remarks Jan-Werner Müller, 'to prove, let alone quantify, that ever elusive thing called "influence" in the history of ideologies.'⁶⁶ Ultimately, so much may be true. But our best efforts to gauge influence will be informed by an idea of the range of variations of influence that might be thought to apply. Accordingly, it will be useful below to separate five plausible scenarios (each of which pose attendant pitfalls for the analyst). This list is not exhaustive. It does, though, purport to capture the most recurring sorts of mechanisms through which ideas are transmitted. To briefly recapitulate, affinities

do something like 'prefigure' outcomes, whether it is through similarity, analogy, or representative expression. The distinguishing property of influences are that they do something more than that.

Indirect influences

First, it is worth reflecting a little further on the case, introduced above, of indirect influence. Indirect influence is, when defined more closely, 'mediated' influence: the important point is that a third object is serving as a mediating agent between the antecedent object and the projected outcome. 'C'est la faute à Rousseau' was the famous lament of Victor Hugo's Gavroche in assigning blame for the French Revolution. Very few scenarios, however, are likely to possess this simplicity (and perhaps still less the one evoked in *Les Misérables*). In these other cases, there is mileage in modelling a kind of 'trickle-down effect' to approximate the diffusion of ideas in later contexts.⁶⁷ Historians of fascism and communism do as much most of the time, when they describe immediate political actors being influenced 'at second-hand' by philosophical ideas.⁶⁸ The pitfall, though, is that – as a rough rule of thumb – the greater the significance of the function of the mediating agent(s), the worse are the costs of projecting the modification of the original idea undertaken by the mediating agent back on to the handiwork of the initial author. Misdiagnosis of antecedents is, as was apparent in the discussion of affinities, an inherent possibility; the likelihood of this possibility is exacerbated here because the adaptations of ideas are, naturally, closer to the present than the originals, hence they are more familiar, making it

more likely that a reading of the originals be obscured by the adaptations.

Unconscious influences

A second scenario is that of unconscious influence. This is the kind of influence that is obscured or hidden to the party thought to be subject to that influence. As Berel Lang remarks, 'the affiliation of ideas need not be conscious, any more than intentions have to be explicitly or fully conceived before they are acted on'.⁶⁹ In some cases, of course, this may really be a relationship only of affinity. Lang's term, 'affiliation', quite feasibly straddles the two. But in cases, say, where Nazi and Stalinist thought and practice is captive to inherited terms of discourse (assumptions, understanding of concepts, mentalities, etc.), the relationship with intellectual antecedents is clearly not one of reproducing those antecedents at random. The ideas may not be consciously held. But they are still derived, rather than arrived at happenstance fashion. A fine example of such a scenario is presented by the thesis that a sea change in the general climate of opinion in Europe circa 1900 – a decisive shift towards pessimism – was a background factor in the rise of Nazism.⁷⁰

The particular pitfall here is to aggravate the danger of committing the fallacy sometimes known to historians as *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*; literally, 'after this, because of this'. To commit this fallacy is to make the mistake of supposing that because one event happens prior to a second event in sequential time, the first is the cause of the second.⁷¹ The danger is likely to be all the more real when the observer is unable to proceed with the certainty that there even is an influenced

party at all. For instance, if Hitler *was* captive to a kind of pessimism, how it is to be discerned whether that pessimism had its source in *fin de siècle* developments rather than being a different kind of pessimism, which had its source, say, in psychology, or in childhood experience, or in whatever else?⁷²

Adoptive influences

A third scenario in which influence might be at work is the very opposite of unconscious. It is the creative kind of influence (in a certain sense of the word creative) that might be encapsulated as 'adoption'.⁷³ When ideas are adopted there is a conscious exercise of influence, a freely chosen act of appropriation. In an idealised case, the political actor who is doing the adopting is likely, for instance, to find the broad thrust of the prior philosophy compelling, but to find it incomplete, or otherwise in need of renewal. Later contexts, it is only right to assume, will present their own specific circumstances and demands, and therefore this reality in itself *requires* that ideas be subject to revision and modification. Adoptive heirs, so to speak, are entitled to legacies, which they are at liberty to dispose of in whichever ways they see fit. An example of this might be the thesis that Stalin both wished, and was required, to reformulate the Marxist ideas that he inherited. Stalin's commitment to Marxism is rightly seen as having been more than merely strategic on the evidence that he made use of Marxist language in private as well as public.⁷⁴ Yet Stalin's own thinking was obliged to play out the various tensions within Marxism-Leninism that had only expanded the longer the tradition had endured.⁷⁵

Thinking of the direction of influences (or legacies) being open-ended in this way, rather than thinking of that direction as being predetermined in advance, is also a vital corrective to those accounts of totalitarianism that are guilty of nullifying free will. Albert Camus' allegoristic novel of the Nazi occupation of France, *The Plague*, is often accused of such, whether rightly or wrongly: Simone de Beauvoir, for example, thought that the metaphorical device of Nazism as natural 'virus' negated the ethical questions of political commitment.⁷⁶ Of more pressing concern here are those accounts that transpose this fatalism on to the canvas of the history of Western thought, and practise the kind of 'intellectual determinism' that imputes to ideas automatic consequences. This practice follows from subscribing to a superficial view of history as a 'rigid sequence of causes and effects',⁷⁷ which another critic has labelled 'suprahistorical conflation'.⁷⁸ What are conflated are precisely those contexts that are separated by their own specific circumstances and demands, and within which respective actors articulate either an original idea or its subsequent (re)formulations – the latter actors potentially transforming original ideas in decisive ways in the process. There is, to note, a peculiar pitfall in ascertaining adoptive influence. In a similar connection Voltaire is reported to have remarked that while all children have parents, not all possible parents have children – a quip that reminds us not to suppose that ideas *must* have an ancestry that is in need of tracing (whether through adoption, or through birth).⁷⁹ Which is to say, there ought to be no presumption that some kind of adoptive influence

will apply (nor, for the same reason, should be there be a presumption of any unconscious influence).

Distorted influences

A fourth scenario of influence is distorted influence. In such a scenario, it may be quite clear what any preceding thinker had to say. Consequently, there is no creative act of appropriation required, in order to tease out meanings and implications that are unspecified or otherwise ambiguous in the original. Rather, what is evident is an attempt to deliberately misrepresent the preceding thinker's ideas. Both philosophers and historians regularly make use of language intended to capture this process in approaching the case of the transmission of Nietzsche's philosophy. While the 'filtering through' or 'percolation' of ideas are metaphors of transmission that have already been indicated, Steven Aschheim describes, with Nietzsche, a '*selective filtering*'.⁸⁰ Long ago, Georg Lukács imagined a transmission process in which to popularise Nietzschean ideas was to vulgarise them at the same time: 'Everything that has been said on irrational pessimism from Nietzsche to Dilthey to Heidegger and Jaspers on lecture platforms and in intellectual salons and cafés, Hitler and Rosenberg transferred to the streets.'⁸¹ (Vulgarisation here is not a function of either Nazism or Nietzsche: all philosophic doctrines shift character when employed with practical ends in view.)

In dealing with the intellectual background to totalitarianism in general, commentators regularly make use of terms like 'misreading', 'misappropriation', and 'malicious amendment'.⁸² Does this mean that any given philosopher is free from culpability in totalitarianism,

if the connection between texts and actions involves a deliberate distortion of some kind? Not necessarily, since this is where the question of intellectual responsibility comes back into the picture, along with how the 'canon' might be read after totalitarianism. Certainly, responsibility and cause must not be lumped together uncritically: the causal question 'how did it happen?' is not the ethical question 'who is to blame?' Yet the two questions are hardly unrelated. To be sure, there is a risk implicit in this assertion that philosophers are held to standards that are rather arbitrary. It is not clear, for example, on what basis exactly André Glucksmann can be so precise as to specify – meticulously – that 'it is not fair to accuse the master thinkers of having organised the concentration camps, rather of not having *disorganised* them in advance'.⁸³ However, the illogicality of holding philosophers to standards that would have no recognisable meaning in their own time should not preclude a more modest acknowledgement that there is a connection of some type between cause and responsibility. Jacques Derrida, in contemplating the Nietzsche–Nazi link, sums up the connection in a nutshell: 'one can't just falsify anything'.⁸⁴ Martin Jay sets out the reasoning behind a similar thought:

the potential for the specific distortions that do occur can be understood as latent in the original text. Thus, while it may be questionable to saddle Marx with responsibility for the Gulag archipelago or blame Nietzsche for Auschwitz, it is nevertheless true that their writings could be misread as justifications for these horrors in a way that, say, those of John Stuart Mill or Alexis de Tocqueville could not.⁸⁵

Cumulative influences

A fifth and final scenario is one where there are accumulated 'layers' of influence in operation, from the long-term to the immediate.⁸⁶ In effect, the distinction often drawn between remote and proximate causes might well be recycled here to denote influences that are primary and secondary. The important feature of the process in operation, however, is that one influence (or source) is prior to the other, so that the shorter-term source is only active in interaction with the prior source; unlike the long-term source which, up until to that point, is active independently. One frequent way in which commentators convey such a process is with the figurative terminology of roots, trunks, and branches. Consider the following two typical statements: 'Hitler's eugenics ideology was clearly *grafted onto* his vision of biological determinism'; over the course of his years in power, Stalin 'grafted a Marxist class theme onto [the national principle]'.⁸⁷ On the assumption that the pretence to monocausal explanation in history is suspect on the whole, it should be anticipated that this sort of accumulation and interaction of influences will correspond with the way that our proto-totalitarian currents of thought function. Related to accumulation and interaction is the convention governing the usual practice of history-writing, that sets of causes have hierarchies: absolute causes and relative causes; necessary causes and sufficient causes.⁸⁸

In the ordinary senses of causation, then, it might be anticipated further that the prior source is liable to constitute a *necessary* cause – that is, without which,

totalitarianism could not have happened – though is not liable to constitute a *sufficient* cause, since the secondary influences had to be ‘grafted onto’ it first. There is a risk in this of an echo of a reductive formula like ‘No Hitler, no Holocaust’ (which gives a privileged place in historical causation to the role of demonised individuals), repackaged as ‘No Darwin, no Totalitarianism’ or ‘No Nietzsche, no Totalitarianism’. However, this is only superficially a risk, since what is in debate (in the more precise sense than above) is what caused the form and content that totalitarianism came to assume, not the cause of its incidence as such. To imply otherwise would be to assume totalitarianism has intellectual sources alone, when it is quite compatible with this book’s thesis that it had more prosaic causes as well.

At the end of this chapter, it is appropriate to briefly review the range of types of intellectual antecedent that have by now been separated. The connection between totalitarianism and any prior intellectual source, it has been argued, will be principally one of either affinity or influence. If it is a connection of affinity, then it will perform only a very modest causal role indeed – though this is not necessarily to denigrate that source as being peripheral to totalitarianism’s legitimation. Affinities may be expressed as *beginnings* (affinities that add up to earliest meaningful similarities); as *analogies* (affinities that cross a high threshold of similarity); or as *representative thinkers* (authors who express elementary totalitarian beliefs and attitudes in preponderant form). This enumeration of the different kinds of

affinity is not intended to be exhaustive, but it is intended to be instructive. Representative thinkers can also constitute influences, where the causal role of ideas is stronger. Influence, once again, can be enumerated into different kinds, by picturing various scenarios (some of which, furthermore, are not mutually exclusive). *Indirect influences* are mediated by third parties. *Unconscious influences* are not observed by influenced parties themselves. *Adoptive influences* are creative and invite ideas to be revised. *Distorted influences* are likewise conscious, and involve deliberate misreading. *Cumulative influences* refer to the 'layers' of influence that pile up and interact in the process.

In sum, it is expected that this study has now made available a set of clearly defined terms through which to assess the modes of transmission of proto-totalitarian ideas in practice. In Part II, which follows, we turn away from the engagement with nuts and bolts type issues in Part I to focus on the three totalitarian currents. Within each current, sources will interact over time, in complex ways, so that tracing the development of each current will turn out to have required this careful handling of the terms of intellectual derivation.

Part II

Three Totalitarian Currents

3

Utopianism

The intellectual trajectory common to Nazism and Stalinism involves the interaction of three significant currents of thought. In Part I of the book, a conception of totalitarianism was proposed that focused on the shared ideological space between these two political regimes, summarised in the form of a distinct set of elements. This shared ideological space is the combined product of three currents of thought. In the book's second part, the emphasis shifts to the internal complexion of each current of thought. We begin with utopianism. In the early phase of the debate about totalitarianism, Cold War liberals were tireless in showing again and again just how it was that utopianism came to be the driving force behind the political catastrophes associated with Hitler and Stalin. But Cold War liberalism's animus towards utopianism was self-serving. Detaching liberalism from utopian conceptions of politics left uncontested the minimal or negative liberalism it desired. Its animus was also misdirected. Cold War liberals often said that the source was really the Enlightenment, with its dangerous

overestimation of Reason. Totalitarianism does have an important utopian strand. It emerges, though, in opposition to the Enlightenment's dominant character, reconfiguring the terms of community around the idea of authenticity. The utopian current is also not the only current. Nor is it even necessarily the dominant current among several. Cold War liberals were oddly indifferent, for example, to totalitarianism's legitimation from the mainstream of modern science. Nevertheless, the utopian current was a vital cog in what this study argues is the totalitarian synthesis. Indeed, the critics of Cold War liberalism are wrong to think that utopianism is exclusive to communism, and alien to Nazism; it is merely the case that communist utopianism has a complexion that is more easily reconstructed.

The view from Cold War liberalism

The Cold War liberals converged on the proposition that it was 'utopias' that led to totalitarianism. In the immediate post-war period, as the West's chief political enemy switched from Nazi Germany to Soviet Russia, anti-totalitarianism served as a 'semantic bridge': it redirected the stock modes of condemnation of (anti-liberal) fascism on to (anti-liberal) communism.¹ But the concern closest to home was the perceived need to combat the threat from the communist East to Western liberties – and to capitalism. Hence, when the Cold War liberals came to fill out the details of what a political theory of anti-totalitarianism might consist in, it was an image of communist totalitarianism that they had foremost in mind.²

The term 'utopia' is slippery. *Utopia* – 'not-place'? *Eutopia* – 'happy-place'? *Dystopia* – 'diseased-place'?³ But the basic claim common to Cold War liberals was that utopia was absent in liberal individualism and pluralism, yet fundamental to the visions of community and collectivism they wanted to oppose. It was because of utopia that distinct individuals dissolved into the collective political subject. It was because of utopia that the fate of those defined as outside of the collective political subject was predictable in advance. The identity of the collective subject could, for Cold War liberals, differ according to time and place. It was always, though, something that was oppressed – and hence receptive to the utopian message. The message to a collective subject that the Cold War liberals were gripped by – and which they proceeded to generalise from – was the message of communism to the workers. And this message was also indistinguishable from the philosophy of Marx himself, even as the message was articulated during Stalinist times: Marxism was the object of study, and it was Marxism and totalitarianism that became one and the same.

Karl Popper is the first Cold War liberal worth examining. Popper, the émigré intellectual from Austria who took up residence in London, chose as his target 'utopian social engineering'. This dangerous approach to solving social problems was, for Popper, symptomatic of the distinction between two philosophical schools: the one liberal, the other implicitly totalitarian. Schemes of utopian social engineering were implemented in the terms of ideal patterns, or 'blueprints for a new order'. They therefore required a 'clean

canvas' to start from. There was no need for discussion and disagreement – utopian engineers simply affirmed 'a singular, rigid version of the ideal state' (thus, they were 'omniscient as well as omnipotent'). The dangerous aspect was this: to attain the clean canvas, they would be obliged to 'purge, expel, banish, kill'.⁴ Who, or what, proposed such schemes of engineering? Marxism, certainly. Marx himself was 'the last of the great holistic system builders'.⁵ Some commentators have suggested that Popper's real concern was not with Marxism but with fascism and, more specifically, with Marxism's incapacity to have resisted the rise of fascism in central Europe, because it was not a factor in Marxism's own blueprint; in other words, on the inherited terms of classical Marxism, fascism should not have been a historical reality at all.⁶ But to suggest as much is rather to concede the point that, for Popper, the significance in Marxism was that it operated with a blueprint in the first place. Nor, to be clear, was the more nuanced reading of Popper how he was understood in debates in the context of the Cold War.

We saw already in the previous chapter how dubious was Popper's method of textual interpretation, on the example of Plato's *Republic* (another of Popper's totalitarian utopians, alongside Marx). That his method was odd was something he did little to hide, to say the least. This is Popper in *The Poverty of Historicism*: 'I have not hesitated to construct arguments in its support which have never, to my knowledge, been brought forward ... I hope that, in this way, I have succeeded in building up a position really worth attacking.'⁷ His use of terminology could be equally baffling. 'Historicism' itself he used not to denote the conventional meaning – that

moral values, for instance, are relative to historical periods – but, instead, to denote ‘long-term historical prophecies’, which were aimed at discovering laws of history.⁸ The conflation of meanings, moreover, is crucial. Ultimately, it meant that, for Popper, utopianism and historical determinism were synonymous, which can only ever sound counter-intuitive. Close analysis also shows the identity to be flawed, and the consequence is destructive of the purpose of Popper’s theory: his theory turns out to illuminate the ‘scientific’ derivation of totalitarianism rather better than it does the utopian derivation. The mark of utopians, for Popper, was not only to possess a blueprint of the ideal state but to also possess a ‘plan or blueprint of the historical path that leads towards’ this state.⁹

In this, Marx parted company with Plato. Plato was a proponent of ‘the closed society’ who wished to arrest all historical change; hence his anxiety about developments in Athenian society. His historicism was pessimistic. Marx’s historicism, by contrast, was optimistic: historical materialism uncovered the laws of history, which, in turn, charted a course of inevitable progress. Marx therefore ended up by endorsing a society that was closed in a specific sense – closed by historical prediction. It was belief in historical inevitability that made Marx an enemy of ‘the open society’; he lent Marxists a justification for suppressing the kinds of criticism that threatened to hold up the historical destiny. This being the case, however, Marxism is totalitarian not because of utopianism. This would be to suppose that the heroic figure of the utopian engineer is at complete liberty to remake society from the ground upwards. Rather, Marxism is

totalitarian because of determinism. 'Piecemeal social engineering' of the liberal sort, which proceeds via trial and error, and which wipes no canvas clean, is not ruled out principally by confidence – certainty – about what the good society will look like; it is ruled out by certainty that society is headed inexorably in that direction regardless.

A second Cold War liberal, Isaiah Berlin, was likewise a critic of both utopianism and historical inevitability. The two themes can, though, be more easily separated in Berlin's work. Berlin was a Latvian refugee who fled to England after the Russian Revolution. There is less ambiguity about Berlin's primary political target. Witnessing an angry mob in Petrograd in 1917 gave him, he said, 'a lifelong horror of physical violence'.¹⁰ Commenting on his project to rethink liberalism, he also once exclaimed: 'I was maddened by all the Marxist cheating that went on, all the things that were said about "true liberty", [the] Stalinist and communist patter about "true freedom".'¹¹ Like nearly all Cold War liberals, Berlin had a predilection for thinking in terms of binary oppositions. Where Popper had contrasted 'open' and 'closed' societies, and 'utopian' and 'piecemeal' modes of social engineering, Berlin contrasted 'monism' and 'pluralism', and 'positive' and 'negative' conceptions of liberty. Each of these oppositions (which are philosophically distinct, but which nonetheless were used by Berlin for similar ideological purposes) says something about the way that Berlin conceived totalitarian utopianism.

Monism approximates to 'the belief that some single formula can in principle be found whereby all the

diverse ends of men can be harmoniously realised'.¹² Consistent with this, Berlin writes elsewhere: 'All the utopias known to us are based upon the discoverability and harmony of objectively true ends, true for all men, at all times and places.'¹³ Pluralism is the opposite of monism (and utopia), since it views ends as diverse and invariably in conflict. Berlin's attack on monist thinking begins in a 1953 lecture titled 'Historical Inevitability'. But while monist thinking can be given particular expression in deterministic philosophies of history – being ordered around belief in a 'single "cosmic" over-all scheme which is the goal of the universe' – such philosophies of history are not monist thinking's necessary expression.¹⁴ What monism pictures at its core is the possibility of a perfect social harmony; this is a possibility that is liable to be rendered as a 'final' state of affairs, but final here does not mean predetermined: it means only that we arrive at a state of which we have no further need to modify, which is also (for Berlin) a natural state.

The dominant sense to be gathered from Berlin's writings in the 1950s is that monism pictures a *rationalistic* social harmony. It is through Reason that human beings have access to knowledge as to what constitute harmonious ends. Berlin also very clearly underlines what Popper does not (though Popper could well have done, without inconsistency): that it is the Enlightenment that articulates this rationalistic social harmony in fully developed form, such that the Enlightenment utopias are the source of the new forms of tyranny in the twentieth century. In practice, said Berlin (as had Popper), the effort to realise utopia would require violence: 'gas chambers, gulags,

genocide... are the price men must pay for the felicity of future generations'. This was because – at the level of principle – utopias were incoherent: human ends may be 'equally ultimate, but incompatible with one another'.¹⁵ That, for Berlin, it was the Enlightenment that originally mishandled the principles, which led to the violence in practice, is evident in the following summation of a range of Enlightenment thinkers:

we find the same common assumption: that the answers to all the great questions must of necessity agree with one another; for they must correspond with reality, and reality is a harmonious whole. If this were not so, there is chaos at the heart of things: which is unthinkable. Liberty, equality, property, knowledge, security, practical wisdom, purity of character, sincerity, kindness, rational self-love, all these ideals ... cannot (if they are truly desirable) conflict with one another; if they appear to do so it must be due to some misunderstanding of their properties. No truly good thing can ever be finally incompatible with any other; indeed they virtually entail one another: men cannot be wise unless they are free, or free unless they are just, happy and so forth.¹⁶

Positive and negative liberty, like monism and pluralism, were respectively utopian/totalitarian and non-utopian/non-totalitarian. In the most celebrated of all Berlin's essays, 'Two Concepts of Liberty', the central exponents of positive liberty look like the arch-rationalists. Negative liberty, the conceptual foundation for a liberalism ordered around a non-interventionist, minimal state, equated freedom with the domain of

non-interference. Positive freedom was 'not freedom from, but freedom to – to lead one prescribed form of life'. The form of life prescribed by Marx, for example, led him to adopt a coercive stance towards the individual human personality, because that personality's 'self-realisation' was pictured in unity – conformity – with the self-realisation of a collective political subject. Marx also adopted a stance of coercion because he was open to the idea that the 'true' self – a 'higher' self – might well be unknown to the empirical (or 'lower') self. On this understanding, it is really Marx's concept of 'alienation' (as opposed to any other idea) that is complicit in totalitarian utopianism: the notion of man's estrangement from his 'species-being' under the conditions of modern social life.¹⁷

A third figure, Jacob Talmon, completes a view of totalitarianism from the vantage point of Cold War liberalism. Talmon was an Israeli historian who also expressed an animus towards rationalist utopias. In a trilogy of volumes on the theme beginning with *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy* (1952), Talmon set out to show how a schism in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment gave rise to two distinct types of democracy: liberal democracy and its other. The definition of a totalitarian democracy echoes Berlin's description of monist thinking: it is 'based upon the assumption of a sole and exclusive truth in politics', and 'postulates a preordained, harmonious and perfect scheme of things'.¹⁸ Talmon also echoes Berlin when he writes that totalitarian democracy is directed at the 'real freedom of men' – not the absence of external constraints, but participation in a 'collective purpose'.

Again, once more, the primary target is totalitarian communism: it is the boundless optimism contained in specific eighteenth-century beliefs that presages Marxism. (A certain kind of pessimism instead, he states, is what presages fascism.¹⁹)

It is, however, Talmon who has the distinction of going furthest in making explicit the connection between utopianism and religion, which is where there is an overlap with political religion theory. This connection is present in the arguments of the other Cold War liberals. But there it is implied, rather than spelled out. For Popper, 'the appeal of Utopianism arises from the failure to realise that we cannot make heaven on earth'.²⁰ For Berlin, the problem with the Enlightenment is really excessive *faith* in the power of reason, and in this Berlin was much influenced by Carl Becker's seminal thesis in *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers*.²¹ But these are asides, concessions, and pieces of detail, in that order. They only go so far towards offsetting the dominant sense to be inferred from Berlin and Popper's work that totalitarian utopias are rationalistic utopias, which project a social world based on rational principles in the place of an 'irrational' status quo. Talmon is explicit on the connection with religion, and he constructs it as follows: the philosophy of totalitarian democracy is in origin rationalist, but this is a rationalism that reveals itself to be intrinsically 'messianic'. Messianism, in turn, is a 'peculiar state of mind', which has advanced in the eighteenth century in step with the decline in the 'intellectual as well as emotional hold' of traditional religion.²² But messianism, like totalitarian democracy, is (in Talmon's first volume at least) relevant only to

‘totalitarianism of the Left’, for messianism is really still only (as for Berlin) reason taken to excess. On Talmon’s description, for example, messianic is the ‘expectation attached to the idea of natural order’, in which reason will be the path to ‘salvation’.²³

That Talmon should have made the connection between utopianism and religion is, though, apt in a certain sense and (notwithstanding this book’s general scepticism towards political religion theory) its implications ought to be teased out further. Czesław Miłosz, the Polish author of another of the classic texts on totalitarianism of the 1950s, *The Captive Mind*, in a similar way called communism ‘the New Faith’ – although, having a first-hand experience of life under an actual communist regime, unlike the Cold War liberals, Miłosz had a rather better appreciation of the reality of such regimes: totalitarian subjects, he noted, were frequently resistant to being inspired by utopian ideals, and developed complex strategies for internalising opposition, even while maintaining external pretence.²⁴ Many of the more rigorous kinds of attempts to subject utopia to conceptual analysis have surmised along with Talmon and Miłosz. Lyman Tower Sargent observes that ‘Christianity was the fount of Western utopianism’, since in Christian theology ‘images of the utopian past (Eden) and the utopian future (heaven and hell, the Second Coming of Christ, and the millennium) relate to both this world and the next one’.²⁵ In Christianity, these images often provided for heretical deviations from orthodoxy. Accordingly, utopia became, as Judith Shklar reports, ‘a way of rejecting that notion of “original sin” which

regarded natural human virtue and reason as feeble and fatally impaired faculties'.²⁶ 'Millenarianism' and 'chiliasm' – synonymous in Christian theology, and denoting Christ's return to the world to establish a kingdom that will last a thousand years – were, as historical movements in early modern Europe, manifestations of the attempt to overcome original sin and to return to Eden.²⁷ It is, though, the theme – in fact, the narrative structure – of Eden, Fall, and reunion with God – that is crucial. Characteristic of the type of utopianism that is expressed in totalitarianism is possession of a mythical narrative organising the past, present, and future of a collectivity according to a pattern of victimhood, struggle, and salvation. What in the religious version is 'the people of God' is, in the totalitarian version, the German national community or the Russian proletariat.²⁸ The important aspect of this mythical narrative is captured best of all in Roger Griffin's term 'palingenesis': creation anew is the utopian expectation, and the object of re-creation is the collective political subject – hence the communist 'New Man', and hence the Nazi 'New Man'. The past as such is not restored (which would make utopianism an anti-modernist source of totalitarianism). Rather, what is anticipated is a 'substantially new order of society... occurring after a period of perceived decadence'.²⁹

The foregoing analogy to religion moves us a step closer to an important claim. (And it is, in the strict sense, only the type of antecedent that is an analogy – since it is not a religious derivation *per se* that is important to totalitarian utopia, but rather only the recurrence of a structure that happens to be

present earlier in religion.) The claim is important because it stipulates the variant of utopianism that is peculiar to totalitarianism, and the stipulation in turn requires a modification of a generic account provided by Cold War liberalism. Totalitarian utopias are utopias of authenticity. The feature of any utopian theory will be that it traces all the ills of existing society back to a single source. But this identity in form allows for variation in content. For example, utopian thought has at times pictured hedonist utopias (like Aldous Huxley's). At other times it has pictured ascetic utopias (like Thomas More's).³⁰ Totalitarian utopias are of the kind that trace social ills back to a state of inauthenticity. The animating idea of utopias of authenticity is that existing society places man in a position of fundamental contradiction with his true self. Importantly, though they might well coincide, a true self is not necessarily equivalent to the rational self – utopias of authenticity may, or may not, be rationalist utopias. The notion of decadence is, though, necessarily implied in utopias of authenticity, since they project the recovery – or more accurately, the reinvention – of an authentic self.

The utopia of Jean-Jacques Rousseau offers a fine example of a utopia of authenticity, to the extent that Rousseau can be picked out as a representative thinker of the utopianism in totalitarianism – a position, in fact, that the Cold War liberals do tend to endorse (even if often for different reasons). Rousseau thought that the existing societies of the late eighteenth century were decadent, and he considered that 'all institutions that place man in contradiction with himself are of no value'.³¹ Rousseau's two histories in the

Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts and the *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* looked back nostalgically to an original condition of man before a Fall. However, rather than desiring the recovery of that condition, Rousseau made clear in *The Social Contract* that his 'conjectural anthropology' was such that social life only 'corrupts man insofar as the Social Contract has not *de facto* succeeded':³² the good society lay ahead, not behind. Rousseau's conception of the natural society was, writes Northrup Frye, an 'eighteenth-century descendant of the pastoral myth', the myth of an idealised, early social condition, which can be identified with childhood – mankind in his infancy.³³ Rousseau has, of course, long been associated with totalitarianism. However, it is important that the right reasons for associating him thus are separated from the wrong reasons.³⁴ Among other things, Jacob Talmon picks out the implications of the civil religion – Talmon's Rousseau is 'fascinated by the pomp and thrill of collective patriotic worship'.³⁵ Quite aside from whether Rousseau was really such a shrewd judge of the future that he was perfectly adept in manipulating 'what we might call crowd psychology',³⁶ Rousseau's civil religion merely stipulates terms for political stability (not political upheaval). It is Rousseau's general will that is the transformative device, which sets out the terms of community at the same time.

Berlin and Popper are both troubled by the general will (as indeed Talmon is).³⁷ The general will is certainly the will of the collectivity – and at the centre of totalitarian utopianism is the idea of the collective political subject. And, as the very emblem of Berlin's positive liberty, it is the 'notion of two selves' – one

true self, one illusory self – that ‘does the work’ in support of it.³⁸ But in the last analysis, Rousseau’s most notorious refrain – ‘whoever refuses to obey the general will ... shall be forced to be free’ – is always amenable to the charitable (indeed, the *liberal*) reading, that it is only part of a more complex argument regarding the necessary connection between freedom and a broader framework of law, rather than a justification for coercing conformity.³⁹ Also, Berlin and Popper’s is a mistake of misdiagnosis: Rousseau’s idea of the general will is hardly representative of the Enlightenment. In fact, it is as much Rousseau the counter-Enlightenment thinker – the Rousseau who ‘hates intellectuals’, detests urban civilisation, ‘identifies nature ... with simplicity’, and who celebrates ‘the inner life’ – as much as it is Rousseau the Enlightenment thinker, who is representative of totalitarianism.⁴⁰ More to the point, it is in the former capacity that he exercises influences of various types. As we will see across the next two sections of this chapter, his ideas are taken up in reaction to the Enlightenment, and it is such they are significant in totalitarianism.

Communist utopianism

Rousseau’s utopia of authenticity assumes, in Stalinism, a rationalistic complexion. Ultimately, it is the Russian proletariat that will become the relevant collective political subject, and participation in Stalinism’s collective project will promise the realisation of man’s higher self. The development of this utopian current is incremental, and there are a series of key stages that merit picking out. These stages amount to successive

modifications of the received – utopian – terms for conceiving the community. The important modifications are undertaken by the pre-Marxian utopian socialists, by the early and later Marx, by Lenin, and within the scope of Stalinist theory and practice.

Rousseau had been dissatisfied with the individualism of modern societies that set man against his fellow man. In the period spanning the aftermath of the French Revolution of 1789 and the European revolutions of 1848, the utopian socialists echoed Rousseau's dissatisfaction. In doing so, they formed the bridge that links Rousseau to Marxism. 'Utopian socialism' was not a project that pertinent figures like Charles Fourier, Saint-Simon, and Robert Owen would have identified with, since the term was a retrospective creation – and since they tended to recognise their projects, in various ways, as having the status of 'science'.⁴¹ But the common form of their projects was utopian nevertheless: there was a central social ill – poverty – and the source of that ill was the operation of the principles of self-interest and competition. Nothing in the operation of those principles, however, was inherent in human nature – indeed, they were the denial of a real nature, and hence put man into a state of inauthenticity. Individualism, also, had been prominent in the agenda of the French Revolution itself – the utopian socialists were especially critical of its natural rights themes.⁴² Despite the popular, contemporary identification of the Revolution and the philosophy of Rousseau, though, they did not reject Rousseau along with the former – and it was Rousseau's idea of authenticity that particularly

captured their attention. One specific figure, Charles Fourier, is illustrative. There was both continuity and discontinuity across Rousseau's utopianism and Fourier's – Rousseau's influence was simultaneously one of creative adoption and distortion.

Fourier's principal work is *The Theory of the Four Movements*. Poverty, in Fourier's design, will be overturned by collective life in agricultural co-operatives (called 'phalansteries'), which will multiply production by harnessing the benefits of co-operation, and which will, furthermore, provide for the realisation of distinctive human capacities. In this way, 'Civilisation' will give way to 'Harmony'.⁴³ The imprint of Rousseau is unmistakable. As Talmon remarks, 'Fourier appears to be clearly conscious of reliving the experience of the Rousseau of the "Discourse on Inequality".' Fourier's question, says Talmon, is how to reassert, in the complex setting of an industrialising society, the harmonious relationships that prevailed in the primitive state of nature.⁴⁴ Some later commentators on the history of utopian thought have found cause to be even more effusive on the connection than Talmon:

The spirit of Jean-Jacques, the enemy of the philosophes, hovers over every line that Fourier wrote. The play of contrast between natural man and artificial man of the *Discourse on Inequality* is reflected in the antithesis of the happy man in the phalanstery and the wretched man of civilization.⁴⁵

Fourier's appropriation of Rousseau is creative adoption in the sense that it updates Rousseau's conception of man corrupted by *amour-propre* and the elevation of

self-esteem through the pursuit of commercial success, by factoring in the realities of early nineteenth-century social and economic life. Fourier retains the utopia of authenticity. But Fourier also distorts Rousseau's message. Rousseau's was an ascetic utopia, or a utopia of virtue: moderation was to be exercised because most desires were only the artifice of existing societies. Fourier's was a hedonistic utopia: human beings were comprised of a range of 'passions', and with the full, coordinated expression of these passions – denied by Civilisation – which marked the realisation the authentic self. In this, moreover, it can be conjectured that Fourier is typical of utopian socialism in general.

An interpretive convention exists, which is accepted to greater and lesser extents by different parties, that there are 'two Marxisms', and so two Marxs. In this convention, there are 'critical Marxists' and 'scientific Marxists', and so there is a 'voluntarist' Marx and a 'determinist' Marx.⁴⁶ The voluntarist Marx is more plausibly the utopian, and he is also the early Marx – the Marx archetypically of the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* of 1844. The Cold War liberals sought first and foremost to condemn the figure of Marx who was the utopian. The early Marx was, though, unknown to them: the 1844 manuscripts, having been lost until the 1920s, were only just beginning to gain serious attention in the 1950s. Certainly, there is no explicit discussion of these manuscripts in Isaiah Berlin's book-length study of Marx's life and work, initially published in 1939 (and subsequently left unrevised).⁴⁷ However, that one must assume that the Cold War liberals were stabbing in the dark

a little does not invalidate the diagnosis of the presence of an important utopian strand in Marx. It was in Paris in exile in the early 1840s that Marx became familiar with the ideas of Fourier and Saint-Simon. The identity of Marxism and utopianism has been vehemently contested, not least of all by Marx himself – and even more so, by Engels. What is less open to dispute is the basic permeation of Marxism by a ‘Romantic motif’, which adds up to the continuing modification of the terms of Rousseau’s revision of the mainstream of the Enlightenment.⁴⁸ On the one hand, themes from Romanticism permeate Marx’s critique of contemporary society. He writes:

The bourgeoisie has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his ‘natural superiors’, and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous ‘cash payment’.⁴⁹

On the other hand, the design of an ideal society (to the extent that Marx is willing to sketch one out) entails, in Kolakowski’s words, ‘the basic principle ... that all mediation between the individual and mankind will cease to exist’ – the restoration of ‘organic links’ between individual and community ‘will at the same time restore the authenticity of personal life’.⁵⁰

Looked at more closely, the permeation of Marxism by romantic themes, while a claim that is more easily endorsed, is also the measure of the utopian content in Marx’s early philosophy (rather than a way of watering it down), as well as a measure of its origin. The terminology is indicative. Both the German romantics – for

instance, Schlegel – and Marx (in the 1844 manuscripts) refer to the state of ‘transcendence of human self-alienation’.⁵¹ Marx’s self-presentation was, in line with the Left Hegelian tendency, to emphasise rationality against mysticism, but his anthropology owes an important debt to Romanticism. ‘Man is a species-being,’ writes Marx, and alienation from species-being is the obstruction of man’s capacities to perform creative work – thus it is that man potentially ‘fashions things ... in accord with the laws of beauty’.⁵² Marx’s aesthetic utopia here, celebrating the worker’s intellectual capacities, was to provide the ‘normative frame’ for Stalinism’s New Man – the transformed Russian proletarian – one important consequence of which was to legitimate certain possibilities, and to delegitimize others.⁵³ And once more, it was a modification of Rousseau’s utopianism, following from Fourier’s prior adjustment: the content of Rousseau’s thesis of self-realisation was now neither moral conscience, nor the full expression of the passions, but aesthetic creativity.⁵⁴

Although commentators are generally more comfortable with the proposition that there is an affinity, rather than influence, between Rousseau and Marx – Wokler, for instance, hits upon the puzzle that Marx would appear to have read ‘the wrong works’ (since there is scant evidence that he read the *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, ‘the most Marxist of all Rousseau’s works’) – there is more than enough reason to suppose that there is a mediated influence.⁵⁵ Marx’s (and Engels’) anti-utopianism was in one respect rhetorical stance (as it had been, indeed, for the retrospectively named utopian socialists).⁵⁶

Criticism of utopian socialism did not amount to the absence of a basic utopian form in their own theory. Nor did it mean there was not a direct influence of utopian socialist ideas: even the anti-utopian rhetoric in *The Communist Manifesto* acknowledges that the writings of Fourier, Saint-Simon, Owen, and others are 'full of the most valuable materials for the enlightenment of the working class', and the ideas that Marx took up included both those of the fundamental social division between classes and the division of history into discrete phases.⁵⁷

But while all of this makes Marxism, in an important dimension, utopian, it does not make Marxism and utopian socialism replacement faiths, as Michael Burleigh has argued.⁵⁸ Titles of utopian tracts like Saint-Simon's *New Christianity* lead too simplistically to that conclusion. Such titles are really only yet another illustration of the fluidity of the boundary that separates utopianism and religion. Nor is Gareth Stedman Jones's claim that, in *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels deliberately 'wrote out the religious prehistory of communism' particularly convincing.⁵⁹ Communism simply happens to share important features in common with religion; for instance, the recurrence of the narrative structure of Fall and redemption. Strictly speaking, the significance of religion for the early Marx is neither inheritance nor similarity. Rather, the significance is engagement with religion as a substantive philosophical problem, a problem that Marx takes from the Left Hegelians, with the effect of arriving at his distinctive utopia, which retains the Rousseauian idea of human authenticity at its very heart. For the Left Hegelians, religion was alienation: man creates

God, and he projects onto God's image all the traits of human perfection – devaluing himself in the process. For Marx, modifying the account, alienation is the prevailing conditions of work:

The more the worker expends of himself, the more powerful becomes the alien world of objects he creates over against himself, the poorer he himself – his own inner world – becomes, the less he has to call his own. It is exactly the same as in religion. The more man puts into God, the less he keeps in himself.⁶⁰

What remains for the later Marx to do in order to take the communist utopia one step closer towards Stalinism? Significantly, the utopian socialists did not recognise the proletariat as privileged historical actor and collective political subject. Marx did. In fact, he had already done so by the early 1840s. But his later work modifies the philosophy in accordance with an increasingly detailed empirical assessment of the place of the proletariat in economic life. Ultimately, at the point where Marx has broached the idea of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat', the proletariat has come to simply fill up the entirety of the conceptual space. Marx's intended meaning in coining this phrase has always remained elusive. Read in a certain way, it might well be taken to denote a retreat from utopian projections – a belated recognition that there will be no momentous leap into communist society, but that rather what will be required is a transitional period, in which one class will exercise exclusive power in order to oversee the abolition of remaining class distinctions.⁶¹

But a nod to realism in (short-term) political strategy should not be allowed to obscure the distinctly Marxist vision of the collectivist utopia of authenticity, which the work of the transitional period will inaugurate: 'in the place of the old bourgeois society', predicts Marx, 'with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all'.⁶² After Marx, the proper meaning to be ascribed to the idea of proletarian dictatorship continues to preoccupy Lenin. The conception of vanguardism is eventually where it leads Lenin, a conception that belongs principally to the revolutionary violence current in totalitarianism (so that consideration will have to wait until a later chapter). The influence of Marx's proletarian dictatorship also takes Lenin, though, to an even more maximalist conception of what will be required of the transitional period. In *The State and Revolution*, quoting Marx and Engels, Lenin agrees that when "the state ... ceases to exist", ... "it becomes possible to speak of freedom" – but, importantly, possible *only* then. In other words, and to be exact, it is this formula that demands the maximalist conception of the transitional period:

until the 'higher' phase of communism arrives, the socialists demand the *strictest* control by society and by the state over the measure of labour and the measure of consumption.⁶³

Lenin thought that concessions to political realism like this were proof that the Bolsheviks were not 'utopians' since they did not "dream" of dispensing *at once* with

all administration, with all subordination'.⁶⁴ It was no such proof at all. Yet again, purported anti-utopianism is better viewed as pure rhetorical stance. The vision of the association of men in 'higher' freedom remains undiminished.

Finally, it is worth considering Stalin's own thought. None of the Cold War liberals dealt with Stalin's thought in any detail – the title of Berlin's *The Soviet Mind*, for example, is largely misleading.⁶⁵ However, Stalin's conceptual innovations (such that they are) take up this mantle of utopianism, and on an alternative reading to the one being proposed here, they might be thought to have the effect of infinitely *postponing* utopia: thus did Boris Pasternak in *Doctor Zhivago* disparage those for whom 'transitional periods, worlds in the making, are an end in themselves'.⁶⁶ But Stalin shifted the utopia's terms rather than postponed it. Stalin's most well-known conceptual innovation is the idea of 'socialism in one country'. This meant, for Stalin, to subordinate the interests of world revolution to the survival of the Soviet Union. The corresponding thought was that the state would have to continue to exist in the conditions of a hostile international environment. The natural conclusion of the idea of socialism in one country was that the state (far from withering away) would remain even in the higher phase of communism – 'unless the capitalist encirclement is liquidated', as Stalin explained at the Eighteenth Party Congress in 1939.⁶⁷ This was also a move that breathed new life into communist utopianism; the move took it in a direction marginal in the prior Marxist tradition, but a direction that the inheritance of utopian terms of community more

than facilitated. 'Socialism in one country' pictured, as utopia's collective subject, not so much the proletariat *per se*, so much as the Russian proletariat. In Martin Malia's phrase, utopia can have a 'perverse logic'. While, as Malia does, to describe Stalin's regime as having 'wound up with its own kind of national socialism' is to put a point more provocatively than it need be put, the accommodation of Stalinist utopianism with nationalism is at least partial. As Malia observes, in less provocative mode:

the Soviets' firm anchor on the Left did not prevent them from also playing on nationalist sentiments, at least for home consumption, while beguiling the outside world with their proletarian 'internationalism'.⁶⁸

Nazism and utopianism

Nazism, like Stalinism, is partly constituted out of a utopian strand of thought. It is the same strand of thought, which builds up over time out of frustration with Enlightenment ideas. However, because utopianism weaves a complex route, there are particular way stations that need picking out, through which communism does not pass at all. The initial frustration is, once more, with Enlightenment individualism. As we saw in Chapter 1, one elementary feature of totalitarian ideologies is that they divide humanity into collective units, which can differ in content. In place of Stalinism's utopia of class (which only blends with a national idea at an extreme point, and in an extremely late phase) is Nazism's distinctive utopia

of nation – the *Volksgemeinschaft*. This emerges in the first part of the nineteenth century. It is not yet a utopia of *race*. It will become so, though, once scientism is added to the mix.

Nazism did not picture the New Man in the same way as did Stalinism. But it pictured a New Man nonetheless – one who was likewise inseparable from a collective political subject. The Nazi New Man would participate – ‘perfect’ himself – in a utopia of nation. This utopia was first evident in the dissatisfaction with the Enlightenment disruption of the idea of a thick community – its vision of individuals united only by common participation in a thinner framework of rights and shared interests. But a utopia of race would have to wait because scientism would be required, firstly to give detailed expression to the idea of race itself, and secondly to make race the relevant unit in a strong theory of history. Up to that point, the utopia of the national community was constructed in two key stages. The first way station was the philosophy of Herder – though it went unnoticed in Isaiah Berlin, for whom Herder instead was a kind of anti-totalitarian by proxy, because he repudiated Enlightenment rationalism. Berlin was wrong about this, and correcting his reading helps to get totalitarian utopianism clearer. Fichte was a second, and more important, figure. In this case, the pathologies of Fichte’s adaptation of nationalism do come in for censure, primarily in Jacob Talmon. However, by that point, Talmon has been forced to fundamentally revise his original conceptual framework.⁶⁹ Totalitarian utopias are no longer so because they are the most radical extension of the eighteenth-century belief in ‘the essential perfectibility of human

nature', a formula that (thought Talmon) excluded the possibility of fascist or Nazi utopias, since totalitarians of the Right declared 'man to be weak and corrupt'.⁷⁰ Rather, totalitarian utopias of the Right were quite possible because, in its 'romantic phase', the messianism is inverted. Nationalism, which in its early days itself has a universalist connotation, was quite capable of serving as a 'bastard messianism', tapping into 'fury and social resentment', and replacing 'the promise of universal regeneration by the pledge of happiness or greatness to the tribe'.⁷¹ Fichte also comes in for censure, albeit to a lesser extent, in Berlin: Fichte is a proponent of the wrong sort of freedom. That this idea will be unfamiliar to the received account of Berlin suggests, just as does Talmon's change in position, that the Cold War reading of totalitarian utopianism is in need of refocusing: if positive liberty is potentially totalitarian, then it is equally open to assuming either a rationalistic or romantic form.

It is first necessary here to examine the case anti-*thetical* to Nazi utopianism's counter-Enlightenment derivation. Berel Lang finds an unconscious influence upon Nazism in the way that the Enlightenment sets out terms for imagining the community. For Lang, when faced with questions about the constitution of society – who belongs to society? on what basis? – the Enlightenment thinkers, like Kant, typically maximised the scope for 'assimilation'. The thought was that participation in the framework of equal rights held out the most inclusive possibility of all: that membership of society was open to all persons, regardless of religious identity in particular. Lang notes the perverse

effect of 'universalising' the terms of inclusion: to ratchet up the costs of exclusion. The reluctance of religious minorities to enter into a full assimilation process, once that gift was generously offered, intensified the vulnerability of those who appeared separate. Unsurprisingly, Lang has uppermost in mind the dilemmas of Jewish emancipation and assimilation from the late eighteenth century onwards.⁷² Lang's thesis is an interesting way of conceiving the earliest intimations of the Nazi utopia. But it is a thesis that puts the cart before the horse. Ratcheting up the hypothetical costs of exclusion requires in the first place a political will to extract those costs. And that will has its impetus outside of the Enlightenment, in the course of the explicit repudiation of the Enlightenment's terms for imagining the community.

In the reaction to the Enlightenment, Johann Gottfried von Herder constitutes a sort of beginning for Nazi ideology. There is no straight line of descent from Herder to Hitler, although Herder does exercise a distorted kind of influence, mediated via some of the more maverick figures of the Nazi intelligentsia. The thinkers of German Romanticism rejected the individualistic and civic nationalism of the Enlightenment mainstream. Herder set the tone. Romantic nationalism amounted to more than participation in a framework of equal rights; it was both collectivist and an affirmation of national uniqueness at one and the same time. Herder was the first to give serious voice to this combined idea. In his *Another Philosophy of History* (1774), Enlightenment rationalism is dismissed as the 'cold philosophy of the age', incapable of picturing the community in terms genuinely resonant of

human experience. Human beings were moved by the simplest of 'delights', like familial relationships, which had been as they were since humanity's founding.⁷³ Once more, it is the creative adoption of Rousseau's ideas that is giving embryonic shape to the totalitarian utopias. The Rousseau of the *Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts* is evident across Herder's *Another Philosophy of History*, albeit the conclusions drawn out are unexpected.⁷⁴ Where Rousseau too lauds the simplest of human delights, making nature the source of all goodness and truth, Herder drew out a further idea. He did so by bounding all authentic experience within the limits of the nation. A shared language, he argued, was what made any group relationship cohesive and meaningful. In language, therefore, uniqueness lay. Language gave each people its special character. It followed that every spontaneous expression of that character was to be cherished.

To reiterate, there is no logical step from Herder to Hitler. Commentators who have implied so have only short-circuited a more convoluted historical process. Herder's was a cultural nationalism, not a political one: the expressions of national character to be cherished were cultural achievements. There was a potential to bend Herder's concept of community in a racial direction, but his intended meaning was cultural. When he stated that 'every nation has its centre of happiness within itself, as every ball has its centre of gravity', he did indeed make a connection between the realisation of the human self and participation in a national project.⁷⁵ However, Alfred Rosenberg's attempt in *The Myth of the Twentieth Century* to stamp Nazism with the legitimacy of Herder's philosophy,

by co-opting the statement into a plea for Germans to find in the experience of the 'Mythus of the Nordic racial soul' reason to 'serve the honour of the *Volk*', was almost pure invention.⁷⁶ To be sure, Herder's was the first paving stone laid across the path separating counter-Enlightenment communitarianism and National Socialism. But it was no more than that. The important move is what it teases out of the early Rousseau: that reason can separate man from community and the natural community is one whose distinctive culture has organically developed. To state that, for Herder, to have shared in this basic assumption was to have 'envisioned a totalitarian society', as Liah Greenfeld does, is mistaken. If these foundations for the ideology of nationalism are, in Germany, exceptional (and they may well be), this by no means supports the conclusion, which Greenfeld again infers, that 'Germany was ready for the Holocaust from the moment German national identity existed'.⁷⁷ This smacks of the worst kind of intellectual determinism, rendering superfluous all historical developments subsequent to the articulation of a nationalism with local colour (and in Germany's case, this was articulated long before the establishment of a nation-state).

However, there is a world of difference between making the mistake of exaggerating Herder's influence on Nazism and making the mistake of turning him into one of Nazism's would-be opponents. Nevertheless, this is what Berlin did. Because Berlin was primarily concerned to lay the blame for totalitarian communism at the Enlightenment's door, he was all too willing to enlist the Enlightenment's enemies to the cause, employing them as early truth tellers about the

dangers of monism. Herder, above all, was Berlin's anti-totalitarian by proxy. Herder, for Berlin, was a great pluralist, who was able to accommodate the ideal of pluralism – indeed, to celebrate that ideal – while nonetheless giving important recognition to the human need 'to belong'.⁷⁸ If Berlin thought he was right to hold that at the root of totalitarianism was 'the deepest single assumption of Western thought' – the idea that humanity's fundamental aspirations were identical at all times and places – then it made sense to laud those critics who were challenging that idea at exactly the moment when the Enlightenment was trying to give expression to it in its modern form. Herder, said Berlin, held to a 'notion of the equal validity of incommensurable cultures'.⁷⁹ Men are born into language, a fact that they can do little to change, although no single culture is superior to any other. Accordingly, 'after Herder', the central assumption of Western thought 'began to crumble'.⁸⁰ Paradoxically, then, Berlin turns Herder into an anti-totalitarian on exactly the grounds that he is located somewhere in totalitarianism's complex causal background: that he undermines the idea of the unity of the human race. That Berlin was wrong about this suggests a modification must be made to the account of totalitarian utopianism: totalitarian utopias privilege select portions of humanity – not humanity as a whole; and rationalism is not a necessary feature. The evidence, indeed, is that later in his life, having already made his lasting contribution to Cold War liberalism, Berlin came to realise that Nazism did have intellectual antecedents in Romanticism. It became foreboding – hardly laudatory – that Romanticism implied 'a denial of common humanity'.⁸¹ As his biographer records

of Berlin's later point of view, 'Romanticism's denial that human beings were everywhere the same could lead ultimately to the denial that they deserved to exist.'⁸² On Berlin's more sober assessment, fascism could well be the end point of romantic nationalism, albeit in 'exaggerated and distorted form'.⁸³ Joseph de Maistre (not a romantic, but certainly a man of counter-Enlightenment) was another figure who came to bridge Nazism and irrationalism – in place of what had previously been the bridge between and rationalism and monism-utopianism.⁸⁴

After Herder, Fichte is a more consequential paving stone towards Nazi utopianism. It was Fichte, not Herder, who made the move from cultural nationalism to political nationalism (despite Zeev Sternhell's attempt to place it earlier).⁸⁵ Fichte adapted Herder's ideas into a political programme: the attempt of a German nation to rid itself of foreign political influence would also be an attempt to rid itself of foreign cultural influence. In his *Addresses to the German Nation* (1807–8), Fichte completed an emphatic revision of his own political stance, which had begun with cosmopolitan identification with the French Revolution, and now ended with a radical disavowal of cosmopolitan principles in the wake of Prussian defeat in the revolutionary wars. Love of the fatherland was not passionate commitment to ideas like rights and constitutions. The terms of community were to be construed in anything other than a thin sense. 'Taken in the higher sense of the word', wrote Fichte:

a people is this: the totality of men living together in society and continually producing themselves

out of themselves both naturally and spiritually; which collectively stands under a certain special law that governs the development of the divine within it. The universality of this special law is what binds this mass of men into a natural whole, interpenetrated by itself, in the eternal world and, for that very reason, in the temporal world also.⁸⁶

Jacob Talmon noted very well what this conception of a nation, or people, equated with. But Talmon could only take note of what it equated with after his original conceptual framework for totalitarian utopianism had been fundamentally reordered. Fichte's was a 'messianism nationalism', noted Talmon.⁸⁷ In other words, shorn of the theological metaphor, particular nations could be the active agents in realising utopian schemes for fundamental human improvement. By enacting their nationhood, thought Fichte, the Germans would redeem, in fact, the whole world, with all its peoples. 'If you sink,' he warned his fellow countrymen, 'all humanity sinks with you, without hope of future restoration.'⁸⁸ In a sense, then, Fichte's was not a disavowal of cosmopolitanism, so much as it was cosmopolitanism by other means. The 'fatherland of the really educated Christian European', he wrote elsewhere, is 'in each age that European state which leads in culture'.⁸⁹

Talmon took up the issue of Fichte's connection to totalitarianism in his second volume, *Political Messianism*. The structure of Talmon's thesis is such that totalitarian democracy, by this point, is no longer an exclusive affair of the left. Rather, quite correctly, Talmon's thesis now implies that, subsequent

to the French Revolution, utopian schemes fork off into two: 'messianism socialism' (Saint-Simon, Fourier, and Marx) and 'messianic nationalism'. Nationalisms that were messianic identified nations (not classes) with special missions in the plan of world history. Hence Fichte's doctrine of the nation stood alongside Mazzini's vision of the 'Third Rome' or Mickiewitz's concept of 'Poland as the Christ among nations'.⁹⁰ Talmon's reading of Fichte is hampered by a rather typical feature of his expository style: namely, if a thinker's intellectual development is separated by early and later stances, the later stance is treated as the natural end, which was always implicit in the early stance.⁹¹ Nevertheless, Talmon pinpoints exactly where Fichte's philosophy bridges the particular and the universal, or effects a cosmopolitanism by other means: 'the mission placed by Fichte before the German nation is not really to cultivate its German traditions and customs, but to fulfil the universal categorical imperative of the moral law, as a teacher to the nations'.⁹² The one thing that Talmon might have laboured more is the role of victimhood in giving fuel to this 'bastard messianism': German humiliation at the hands of the invading French army was the vital cement to group identity, which Fichte was able to tap into. But his account also serves to modify Hegel's place among totalitarianism's intellectual antecedents. Rather than Karl Popper's Hegel – whose principal link to totalitarianism seems to be his 'Platonizing worship of the state' – it was the Hegel who took his lead from Fichte who was to become a background source of Nazism.⁹³ Fichte's nationalism was built into Hegel's project;

Hegel was echoing Fichte when, in Isaiah Berlin's words, he equated progress with the victory of the 'historic' nations over the 'unhistoric', of Germanic culture over the rest.⁹⁴

One last issue to consider is a further charge against Fichte (where Fichte, this time, is not indicted in the company of nationalist thinkers like Mazzini or Mickiewicz, but stands apart). It is Berlin's charge that Fichte is a proponent of a proto-totalitarian kind of freedom, which Berlin took note of on another occasion when he stepped outside of Cold War liberalism to consider the origins of Nazism more thoughtfully. We discover, after all, that in an early phase of Berlin's thought, positive liberty is no more exclusive to communism (not Nazism) than is rationalism (not irrationalism) a necessary feature of totalitarian utopianism. The defence of negative liberty in Berlin, as we saw at the start of this chapter, is closely linked with the attack on monism. If 'monism' is Berlin's stand-in for utopianism, and if – as we have seen more recently – utopianism can quite easily emerge out of Romanticism, then we should not be surprised that positive liberty (negative liberty's opposite) can assume, for Berlin, a romantic, as well as rationalist, guise. This it did in Fichte, in the most developed form.

The earlier, less well-known Berlin associated the perversion of liberty not with the Enlightenment, but with the reaction against it; and it is this idea that needs (re)centring in the account of totalitarian utopianism. Before it was positive liberty, the dangerous conception of freedom was 'romantic liberty'.⁹⁵ Romantic liberty, like positive liberty, disrupted the 'nuclear, central, minimal meaning' of liberty as the

absence of restraint or coercion on the part of other human beings. But the more specific quality was that the romantic conception envisaged liberty as self-realisation through the union of the individual with some large group or movement.⁹⁶ Fichte, thought the early Berlin, was supremely emblematic of this position because he articulated an advanced form of the concept of the 'real' or 'ideal' self on which romantic liberty (like all positive liberty) had to be based; Fichte conceived this self, ultimately, 'as a kind of supra-self, a transcendental entity', which was embodied in the nation:⁹⁷ 'Individual self-determination now became collective self-realisation, and the nation a community of unified wills in pursuit of moral truth.'⁹⁸ For Berlin, therefore, Fichte made a further contribution to the construction of the Nazi utopia, in addition to the one spelled out by Talmon: Fichte was the first to develop the idea that freedom might signify submission to the nation.

So, adding to the charge sheet Berlin's accusation that Fichte is a proponent of proto-totalitarian liberty, Nazi utopianism had several sources not in Enlightenment Reason but in the romantic revolt against it. There is evidence of both an affinity and (in this case, even if not in Herder's) an influence that is not one of distortion, even if it is one of creative adoption. As Ryback concludes, Fichte was in fact – rather more than the popular candidate, Nietzsche – 'the philosopher closest to Hitler and his National Socialist movement in tone, spirit, and dynamic'. It was Fichte 'who provided the philosophical foundations for the toxic blend of Teutonic singularity and vicious nationalism'.⁹⁹ Also, Ryback observes, Fichte's

texts 'represent the only serious works of philosophy among Hitler's surviving books'.¹⁰⁰ Hence, with consideration of this textual evidence, we get a further sense of how it could have been that, as Talmon's revised conceptual framework allowed for, 'the mysterious uniqueness of the Nordic race took the place of the Absolute of Political Messianism – the rational pattern at the end of the days'.¹⁰¹ In short, the idea of the utopia of the national community is formed by the early part of nineteenth century. Once more, as in the case of the utopia of class, a new vehicle for collective action is fully available, out of which totalitarianisms could emerge long before they actually did.¹⁰² And once again, the upshot of the demand for authenticity is the reality of greater homogeneity: vehicles for collective action are viable only if they are sustained by thick bonds of solidarity.

Hitler's thought and Nazi practice are the final evidence of the reception, and further development, of an irrationalist, collectivist utopia of national authenticity. To make the point clearly, the utopian appeal of Nazism was primarily centred on the nation, not race, since racialism instead rested on a kind of scientific appeal (as we shall see shortly, in the next chapter).¹⁰³ But to be sure, the distinction between the two categories was loose, and the appeal of Nazism deliberately played off that looseness.¹⁰⁴ Claudia Koonz in *The Nazi Conscience* captures this with the term 'ethnic fundamentalism' ('ethnic' approximates to *völkisch*, in the idea of the *Volksgemeinschaft*). In the Germany of the interwar period, for ordinary people, ethnic fundamentalism was simply more socially

acceptance than was outright, violent anti-Semitism (*contra* Goldhagen's thesis).¹⁰⁵ For intellectuals too, argues Koonz, it was commitment to the ethnic group that exercised the appeal. Intellectuals who prostrated themselves before Nazism, like Martin Heidegger and Carl Schmitt, often subscribed to very different conceptions of what Nazism was really about, 'but they converged on one point – the desire for moral rejuvenation of the *volk*'. Koonz also comes very close to describing ethnic fundamentalism in utopian terms, and she has no hesitation in invoking the ubiquitous theological metaphor: '*volk* held out an egalitarian and ecumenical promise to members of a so-called community of fate'. Certainly, it was a collectivism – and one that was 'deeply anti-liberal' – which stressed the boundaries of ethical obligation: not to humanity in general, but to the nationally defined community.¹⁰⁶ All this leads to a logical question (one that runs parallel to the question of Stalin's 'socialism in one country'): Was Hitler a socialist? Did National Socialism have a credible socialist component?

Ian Kershaw, across his two-volume biography of Hitler, has a tendency to refer to Hitler's 'socialism' in inverted commas, and at one point he states sharply that 'Hitler was never a socialist'. But he is more than willing to concede that the intention behind the 'nebulous "national community"' was to 'overcome the division between nationalism and socialism', to reconcile (nationalist) bourgeoisie and (Marxist) proletariat.¹⁰⁷ Granted, Hitler's vision was thoroughly anti-Marxist. His attempt to address the social question leads him, in *Mein Kampf*, to the concern that the impoverishment of the workers by international

capitalism – personified by Jews – will isolate the workers from the national community, and lead them to Marxism – again, personified by Jews. Marxism also equalled the Social Democratic Party in Germany: ‘When I recognised the Jew as the leader of Social Democracy, the scales dropped from my eyes.’¹⁰⁸ The effort to draw the workers away from Social Democracy, though, entailed a redefinition of terms, candidly explained by Hitler himself in a speech of 1928:

That is the aim that the NSDAP has set itself: to lift the terms nationalism and socialism out of their previous meaning. To be national can only mean to be behind your people, and to be socialist can only be to stand up for the right of your people, also externally.¹⁰⁹

So, Hitler’s socialism was anything other than its standard, generic conceptual core: abolition of private property, common ownership of the means of production, economic equality. The important point was the primacy of the collective over the individual. As Richard Weikart remarks, ‘Hitler’s brand of socialism was a means to an end, and the end was the perpetuation of the German *Volk*.’¹¹⁰ Perpetuation is partly misleading. This end, which was the utopian end, was ‘to fabricate’ the Nazi New Man (on Burleigh’s more appropriate choice of word).¹¹¹ At issue is therefore the character of the Nazi New Man. Tony Judt suggested that, in the middle of the twentieth century, ‘workerism’ was an ideological phenomenon that transcended communist politics, and which identified

the worker – in ‘fascist light’ – as ‘stern, male, and muscular’.¹¹² In this sense Nazism (and indeed fascism in general) is better understood as ‘workerist’ than as ‘socialist’. Certainly, workerism identifies one aspect of the New Man’s projected character. But the central aspect was taken from the myth of collectivism that emerged out of the First World War – the ‘socialism of the trenches’. In Neil Gregor’s depiction of the far right mindset prevalent on the eve of the Nazi era, ‘this was a real “socialism” forged in the blood of the trenches, not the false socialism foisted upon unsuspecting workers by mendacious Jews’.¹¹³ This led to the New Man being pictured, in particular, through a cult of martial toughness. *Mein Kampf* is rife with military language transposed on to political life. In this too reside the differences in the Nazi and Stalinist conceptions of the New Man. Both types of New Man would be forged in opposition to the individualism of modern life, but the Nazi New Man would be made on the battlefield, with the SS as template. As Fritzsche and Hellbeck assess the matter, ‘if Russian ideologues of the New Man worked on their souls, their German counterparts worked on their bodies to serve the nation’.¹¹⁴

Nazi practice, then, confirms the important presence of a utopian current. One last source of confirmation is the presence, in Hitler’s thought specifically, of the familiar narrative structure of totalitarian utopianism. As Griffin observes, it is paligenetic myth that explains how it is that ‘the dialectic of decadence and rebirth gives *Mein Kampf* any cohesion and structure it has’.¹¹⁵ It is a structure through which, in *Mein Kampf*, Hitler narrates two closely related stories, one about Germany, and the other about his own personal life.

Indeed, even by the end of the book's first chapter, Hitler has managed to impose a heavily biographically informed image of an idealised past, in the statement of the ambition to reunite the 'two German states' of Germany and Austria; to evoke the theme of victimhood, in the reference to the 'burdens' imposed on 'the German people'; to introduce the motif of renewal, in the allusion to a 'great heroic struggle'; and to hold out the prospect of final victory, in the aspiration 'to become "something"'.¹¹⁶ Thus are Fall and redemption the theological rendering of the pattern of the Nazi utopia, just as alienation and its overcoming are the pattern of the communist utopia.

4

Scientism

If Cold War liberalism constructed an account of totalitarianism around utopianism, then a tradition of critical theory, which came to the fore in the 1960s, turned the focus to science. Critical theorists were hostile towards Cold War liberals. They were dissatisfied with an account of totalitarianism that they thought ran close to constituting a blanket critique of the left. Critical theorists, then, had their own agenda, and their own target. Unlike Cold War liberalism, the primary target was not communism, but fascism. More specifically, the primary concern was with where Nazism was little more than a reflection of tendencies prominent within advanced Western societies at large. The agenda was to bring into clearer focus the hidden forms of domination that explained these connections between Nazism and the modern liberal mainstream. Undoubtedly, large parts of the critique of totalitarian scientism are overdone. In the very least, the critique of scientism has to be carefully balanced against the critique of utopianism, rather than replace it wholesale. But claims about science can be shown to illuminate

Nazism in certain aspects. Ultimately, in such senses, scientism is best viewed as providing legitimacy to the terms of historical justification in totalitarianism, where utopianism attends instead to the terms of community. More to the point, thus viewed, claims about science can be shown to illuminate aspects of Stalinism as well (however distant this was from the original intention). As we shall see in the course of this chapter, scientism can be made to explain the terms of historical justification across both Nazism and Stalinism – albeit in different ways. Critical theory’s original concern was to account for the forms of totalitarian domination that it thought were hidden and which, accordingly, it imagined Cold War liberalism found easy to neglect. But a modified version of the critique of scientism accounts for the less hidden forms also – and indeed, it accounts for them rather better.

Critical theory and the pathologies of reason

While the target of critical theory was Nazism-cum-liberalism, the political tradition it shared an allegiance to was Western Marxism. Western Marxism is an opaque category. In the post-war period in which critical theory rose to prominence, it tended to be defined by default: membership was defined by shared opposition to the dogmatic, deterministic Marxism of the Soviet Union. The error of Soviet-style Marxism was, on accounts like Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s, to have aped the methods of ‘bourgeois science’.¹ Western Marxism considered that this was a distortion, albeit a distortion traceable all the way back to Engels, and possibly even the later Marx himself. A renewal of

Marxism, Antonio Gramsci had argued, required a revolution 'against *Capital*'. Western Marxism harked back instead to a young Marx, a non-scientistic Marx. Herbert Marcuse, for one, now announced that the publication of the long-lost Paris manuscripts marked 'a crucial event in the history of Marxist studies'.² This meant two things. First, and ironically, it meant harking back to exactly those texts and concepts which, as we saw in the previous chapter, had already set Marxism in the direction of totalitarian utopianism (as the Cold War liberals had diagnosed correctly, even if rather unsystematically, without having ingested the writings of the young Marx as such). Second, it meant that, from the outset, the account that critical theorists would be able to give of totalitarianism would be selective and self-serving. Science would be the signature theme, and more than expedient the role of science would be constitutive: science would not only serve as a tool for the extension of state power, as Friedrich and Brzezinski's model had allowed for, but science would serve also as the mode of that power's legitimation. And beyond domination by science was (to the extent that the critical theorists were inclined to hope for it) the world that they projected in its place.

This outline of the connection between science, domination, and modern society at large was first formalised in the founding text of critical theory in its initial, Frankfurt School incarnation, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. First published in 1944, this text was only read widely much later on, gaining more consequential reception in the 1960s and 1970s. 'Anyone who doesn't want to speak about capitalism should also keep quiet about

fascism,' Horkheimer had declared earlier, in 1939.³ *Dialectic of Enlightenment* spelled out the rationale for this injunction more precisely. Rather than capitalism, the text proceeded to take modern rationality as its organising idea. But the rise of fascism, which in the early 1930s had led the Frankfurt School into exile in the United States, remained the central concern. Steven Aschheim, for example, describes the book as the 'by-now classic attempt to account for Nazism'.⁴

Enlightenment reason, so stated the book's principal argument, had promised human emancipation, though the present was proof that 'mankind, instead of entering a truly human condition, is sinking into a new kind of barbarism'.⁵ Hopes of emancipation had given way to barbarism because reason itself contained the germ of domination. Following Weber, Horkheimer and Adorno thought that, in the modern world, 'instrumental' – or technical – rationality had gained the upper hand over 'substantive' rationality. The point of difference was that where substantive rationality had ethical content – it had an interest in the reasons for subscribing to the beliefs on which actions were premised – instrumental rationality did not. Its only interest was in the success of an action, not its intrinsic value. This argument led Horkheimer and Adorno to the proposition that 'Enlightenment is totalitarian' – a proposition that is stark, though it loses nothing of the intended meaning. The Enlightenment, on their application of dialectical reasoning, began from a thesis – myth is repressive. Against that thesis it held up an antithesis – rationality is liberating. And finally, it generated a synthesis – rationality is repressive; everything that persists in being unknowable is hostile. To put meat on the bones of this

neat, dialectical twist, the authors considered reason's entanglement with nature via reason's relationship to 'mimesis'. Rather than an imitation of reality that is being dismissed as superficial – its conventional meaning and usage – mimesis here was made to mean a kind of assimilation to the object of imitation: instrumental rationality initially tried to separate itself off from nature, with its forces of superstition and magic, but ended up becoming like it instead. In short, the Enlightenment was highly complicit in the forms of domination that emerged out of scientific mastery of the natural world and which, in the broad sweep of modern life, remained covert:

Men pay for the increase of their power with alienation from that over which they exercise their power. Enlightenment behaves towards things as a dictator toward men. He knows them in so far as he can manipulate them. The man of science knows things in so far as he can make them. In this way, their potentiality is turned to his own ends.⁶

The relation between capitalism and fascism in this account was one of logical extension and reaction of latter against former at the same time. Fascism was the logical extension of capitalism because common to them was the degeneration of reason into techniques in the service of power. Both were forms of 'total society', which was also 'the administered society'. The impoverishment of human experience, embodied in Horkheimer and Adorno's portrayal of the archetypal figure of Homer's *Odysseus* – 'the self who always restrains himself' – could lead to submission to either a

capitalist or fascist order.⁷ Both also had their substitutes for true experience, which in the capitalist West took the shape of the culture industry. What fascism owed to the pathologies of reason was best shown in the Marquis de Sade's 'enlightened Juliette', the 'child of the aggressive Enlightenment'. Sade's Juliette acted on instrumental rationality freed from 'the bite of conscience'. Her orgies, which ultimately become murderous, were not marked by frenzied passion, but by cool reflection.⁸ Nevertheless, on Horkheimer and Adorno's reading in the roundest sense, fascism is not *solely* an extension of capitalism. It is wrong to suppose – as do the critics who have overstated their case – that Horkheimer and Adorno make capitalism and fascism equivalent. In important ways, the text winds up by implying, barbarism was also a reaction *against* capitalism. It was not towards the culture industry that fascism's impoverished subject was directed in order to find gratification in illusion. Rather, he was directed to wreak vengeance on scapegoated minorities. In this, it would seem, there was genuine emotion – and hatred. As the two authors write of modern man in the text's concluding essay, 'Elements of Anti-Semitism': 'since he cannot allow himself the pleasure of following his own instincts, he attacks other individuals in envy or persecution just as the repressed bestialist hunts or torments an animal'.⁹ *Dialectic of Enlightenment* was in the main composed prior to full realisation of what the Nazi project meant. Only 'Elements of Anti-Semitism' was left being completed when reports of the death camps reached America.¹⁰ The Holocaust, so it would seem, complicated the story.

Overall, Horkheimer and Adorno possess the distinction of having provided critical theory with an

influential and, in skeletal form, quite lucid account of the connection between science and totalitarianism. It is also an account that has the merit of not being quite as overdone as it might, on first view, appear. As Eike Gebhardt remarks, what they opposed was *scientism*, not science as such: their problematic was the way in which scientism, together with the instrumental mode of rationality that accompanied it, had become 'the prevalent ideology of the time'.¹¹ The detail of the account is often flawed. 'Enlightenment' turns out not to be the eighteenth-century Enlightenment at all, but rather Western civilisation down to its foundation. The absence of any firm anchor on historical chronology also leads them to miss the figure who is most representative of totalitarian scientism: not Odysseus or Sade, but Charles Darwin, whose importance (as we shall see later) consisted in undertaking a decisive modification to the Enlightenment's conception of science. The more consequential flaw, however, is where the text digresses from its principal theme of the pathology of modern reason to propose a general theory of extreme political violence. The thinking expressed on anti-Semitism – though complex (as we shall also see later) – fails to give due recognition to the transformation of anti-Semitism under the auspices of modern reason. What it was taken to mean instead was quite contrary: that, in any instance of political mass murder, the identities of victim and perpetrator could be fluid.¹² They wrote, indeed, that 'the anti-Semitic plank' in the Nazi platform could easily be replaced by some other plank – 'just as workers can be moved from one wholly rationalized production center to another'.¹³ In doing so they validated the worst excesses of 'cog in the

machine' theories of genocide. This is, in many ways, the bathwater of critical theory's account of totalitarianism, which has often led – somewhat prematurely – to the account being thrown out *in toto*.

A second figure worth examining as a critic of totalitarian scientism is Michel Foucault. Foucault is a critical theorist in the wider sense of the term than when employed to connote affiliation with the Frankfurt School. He also conceived of his own philosophical project as continuous with the research agenda formalised by Horkheimer and Adorno; for Foucault too, the problem of modern society was the problem of instrumental rationality:

The relationship between rationalisation and the excesses of political power is evident. And we should not need to wait for bureaucracy or concentration camps to recognise the existence of such relations.

Foucault's project only departed from that of earlier critical theory inasmuch as it broke things down into more manageable parts:

it may be wise *not to take as a whole* The rationalisation of society or of culture, but to analyse this process in several fields, each of them grounded in a fundamental experience: madness, illness, death, crime, sexuality.¹⁴

Again, like *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the substantial reception of Foucault's work dated from the 1960s onwards. Specifically, the fallout from the events of 1968 was an impetus. Asked to characterise the

poststructuralist movement that he was more immediately identified with, Foucault once affirmed as such. Moreover, he did so by also linking those events to the legacy of interwar totalitarianism:

I would rather say it all started with a series of events and experiences since 1968 involving psychiatry, delinquency, the schools, etc. These events themselves could never have taken their direction and intensity without the two gigantic shadows of fascism and Stalinism looming in the background.¹⁵

In fact, for the critical theorist, fascism/Nazism rather than communism/Stalinism was the uppermost concern. There is something to be said for the alternative reading. In many ways, poststructuralism in general arose out of the eventual reaction against Marxism in intellectual life in post-war France. Foucault might also *appear* to be troubled by the relation between Marxism and totalitarianism, because this *is* what preoccupied his 'intellectual progeny': the 'New Philosophers', Bernard-Henri Lévy and André Glucksman.¹⁶ However, as Foucault's biographer underlines: 'throughout his life, he was haunted by the memory of Hitler's total war and the Nazi death camps'.¹⁷ Certainly, while Foucault's reflection on Nazism and the Holocaust is neither sustained nor especially systematic, any genealogy of the Gulag is absent from his work.¹⁸ Nor, it should be noted, are Foucault's sparse allusions to 'totalitarianism' itself much of a clue as to the principal subject designated: when he did use the term, it tended to be to dismiss the Cold War version of it as a rhetorical

prop to the interests of Western capitalism.¹⁹ Not that this is without significance in itself. Again, on critical theory's view, the relation between totalitarianism and modern political life in general is one of continuity, even if not of identity: Foucault was sometimes prone to compare 'historical fascism' – 'the fascism of Hitler and Mussolini' – with the 'fascism in all of us, in our heads and in our everyday behaviour, the fascism that causes us to love power, to desire the same thing that dominates and exploits us'.²⁰

But if Foucault's perspective can be aligned to Horkheimer and Adorno's, located in the 1960s, and contextualised as a response to Nazism, what of his actual contribution to a conception of totalitarian scientism? There are two important moves, the second move accommodating the prior move, with the effect of equipping the later Foucault with his most rounded account. The first move is the critique of the 'carceral society'. The reference in the statement just quoted to 'everyday behaviour' is the important point of this connection that Foucault makes between totalitarianism and modern society at large. In Foucault's elaboration of this connection, there is the spectre of the cog-in-the-machine theory, which threatens to nullify any plausible perspective on agency. But there is also, saliently, a quite explicit rejection of the Cold War liberal theory of totalitarianism. A passage from *Discipline and Punish*, which is where Foucault takes up the issue of the rationalisation of society in the field and experience of crime, is worth citing in full:

The Enlightenment, which discovered the liberties, also invented the disciplines. ... Historians of ideas

usually attribute the dream of a perfect society to the philosophers and jurists of the eighteenth century; but there was as well a military dream of society; its fundamental reference was not to the state of nature, but to the meticulously subordinated cogs of a machine, not to the primal social contract, but to permanent coercions, not to fundamental rights, but to indefinitely progressive forms of training, not to the general will but to automatic docility.²¹

Discipline and Punish is, in the first instance, only concerned with hidden forms of domination that pertain to the penal system. But 'carceral society' is a metaphor for prison, and it serves Foucault well in his portrayal of the operation of modern disciplinary power in general, implicated in nearly all fields and experiences: 'is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons?'²² For Foucault, modern disciplinary power subverts the earlier regime in which commands were issued outwards and downwards from a fixed, sovereign centre. 'Historians of ideas', in the above passage, functions as code for Cold War liberals – and the point of criticism is that the Cold War liberals failed to come to term with this displacement of power in the modern era. Docile bodies, not ideological fanatics, are the stereotypical totalitarian subject. Military-style regimentation, not abstract utopias – 'the dream of a perfect society' – is the key to totalitarian legitimation.

One interesting aspect of Foucault's corrective to the Cold War liberals is what it says about totalitarianism's representative philosophical figure. In the place of Rousseau, with his idealised man in 'the state of nature',

is Jeremy Bentham, architect of the 'Panopticon', with its possibilities for the control and restraint of human beings through optimising opportunities for observation. Foucault thinks that Bentham may have been the 'complement to Rousseau'. But what he wishes to indict is the 'transparent society', not the danger of Rousseauist collectivist visions of recovering authenticity.²³ And ultimately, for Foucault, the means to transparency is science. Modern societies have need of observation when behaviours transgress scientifically derived standards of normality; modern societies are founded on 'dividing practices', which rest on scientific classifications: sanity/insanity, health/sickness, natural/perverse, law/crime, order/disorder.

So much is Foucault's conception of the carceral society. Ultimately, it is implausible, if it is applied to try to make sense of Hitler's Third Reich or the Stalinist Soviet Union explicitly, which Foucault does not: those followers of Foucault who have drawn out the conclusion that the Russian Revolution failed (only?) because it did nothing to inhibit 'the functioning of the disciplinary techniques' rather miss the ideological innovations in play.²⁴ But a second conception, which incorporates rather than replaces the earlier analysis of disciplinary techniques, shows more subtle appreciation of the specificity of the Nazi experience in particular, and it also implies a reconsideration of the historical chronology of totalitarianism. In Foucault's late writings, the category of 'biopolitics' replaces 'carceral society'. In *Discipline and Punish*, the Enlightenment was still the important source of the intensification of the control of populations through science. It was an Enlightenment more conventionally

recognisable than Horkheimer and Adorno's. But it did not picture the importance of a set of nineteenth-century developments that biopolitics brought into focus. In general, Europe's nineteenth century – the bourgeois century – is Foucault's *bête noire*.

A different passage, this time from *The History of Sexuality*, shifts the emphasis to the nineteenth century: in effect, away from Bentham, and in direction of Darwin, more accurately the representative figure of totalitarian scientism. 'Biopolitics' emerged when European states began to take an interest in their populations, with an increase in economic productivity in mind. Biopolitics worked upon the body of the species; it was more interested in fit subjects than docile subjects. This analysis is an advance on Foucault's previous account because it leaves the space open to impose distinctions between different forms of modern political regime: as E.R. Dickinson points out, a continuity in some biopolitical concerns between twentieth-century democratic welfare states and fascist states does not have to mean an identity between them.²⁵ But optimising life was not biopolitics' only outcome. Its opposite was 'thanatopolitics' – a politics of death.²⁶ In this way, James Bernauer surmises that the later Foucault offers 'an examination of Nazism not as nihilism but as an intelligible ethic'.²⁷ 'Genocide' – a rare topic in Foucault's oeuvre – is now linked, alongside war, to a justification in the interest of 'the species' or – more revealingly – '*the race*':

Wars are no longer waged in the name of a sovereign, who must be defended; they are waged on behalf of the existence of everyone; entire populations are

mobilized for the purpose of wholesale slaughter in the name of life necessity: massacres have become vital. It is as managers of life and survival, of bodies and *the race*, that so many regimes have been able to wage so many wars, causing so many men to be killed. ... If genocide is indeed the dream of modern powers, this is not because of a recent return of the ancient right to kill; it is because power is situated and exercised at the level of life, the species, *the race*, and large-scale phenomena of the population.²⁸

Thus, on Foucault's late account, Nazism was the expression of 'racism in its modern, "biologizing", statist form'.²⁹ Science was at fault because science legitimised the sorts of dividing practices that, in this case, marked off those as racially without value. But there are limits, on Foucault's late reading, of the extent to which Nazism merely refined 'Enlightenment' techniques of social discipline. Scientific racism pointed to more extreme possibilities because, in the nineteenth century, modern thought's conception of the temporality and historicity of life provided the basis for the introduction of Darwin's influential idea of evolution.³⁰ The 'evolutionist idea' was fundamentally different after Darwin and, Foucault implies further, Darwin shifted an *episteme*. In other words, Darwinian evolution shifted the sum total of rules governing the articulation of knowledge: the affirmation that 'the species evolves' changed a whole set of related propositions, 'their conditions of use and reinvestment', and so on.³¹ On this issue, Foucault could have been more explicit, since a more developed version of critical theory's account of totalitarian scientism

needs to emphasise evolutionism, as well as scientific classification. Nonetheless, it was the development – post-Darwin – of racial theories in a specific direction, and their uptake in Nazi thought, which, Foucault now seems to say, set the Third Reich apart from the modern mainstream. An extension of broader trends co-existed with the exceptional: ‘a eugenic ordering of society, with all that implied in the way of extension and intensification of micro-powers, in the guise of unrestricted state control was accompanied by the oneiric exaltation of a superior blood’.³²

A third critic of totalitarian scientism is worth considering, if only because his theory draws together the ideas both of the early Frankfurt School and of Foucault. The writings of Zygmunt Bauman amount to an East European critical theory.³³ Bauman’s *Modernity and the Holocaust* echoes Horkheimer and Adorno: modern rationality makes genocide possible because modern rationality is bureaucratic rationality, distancing human beings from the ethical implications of their actions.³⁴ Thereafter, Bauman’s *Modernity and Ambivalence* echoes Horkheimer and Adorno explicitly: the problem of ambivalence arises from what, in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, is the fear of that which persists in being unknown; and Bauman develops his metaphor of ‘the gardening state’ out of a thesis about modernity’s need to control nature through science.³⁵ The analysis in *Modernity and Ambivalence* is also distinctly Foucauldian. ‘Ambivalence’ – ‘the possibility of assigning an object or an event to more than one category’ – represents an obstacle to scientific classification, on the basis of dividing practices, in Foucault’s

earlier sense, and Bauman's contribution to a conception of totalitarianism is to highlight the 'violence that – 'invariably' – accompanies classification: 'classifying consists in the acts of inclusion and exclusion'. Produced through exclusion are categories of humanity assigned for physical elimination. On Bauman's metaphor, 'the production of waste' is 'as modern as classification and order-designing', and 'weeds are the waste of gardening'.³⁶ If, faithful to the typical agenda of critical theory, Bauman starts out from the problem of Nazism, it is Stalin's Soviet Union, together with Hitler's Germany, that comprised emblematic instances of 'the gardening state' – albeit they operated with different categories of waste. Bauman, then, synthesising Foucault with earlier critical theory, identifies very well – as the separate discussions of Nazism and Stalinism will show – the role of *categorisation* in totalitarianism, ultimately evident in its more murderous episodes.

There is another distinct contribution that Bauman makes, which brings us towards an evaluation of critical theory's account in light of the historical record. That account is promising in its more sober moments, when it desists from making sweeping assessments of modern society in general, and of science in general. What scientism – as opposition to science *per se* – demands, is the *transparency* of the world.³⁷ In this way, for Bauman, the modern problem of ambivalence is exacerbated, because the complexity of reality eludes these demands. Or, as James Scott has put it, what the gardening state requires is the 'legibility of a society', which 'provides the capacity for large-scale social engineering'.³⁸ The mark of scientism is the perception that 'no part of the world' is beyond its grasp, with the

effect that ‘there is nothing left to stop us imagining *how to create* a “new man”’.³⁹ However, the more important component parts of this current of totalitarian thought derive not from the Enlightenment, which is where critical theory’s account again lacks nuance. The important contributions emerge in the middle of the nineteenth century, in reaction to the Enlightenment mainline. Certainly, it was only in intellectual developments post-Enlightenment that gardening projects were given their terms of historical justification, alongside more detailed scope.

It was thus that the decisive figure was Darwin. There is need for caution here. While, on the issue of intellectual antecedents, cause is never the same as responsibility (as we saw in Chapter 2), Darwin is more remote from blame than are either Rousseau or Nietzsche. In considering totalitarianism, Hannah Arendt rightly observed that, ‘politically speaking’, Darwinism ‘was neutral’.⁴⁰ But Darwinism did provide two concepts that became fixed in totalitarianism’s scientific current. First, it provided the idea of evolutionary progress. Second, it provided the idea of a violent struggle for existence. In each of these ways, Darwinism transcended the Enlightenment because it emphasised not free will and optimism, but fatalism and a kind of pessimism: the basis of human action was no longer conscious, rational choice but was, instead, a mixture of ‘heredity’ and ‘environment’; and social progress would no longer follow automatically from the triumphant application of science, since progress now became conditional upon violent struggle.⁴¹ The second idea also legitimated projects in eugenics – projects in

controlling reproduction to improve the human species, albeit only once Darwin's original conception was inverted: artificial selection in the place of natural selection. Thus, gardening projects had a general affinity with Darwinian science and, overall, they were influenced by it in ways that were variously indirect, unconscious, adoptive, and cumulative.

As will be shown shortly, there is a discrepancy in the relation of Darwinism to Nazism and Stalinism respectively. The image of an inverted mirror captures the discrepancy. Nazism has a justification by evolutionary progress, but this is a theory of history that is strong rather than deterministic: in races it has crucial collective units, though it is not quite a racial determinism, since at no point in Nazi thought is the triumph of one race over others pictured as being inevitable in advance. Conversely, Stalinism does have a deterministic theory of history, since at many – even if not all – points in Marxist thought, this *is* how the triumph of one class is pictured: it is an economic determinism. Stalinism, however, and unlike Nazism, does not assign its relevant collective units scientific classifications, in the Darwinian sense: classes are not like races, in the respect in which race is an inherited characteristic; membership of class is not rigidly fixed. Accordingly, there is something to be said for the idea that there was, across Nazism and Stalinism, legitimation by different Darwins.

Nazi science?

We saw in Chapter 3 that the utopian current of Nazism primarily animated its conception of the

nation, the *Volksgemeinschaft*. This emerged in the first part of the nineteenth century: Herder and Fichte were the decisive figures in the construction of an irrationalist, collectivist utopia of national authenticity. The contribution of the scientific strand is to transform a conception of nation into a conception of race, and a conception of race articulated biologically. In this, there are another two decisive figures: one who, in the 1850s, made a contribution prior to Darwin; and one who entered the picture after Darwinism itself had fundamentally changed the terms of legitimation for future political projects. The first, pre-Darwinian figure is Arthur Comte de Gobineau, a French aristocrat by birth, and a French diplomat by profession. The second, post-Darwinian figure is Houston Stewart Chamberlain, an Englishman by birth, who was educated in France, and who then later opted to become a German citizen. Nazi theory was influenced by Gobineau in the cumulative sense; influenced by Darwin himself in the adoptive sense; and indirectly influenced by Chamberlain. Nazi practice evidences these influences across the realms of both foreign policy and social policy, which were both, at root, extensions of racial policy.

Decline and degeneration was Gobineau's first theme. In this he shared something with the figures of totalitarian utopianism. But Gobineau's answer to the reasons for decline and degeneration was different from theirs: the most important reason was race. In fact, in the *Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races* (1853–5), Gobineau considered – and rejected – the entire range of conventional explanations for social decay: fanaticism,

luxury, corruption, irreligion, government, institutions, climate, Christianity. None of these explanations offered a convincing, general cause for the decline of civilisations. Perhaps the two most important ideas of the *Essay* are these. First, that race-mixing is the general cause of degeneration: 'the human race in all its branches has a secret repulsion from the crossing of blood'. Second, that these 'branches' are far from being equal in worth: 'there are real differences in the relative value of human races'.⁴² Gobineau not only sorted human beings into categories. He arranged these categories hierarchically. There were three races – white, yellow, black – in descending order of perfection: 'as these races recede from the white type, their features and limbs become incorrect in form'.⁴³ Accordingly, Gobineau's significance was to have introduced a racial interpretation of history. However, there was no pretence, as yet, that this racism was grounded in biological science; Gobineau's investigations tended to be more idiosyncratic, often archaeological. Moreover, it was an interpretation that, in light of the stance on miscegenation, pictured decline rather than evolutionary progress. Gobineau concluded that 'the racial question overshadows all other problems of history ... *it holds the key to them all*'.⁴⁴ In this, he was to supply Arendt with her famous definition of what inclined 'ideological' thinking to totalitarianism.⁴⁵ Yet Gobineau did not supply political thought with a confident projection of the Aryan New Man.

After Gobineau, Nazism was not to be provided with an explicitly scientific conception of racism until the influence of Darwin had sufficient time to accumulate. Like Gobineau, Darwin thought in the grandiose

terms of the history of the human species. But beyond Gobineau, he provided race-thinking – which he by no means endorsed (it was not his remit), but which he did help to shape – with the idea which pointed history in the direction of progress: the ‘survival of the fittest’ (again, not even Darwin’s own term, but Herbert Spencer’s).⁴⁶ Both Darwin’s *The Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871) served to (re)establish race on a more explicitly biological and hereditary basis.⁴⁷ Natural selection offered a theory in which species progressed by adaptation to changing local environments. Thus would any given species come to preserve the ‘favourable variations’ and reject the ‘injurious variations’.⁴⁸ Social Darwinism, which was the social application of the idea of natural selection,⁴⁹ opened up the space for a biological interpretation of history to be acted out. This is why Nazism was not quite a racial determinism. Since there was competition in nature, there were superior and inferior races, and it was to be hoped that the inferior races would face extinction in the fullness of time. But as Nazi thought made clear, ‘laws of Nature’ did not operate independently of human will. They had to be applied.

After Darwin, in the mainline of the development of the scientific current in Nazism, came Houston Stewart Chamberlain. Gobineau, who had not been much read in the 1850s, but who was being read with interest by the end of the century, was not explicitly anti-Semitic.⁵⁰ Chamberlain was – and he was anti-Semitic in his own particular way. Chamberlain’s influential book *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* (1899) has been described by J.W. Burrow

as 'the most obvious successor to Gobineau' as a racial interpretation of history.⁵¹ There is evidence that while Hitler may not have read Chamberlain's book, Chamberlain was an indirect influence: Otto Strasser attested that Hitler picked up his ideas in conversation, the mediating personality being Dietrich Eckert, an early party intimate detained with Hitler at Landsberg after the failed Munich putsch of 1923.⁵² Chamberlain was not a terribly consistent thinker. He moved carelessly between biological and spiritual conceptions of race.⁵³ He also varied in his judgments about natural science – Darwinism is described in *The Foundations* as 'a manifestly unsound system' – yet his diagnosis (enthusiastic or otherwise) was that the nineteenth century had 'become a century of races, and that indeed is in the first instance a necessary and direct consequence of science and scientific thinking'.⁵⁴ But where there was less ambiguity in Chamberlain's thinking was in the centrality of the conflict between 'the Teutonic peoples' (the Aryan inhabitants of northern Europe) and the Jews. While, he said, 'our whole civilisation and culture of to-day is the work of one definite race of men, the Teutonic', the Jewish race was the only other race to have preserved its purity by avoiding miscegenation. Chamberlain actually railed against the 'ridiculous and revolting tendency to make the Jew the general scapegoat for all the vices of our time'. Yet the influence of the Jews in modern life, even if overstated, he added more menacingly, 'has certainly not brought good alone in its train': Jewish influence threatened 'the resurrection of a Lazarus long considered dead, who introduces into the Teutonic world the customs

and modes of thought of the Oriental'.⁵⁵ Chamberlain, then, was not an architect of scientific racism, but he furthered the legitimation of a race-thinking that coalesced around anti-Semitism. Notably, Hitler attended his funeral in 1927.

Eventually, Nazi race-science was, of course, primarily directed at the Jews. This was the point that Horkheimer and Adorno were never quite able to grasp in the 'Elements of Anti-Semitism' essay, regardless of how much they otherwise did to shine a bright light on the connection between Nazism and science. That essay, which marked the point where Horkheimer had, in effect, to disavow his own mantra about those reluctant to discuss capitalism being wise to keep quiet about fascism, shifted the centre of theoretical gravity decisively away from the economic, and nearer towards the psychoanalytic: the Jews were no longer, as in Horkheimer's earlier, pre-war thinking, the subject of Nazi contempt because of their position in economic life, but rather because of their symbolic role as the site of false projections.⁵⁶ When, for instance, Horkheimer and Adorno write – highly cryptically – that, in anti-Semitism, the desire to return to the 'mimetic practice of sacrifice finds its ultimate fulfilment', the fate of the Jews appears to exemplify their general take on civilisation's age-old – but perverse – response to the forces of nature.⁵⁷

Perhaps in this sense, as Rolf Wiggerhaus insinuates, the anti-Semitism essay is the hidden centre of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.⁵⁸ Nonetheless, if so, for what it obscures, it is a flawed centre. What the enumeration of a sum total of seven 'theses' about the Jews succeeds in doing is only effacing a more simple

idea, which rings rather more true: that what had previously been religious prejudice was transformed, by the spirit of modern science, into racial prejudice. Anti-Semitism was thereby supplied with a modern foundation. This was to prove rather more consequential in actual Nazi thought and practice than was, for instance, any perception that Judaism brought animosity upon itself by renouncing magic, which Horkheimer and Adorno included in their enumeration of theses.⁵⁹ As experience was tragically to attest, the denigration of racial identity was more fatal than the denigration of religious identity. In Hannah Arendt's memorable epigram: 'Jews had been able to escape from Judaism into conversion; from Jewishness there was no escape.'⁶⁰ It was by the measure of modern, racial science that the doors were closed that much the more tightly shut.

It is the 'scientific' categorisation of race, then, that played a substantial part in the transmission of the scientific current in Nazism. In this, on the account discussed before, Michel Foucault did much to shine a light upon the current. It is worth briefly considering attempts, like Enzo Traverso's, to extend the Foucauldian explanation of Nazism. Traverso tries to do so in order to endorse a more old-fashioned Marxist reading. For Traverso, the background to Nazism is the 'biologisation' not only of the discourse of race, but also of the discourse of class. From the Paris Commune of 1871 onwards, he argues, the proletariat and the Jews were married together in the capitalist imagination. Proletarian and Jew were the twin embodiments of degeneracy, subversion, and general threats to 'hygiene'. If this reasoning were cogent, then the

implications would indeed be far-reaching: a reinvigorated Marxist perspective on fascism would challenge the basics of the totalitarian thesis, and the ideological character of fascism would be entirely taken over by scientism. However, the argument about 'class racism' here overreaches itself – it proceeds as if little must be done in the first place to shore up the thesis that Nazism was an extension of capitalism (which surely needs to be presumed, before the mutual interaction of the imagery of race and class takes on any significance at all).⁶¹ That said, this is not to say there are no implications at all. As we will see in the discussion of Stalinism, Traverso's suggestion that, at a certain point, race imagery might morph into class imagery works rather better vice versa, to make sense of how the Soviet Union came to conceive of undesirable social classes; or at least, the suggestion corresponds rather better to the empirical evidence.

Direct consideration of Hitler's own political thought confirms the pivotal role of a racial interpretation of history, in which the conflict between Aryan and Jew assumes centre stage, and via an extension of the Darwinian conception of a struggle for survival.⁶² For Hitler, defeat in the First World War was an outward manifestation of the kind of process of racial decline that Gobineau had feared. Hitler also concurred with Gobineau in the argument in *Mein Kampf* that 'all occurrences in world history are only the expression of the races' instinct of self-preservation'. Also, as for Chamberlain in *The Foundations*, for Hitler too in *Mein Kampf*, Aryan and Jew stood diametrically opposed: if the Aryans were the 'founders of culture', the Jews

were culture's 'destroyers'. This combination of the views represented by Gobineau and Chamberlain was, finally, given a social Darwinian finish – what miscegenation now threatened to damage was the heredity of the Aryan racial stock:

Any crossing of two beings not at exactly the same level produces a medium between the level of the two parents. This means: the offspring will probably stand higher than the racially lower parent, but not as high as the higher one. Consequently, it will later succumb in the struggle against the higher level. Such mating is contrary to the will of Nature for a higher breeding of all life. ...The stronger must dominate and not blend with the weaker, thus sacrificing his own greatness ... if this law did not prevail, any conceivable higher development of organic living beings would be unthinkable.⁶³

Is it true to say, then, that this talk of 'Nature' – with its 'will' and its 'law' – makes National Socialism's conception of history a racial determinism, in the same way that Marxism might be described as an economic determinism? It is clear that *Mein Kampf* does resonate with the structure of the thesis of *Capital*: it invokes a 'rigid law of necessity' in connection with 'the victory of the best and the strongest' (albeit, it thus puts racial groups in place of socio-economic groups).⁶⁴ However, as Eberhard Jäckel hints at, there are several passages from a later, unpublished manuscript, Hitler's so-called *Second Book*, which ought to give us pause for thought on this issue.⁶⁵ For instance, in the later text, Hitler gives a definition of politics that suggests that a racial

theory of history does not arrive at its terminus – the victory of the stronger race – independently of human action: ‘politics is in truth *the implementation of a nation’s struggle for existence*’. Hitler also later on expresses the view that consciousness plays an important role. Ostensibly, on the broader terms of Hitler’s thinking, racial value should be fixed, since racial value is given in nature. Yet passages like the following are a candid expression of Hitler’s anxiety that a historical destiny might well elude a people, in the absence of an active will to enact that destiny:

The significance of this racial value of a people will ... only become completely effective if this value is recognised, duly valued and appreciated by a people. Peoples that do not understand this value, or for lack of natural instinct no longer feel it, then begin immediately to lose it.⁶⁶

Nor should Darwin’s (indirect) contribution to Nazism’s interpretation of history obscure the point that Darwin’s was also an ethical contribution, hardly a value-free synopsis of developmental forces. As Richard Weikart argues in *Hitler’s Ethic*, it was as an ethical principle that Nazism asserted the primacy of race, and it asserted evolutionary progress as an ethical end. For Hitler, ‘anything that promoted the health and vitality of the human species was morally good’.⁶⁷ Hence, contrary to some of the received accounts, Darwinism did not license a relativism; Darwin’s input was very distinct from that of Nietzsche, which did inject an amoral nihilism into Nazism, in its thinking on revolutionary violence. Nazism’s reception of a Darwinian-inspired

evolutionary ethic provided it with a sense of moral duty and purpose, however perverse – so evident in its ‘biologised’ discourse about policy aims. As Hitler phrased the matter in *Mein Kampf*, the ‘holiest obligation’ was ‘to see to it that the blood is preserved pure and, by preserving the best humanity, to create the possibility of a nobler evolution of these beings’.⁶⁸ Joseph Goebbels’ wartime diary likewise noted the imperative of pursuing a ‘life-and-death struggle between the Aryan race and the Jewish bacillus’, and alluded, ominously, to a ‘surgical task’ underway in respect of ‘the Jewish disease’.⁶⁹

Central to the Nazi practice of the evolutionary ethic was the pursuit of *Lebensraum*: ‘In the limitation of the living space lies the compulsion for the struggle for survival, and the struggle for survival, in turn, contains the precondition for evolution.’⁷⁰ History was unfinished, not predestined, because expanding populations had to actively wage war for finite space and resources. On Ian Kershaw’s account, ‘removing the Jews’ and ‘*Lebensraum*’ were Hitler’s ‘twin obsessions’ – and they were related.⁷¹ Thus did the focus become the East, in particular the territory occupied by the Soviet Union. Nazi expansionism had its first impetus not from economics but, precisely, from scientific racism. In Weikart’s words, ‘genocide was implicit in Hitler’s vision of the struggle for living space, because the “inferior” races would have to be displaced to make room for the “superior” conquerors’.⁷²

The flipside of Nazi science’s implications for foreign policy (which was really racial policy) were the implications for domestic policy, in the social realm, and above all in eugenics. Once again, the thinking was articulated with clarity long before the takeover of

power and, thereafter, the cover of war provided opportunities for implementation. *Mein Kampf* had declared that 'the *völkisch* state ... must see to it that only the healthy beget children' – 'to bring children into the world' despite 'one's own sickness and deficiencies' was a singular 'disgrace'.⁷³ Combined with policies of compulsory abortion and sterilization, which were consistent with this command, were 'pronatalist' policies, mixtures of coercion and incentives for 'Aryan' women to reproduce.⁷⁴ There was also euthanasia. Before the Final Solution, the 'Aktion T-4' operation in Berlin conducted the systematic murder of the mentally and physically handicapped between 1939 and 1941.⁷⁵ This is where Zygmunt Bauman's account comes back into the picture. As Bauman underlines, the Nazi project in biological, social weeding was directed not only against Jewry, but also against 'carriers of congenital diseases, the mentally inferior, the bodily deformed'. Once again, however, the case for Nazi scientism is best made when it steers cautiously away from unnecessary hyperbole.

Bauman's account, for instance, draws on Detlev Peukert's explication of the 'genesis' of the Final Solution from the 'spirit of science'.⁷⁶ For Peukert, at the turn of the twentieth century, scientific rationality acquired an existential significance: supposedly, it 'took on itself a burden of responsibility that it would soon find a heavy one to bear'. Thus conceived, the primary object of scientific rationality was to transcend the mortality of the bodies of individuals through radical improvements in modern medicine; and it was only once having failed at that impossible standard that, on Peukert's view, it turned its attention instead 'to the "body" of the nation', pursuing

the more practicable course of eradicating the nation's unhealthy elements.⁷⁷ Suffice it to say that Peukert's particular account is overdone. In fact, it is one of the more bizarre offshoots of political religion theory: science as surrogate faith. But this ought not to detract from the persuasiveness of the general thrust.

Roger Griffin handles this line of approach more cogently. Griffin observes that it is this scientific impetus – in Bauman's specific sense of the confrontation with ambivalence – that accounts for one strand of Nazism's modernism, its 'biopolitical' modernism. Considering Nazi theory, Griffin picks out Hitler's reference, in *Mein Kampf*, to the imperative to 'prune back the wild shoots and tear out the weeds'. Considering Nazi practice – and in a challenging image – he attributes the outcome of this strand to the kind of 'radical ecology' practised at Auschwitz; this became, suggests Griffin, 'a "site" not for the enactment of sadistic fantasies and pathological hatreds, but for the purification of Europe, both literal and metaphorical'.⁷⁸

Ultimately, therefore, Nazi scientism, as much as Nazi utopianism, was conceived as crucial to the ambition of the anthropological revolution. As Hitler predicted at the Nuremberg Party Congress in 1937: 'The uniqueness of this German racial policy will be more significant for the future of our *Volk* than the effects of all the other laws together. For they are what is creating the new man.'⁷⁹

Marxism, Stalinism, and scientism

Explaining the intellectual sources of Stalinism was not critical theory's first priority. However, scientism is a

crucial current of Stalinist totalitarianism. And viewed in contrast with Nazism's legitimation by science, the influence of Darwin across Marxism and Stalinism is inverted. Once more, the relation to Darwin has to be dealt with carefully: it is not so much that Darwinism was distorted, insofar as Darwinism was politically neutral. But Darwin's cumulative influence was to steer the intellectual developments that informed both Stalinist theory and practice in a distinctive direction. It was a direction that inverted the pattern of the Nazi case because while Nazism stopped short of embracing the Darwinian-inspired thesis of historical inevitability, Marxism embraced it full on. Yet, in contrast to the Nazi conception of race, Marxism was never prone to conceptualise social classes in biological terms. Stalin, however, as we shall see, came very close to doing so, marking the point at which Stalinist discourse came closest to imitating Nazi discourse.

Although critical theory's first interest was in trying to expose a hidden continuity between fascism and capitalism, its allegiance to Western Marxism meant that it was always minded to hold that it was a later Marx, a Marx who perhaps verged on succumbing to scientism, who had endangered the tradition's humanist legacy. That legacy, for critical theory, was the legacy of the Hegelian Marx. In this presumption, however, critical theory was misleading: Hegel is really a source of Marxism's scientism, and hardly the ideal candidate for the construction of a non-deterministic alternative. There is at least one occasion where the early critical theorist Max Horkheimer acknowledged this point. The importance of the recognition was lost,

however, in the reverence that came to be accorded instead to the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, a text that had little to say about Hegel, Marx, and Stalin. Young Marx was cast as the Hegelian Marx because, for Western Marxism, Hegel's application of dialectics was more important than his opposition to materialism. But Hegel was also a contributor to the scientistic strand expressed in Stalinism, even if he was an idealist. At the core of Hegel's philosophy was a developmentalist account of World History, and an aspiration to totality: in Hegel's obtuse terms, history was the record of the formation of Absolute Spirit. This is near enough what Horkheimer had taken a critical note of in his 1940 essay, 'The Authoritarian State':

According to Hegel, the stages of the *Weltgeist* follow one another with logical necessity and none can be omitted. In this respect Marx remained true to him. History is represented as an indivisible development. The new cannot begin before its time.⁸⁰

The Hegelian–scientistic derivation of Marxism does not, in fact, require much external confirmation, since verification can be found within the Marxist canon itself. Take, for example, Friedrich Engels' essay 'Socialism: Utopian and Scientific' (1880). In this pamphlet, Engels' description of Marxian socialism as a science indeed rests on the claim that it is consistent with Hegel's developmentalism. If 'for the first time', in the 'Hegelian system', Engels wrote, 'the whole world, *natural, historical, intellectual*, is represented as a process, i.e. *as in constant motion, change, transformation, development*', then with Marx – who,

unlike Hegel, was confronted with the facts of industrialisation – socialism ceased to be the ‘accidental discovery of this or that ingenious brain’, and became instead ‘the necessary outcome’ of a historical struggle between social classes, which was governed by scientific laws.⁸¹ Hegel’s achievement, in a word, was foundational to Marx’s own corrective to the rival socialisms of the 1830s and 1840s – which remained ignorant of developmental forces.

The position occupied by Engels for the understanding of Marxist scientism is crucial: Engels’ name is both inseparable from the polemics that surround the issue and typically associated with the later Marx. Critical theory sometimes even affected the stance that it was Engels alone who was responsible for the construction of a cold and mechanistic Marxism, which had provided Stalinism with a justification for suspending the ethical question of the sacrifice of human life in the present.⁸² The vital reference point in the articulation of this variant of Marxism, it is argued further, is Darwin. Critical theory’s stance is half right. Marx himself was never *pure* Darwinism – though there was at least a partial acceptance of Darwinian ideas. Engels, however, was indeed pure Darwinism. Or, at least, that was the condensation of Engels’ thinking that came to influence the subsequent production of Soviet Marxism’s tenets: it was to some degree a *distorted* influence, since the ‘historical importance’ of Engels’ works and their ‘philosophical value’ by no means coincide.⁸³

The more substantial object of the polemics is Engels’ notorious eulogy delivered on the occasion of Marx’s death: ‘Just as Darwin discovered the laws of development of organic nature, so Marx discovered

the law of development of human history.’ In this statement, it is an affinity that Engels is trying to establish between the two men’s projects. The affinity, in fact, is weak. There is an influence, though, and it is at one and the same time cumulative and adoptive. Over the course of his intellectual career, Marx’s identifications shifted from Hegel to Darwin. In this way, the prior influence of Hegel on Marx’s thought was combined, thereafter, with themes borrowed from *The Origin of Species*, though Darwinism was only ever approached through the prior conceptions that Hegel had provided. As Alvin Gouldner summarises, ‘for Marx, Darwin is Hegel scientised and modernised while Hegel is the philosophical depth of Darwin – without the English “crudity”’.⁸⁴ Marx resisted a full acceptance of Darwinism because Darwin was captive to a Hobbesian image of ‘the war of all against all’ – ‘crude’ (on Marx’s own expression) because it was an approximation to bourgeois, market society only.⁸⁵ But the influence existed in Darwin’s extension of Hegel’s theme of developmentalism: proceeding unconsciously, via conflict. There may well be a ‘comedy of errors’ in the sum total of attempts to make sense to the various myths that surround Darwin having declined an invitation to receive a dedication in a later volume of *Capital*, as Terence Ball has dug around in the archives to show.⁸⁶ But there was a genuine intellectual relationship nonetheless. If, as Andrzej Walicki has argued (against the critical theorists), Marx is not innocent of having promoted the idea of a scientifically ascertainable ‘historical necessity’, then there is reason to think that as much is the product of a combined reading of Hegel and Darwin.⁸⁷

The evidence, however, is that Engels went further than Marx. Expressions that are his rather than Marx's bear the imprint of Darwinian terminology. Engels' reference to the state 'withering away' is manifestly a metaphor taken from biology.⁸⁸ In 'Socialism: Utopian or Scientific', with the predicted demise of capitalism, what it is which is brought to an end is a Darwinian struggle for survival. Hence 'it is the ascent of man from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom': 'anarchy in social production is replaced by systematic, definite organisation', and man, liberated from baser, animal instincts, achieves true freedom.⁸⁹ The difference would seem to be that Marx's aim was to prove that history was subject to its own laws – and he formalised the 'materialist conception of history' to do that. Going beyond this, Engels actively attempted to extend the laws of nature into human history. Engels, in other ideas, might have opened up alternative possibilities for a future Marxian politics; for instance, in his twilight years, as Tristram Hunt points out, he warmed to the notion of pursuing communism not through revolution but through the ballot-box.⁹⁰ But it was not this Engels who, first, led Georgi Plekhanov (before the split in Russian Marxism) to coin the term 'dialectical materialism', in order to codify a theoretical system that covered natural science as well as social change. Nor was it this Engels who, second, led Lenin (notwithstanding the voluntarist dimension of his thought) to formulate a particularly rigid account of dialectical materialism, in 1913.⁹¹

It was down this line of derivation – Plekhanov then Lenin – that dialectical materialism become ideological orthodoxy in Stalin's Soviet Union. Stalin himself

cemented the account. In the chapter 'Dialectical and Historical Materialism' in Stalin's *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (1938), dialectic materialism is not only elevated to official state doctrine. Its truth is demonstrated with reference to various laws of science, where Stalin quotes liberally from – who else? – Engels. (This includes, furthermore, several passages where Engels himself is quoting from Darwin.) Once more, as in nature, so too in society. In nature, dialectical development involves 'transition from quantitative changes to qualitative changes'; hence changes in temperature alter ice to water to steam. In society, revolution is sound, reform unsound, because it is qualitative change that dialectics require. More to the point, reform is historically redundant: 'If the passing of slow quantitative changes into rapid and abrupt changes is a law of development, then it is clear that revolutions made by oppressed classes are quite *natural and inevitable* phenomenon.' When progress is thought to be natural and inevitable, the victors of progress have less reason, of course, to be morally troubled by the fate of progress' victims.⁹²

So it was, then, that Stalin's thought took up ownership of a deterministic theory of history, which cancelled out those alternative, prior ideas in the Marxist canon that might have pointed in a different direction. But the debt that Stalin's thought owed to totalitarian scientism did not end there, since not only did class revolution become the inevitable effect of socio-economic changes: the understanding of classes themselves came to be informed by a rigid scientism. Undesirable social classes never quite became conceived

in biological terms, strictly speaking, though their conception certainly approached this. The first clue to this matter is how Stalin, Georgian by birth, came to apply dialectical materialism to the problem of the existence of diverse nationalities, a task that Lenin had explicitly briefed him with. Marx himself had left behind a legacy in which nationalism was a bourgeois trick played on the workers, and in which the ideal instead was international proletarian unity. Erik van Ree has argued a contrary case, whereby a more enthusiastic nationalism did form a 'part of original Marxism'. For Ree, Marx and Engels were open both to treating the proletariat itself as a source of patriotism and to favouring the stronger – 'historic' – nations over the weaker – 'unhistoric' – nations. The implication, thus, is that Stalin's accommodation with nationalism was never a 'betrayal' of the prior tradition.⁹³

More convincing, however, is the notion was Stalin was, early on, consistent with original Marxism in espousing a cosmopolitan position in the pre-1917 period, but later on rethought that view. 'Marxism and the National Question' (1913) is the most well known of Stalin's writings. The dominant thrust of Stalin's argument in this essay is that, in a superseded Russian Empire, there could be regional autonomy, but there could be no national secession.⁹⁴ Stalin defined the nation as a 'historically formed, stable community of people, united by community of language, of territory, of economic life, and of psychological make-up, which expresses itself in community of culture'. However, in the contemporary era, the cultural identity of nations was disappearing, and this was to be welcomed – the development of capitalism was assimilating nations

under universal, rationalist norms. Importantly, the nation was not 'racial': the national character was not 'something given once and for all'; differences in character developed 'from generation to generation as a result of different conditions of existence'; and thus, far from biologically determined, national character – true to Marx – was to be seen as a 'reflection of the conditions of life'.⁹⁵

Consistent with these ideas, the treatment of the national question once in power came, in the 1920s, to run along the lines of the formula that culture should be 'socialist in content but national in form', a formula intended to protect the cultural independence of the non-Russian republics within the Soviet Union.⁹⁶ But Stalinism itself culminated in Russian chauvinism and, in its very late phase, in an 'anti-cosmopolitanism' that functioned as a code for anti-Semitism. Integral to this shift was what some commentators have proposed was the Stalinist Soviet Union's encounter with 'biopolitics' – sometimes applying Foucault,⁹⁷ sometimes applying Bauman.⁹⁸ Accordingly, there was, on the one hand, the ostensibly progressive aspect of Stalin's adoption of this modernist attempt to use science to perfect society: as Stephen Kotkin has suggested, 'rather than being viewed as a pathological case ... the USSR in a narrative of the welfare state might appear as the standard whose uncanny success challenged the rest of the world to respond'.⁹⁹ Yet the reverse side of this vast exercise in social engineering – and the reverse of 'state welfare' – was the expression of Bauman's 'social weeding', and 'state violence'.¹⁰⁰ As such, national differences had to be eradicated: hence the deportation of the non-Russian nationalities.

Scientific classification came to play a substantial part in Soviet political violence, just as it did in Nazi violence. One facet of this, as Amir Weiner has put it, is that 'nature' began to eclipse 'nurture' in the development of Stalinist ideology. Officially, on the basis of its Marxist pedigree, Stalinism was ideologically hostile to the idea that social behaviour could be genetically determined, emphasising environmental determinants of social behaviour instead. For this reason the Soviet state, while obsessed with maintaining the scientific credentials of its project, and otherwise heavily involved in managing the reproduction of its population, came to repudiate eugenics, which it denounced as a 'fascist science'.¹⁰¹ Yet nature supplanted nurture in the sense that national minorities (like class enemies) came to be referred to, in biological terms, as 'vermin' or 'filth'.¹⁰² The threat implied was to social hygiene rather than to racial hygiene, which was the Nazi case: national distinctiveness, and not racial 'pollution', *contra* Eric Weitz, always remained the target.¹⁰³ But more revealingly, this 'nationalisation' of the general terms of Marxist discourse also reflected back on to the conception of social classes: enemies of the regime of all kinds came to be defined by objective characteristics from which they had no opportunity of escape.¹⁰⁴ Finally, the delineation of class, which only ever veered on a Darwinian conception, became enmeshed with the theory of history, which was fully Darwinian: the drive to eradicate enemies was intimately connected with the conception of historical time. The discourse of Stalinism from the Second World War and thereafter is rich with declarations that the higher stage of communism will soon

be in sight. As Stalin reported to a party audience in March 1939, for example:

We now have an entirely new, socialist state, one without precedent in history. ... But developments cannot stop there. We are moving ahead...¹⁰⁵

Before the end of history could be ushered in, the social body would have to be unified. Progress, in Stalin's reworking of Marxian scientism, was inevitable. But, nonetheless, in Darwinian terms, it still consisted in active struggle.

5

Revolutionary Violence

Alongside utopianism and scientism, totalitarianism has a third and final current: revolutionary violence. We have seen so far that, in totalitarian ideology, it is utopianism that defines the terms of community, and scientism that defines the terms of historical justification. Revolutionary violence is the current that defines the terms for political action. Once more, there is a particular intellectual milieu in which one theme in totalitarian thought has found dominant expression: revolutionary violence is the theme accentuated in anti-totalitarian thought in France. Explicit debate about totalitarianism came relatively late to France, only arriving in the late 1970s, in the course of the impact of the publication of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago*. Needless to say, therefore, debate about totalitarianism in France was really a debate about the nature of communism. But there was more to it than that. It was also, at the same time, a debate about the continuing reception of the French Revolution: the vital figures in French anti-totalitarian thought are, in

many ways, the French Revolution's revisionist historians. Accordingly, French anti-totalitarian thought came to reject critical theory's emphasis on bloodless and hidden forms of domination – and partly because it viewed totalitarianism through the lenses of the most bloodthirsty episode of the French Revolution: the Jacobin Terror.

Critical theory, by virtue of its affiliation to Western Marxism, had often clung to the dream of a reformed communism, faithful to the spirit of a 'true' Marx. The assessment of the revisionist historians was rather less sanguine. In their view, communism itself was the root of the problem, and exactly because it had an integral connection to classical Marxist ideas. But French anti-totalitarian thought was more than just a reprise of Cold War liberalism. For the target was not Marxism's abstract idealism, but rather its considered thinking on the realist's question of the justification of violence. Consideration of French anti-totalitarian thought makes it possible to isolate the signature feature of totalitarian revolutionary violence: the proposition that, in political and social life, violence can be a regenerative force. But as will be shown across the course of this chapter, the line of derivation that links revolutionary theory and communist practice is more complex and indirect than was sometimes constructed within this milieu. Furthermore, there are several moves that have to be made in order to develop a more complete account of the reception of revolutionary violence in Nazism. On the matter of Nazism, French thought post-Solzhenitsyn has had far less to say.

The revolutionary passion in French anti-totalitarian thought

Political violence tends to have two justifications. The first justification is utilitarian. The second can be thought of in terms of its relation to 'identity'.¹ A utilitarian justification turns on expediency. Violence, it says, is justified when it promotes a greater good. Stalin himself is reputed to have given voice to this justification, in supposedly having coined the proverb 'you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs'. Death and suffering are, on this application of the utilitarian justification, the costs incurred in the pursuit of the broader totalitarian project. The identity-related justification captures the more exclusive feature of revolutionary violence. Violence, on this justification, is not so much a necessary evil as an indirect good. In its totalitarian version, it is the idea that the commission of violence will not only be a legitimate mode of political action; rather, the commission of violence will transform the identities of both individual and community. The community of which plural individuals are the parts is pictured in terms of shared victimhood. Violence will thereby overcome victimhood, and the humiliation that accompanies it, by serving as a regenerative force: cleansing, purifying, and cathartic.

Hannah Arendt long ago proposed a puzzle regarding the record of totalitarian regimes in power. Violence, she noted, tended to ratchet up a gear in a stage subsequent to any real sources of political opposition having been eliminated.² The regenerative aspect of revolutionary violence is the answer to this puzzle. Revolutionary violence is not temporary and

expedient; it is intrinsic to totalitarianism in virtue of the nature of the thinking out of which it emerges.

The decisive – though not the earliest – figure in this type of justification of violence is Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche, albeit by quite curious routes, became pivotal to both the leftist and rightist orientations on revolutionary violence, which informed Stalinism and Nazism respectively (unlike a range of other figures, whose influences were more one-sided). Violence, so Nietzsche reflected in *The Gay Science*, was one of those ‘favouring circumstances’ that made possible the increase of ‘virtue’:

Examine the lives of the best and the most fruitful people and peoples and ask yourselves whether a tree which is supposed to grow to a proud height could do without bad weather and storms: whether misfortune and external resistance, whether any kinds of hatred, jealousy, stubbornness, mistrust, hardness, greed, and violence do not belong to the *favourable* conditions without which any growth even of virtue is scarcely possible? The poison from which the weaker nature perishes strengthens the strong man – and he does not call it poison.³

This is what the revisionist historians noticed about the way that revolutionary movements set terms for political action: actively making a revolution, rather than passively standing by until it happened, might well require the sacrifice of human life in the present, but beyond that, the acts of violence entailed might themselves help to give shape to the New Man and the new society. To be sure, the revisionist historians

were not always clear on this diagnosis: they tended to write in terms that were conceptually vaguer. The inculcation with 'the revolutionary passion' tended to be made to serve as their explanation of how it was that revolutionary political actors were driven to ever more murderous deeds. But even if they sometimes moved a little carelessly between noting the utilitarian justifications and the identity-related justifications in the discourses of revolutionary political cultures, the important point is that they give credence to the idea that, in the self-understanding of totalitarian movements, violence could be genuinely regenerative.

The most significant of France's post-Marxist historians of the French Revolution is François Furet. It is illuminating to consider Furet's texts in connection with the so-called 'Solzhenitsyn effect'. It is also worth considering what can be regarded as the iconic work of French anti-totalitarian thought in the late twentieth-century: the mammoth, multi-authored volume *The Black Book of Communism* (1997). For some of the essays in this volume make use of the idea of the revolutionary passion in order to explain the record of communism in power: 'crime, terror, repression'.⁴

Intellectual Marxism had a hold in post-war France like nowhere else in Western Europe. With the reception of Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago* (1974) – and although it was by no means the cause in and of itself – this suddenly ended.⁵ The mid-1970s therefore marked a crucial break in the history of the French left. In Michael Scott Christofferson's expression, this was France's 'antitotalitarian moment': it was then that 'antitotalitarian intellectuals loudly and

dramatically denounced Marxist and revolutionary politics as fatally intertwined'.⁶ Hitherto, Marxism had been conceived as the modern theory of revolution, and as the legitimate successor to France's own republican revolutionary tradition. More than that, in fact: after the moral compromises embodied in the wartime Vichy regime, the renewal of the French republic had been cast as intimately bound up with the fate of the physical incarnation of the modern revolutionary project, the Soviet Union. This was the account of recent experience that François Furet wanted to intimate in *Interpreting the French Revolution* (1978). It was also the account he wished to attack. 'The Revolution is over,' he said. By this he meant that, with undesirable consequences, 1789 had not ended with Napoleon. Nor had it ended with 1815. Rather, it had served as an ongoing dynamic in nineteenth-century regime change, and its project had continued even into the France of the post-1945 period. But the Revolution now stood to be interpreted as history – not present-day politics. Moreover, the 'revolutionary catechism' – its basic teachings – stood only in need of denunciation, not an awkward propping up through laboured defences of the reasons for the Soviet Union's shortfall between rhetoric and reality.⁷ *Interpreting the French Revolution* was, therefore, as Sunil Khilnani has aptly noted, 'revolutionary historiography as political theory (by other means)'.⁸

Furet struck out at revolutionary political culture on several fronts. In one respect, the problem was with its 'social interpretation'. This was the Marxian account, in which the 'bourgeois' revolution was destined to be repeated at a 'higher' level, once economic developments had provided for an expanded

sociological base to support that: the revolutionary proletariat. In another respect, the problem was not with Marxism at all, at least not directly. Instead, the problem was with political science's use of revolution as a term in the analytical vocabulary of political change. For Furet, revolutions had to be understood in the cultural sense, through the discourses of the revolutionary actors themselves.⁹ The close reading of revolutionary discourse led Furet to the conclusion that violence was the outcome of extreme voluntarism. Revolutionary discourse stated that human institutions were open to being decisively reshaped. Violence was the outcome of the confrontation with the reality that human institutions, in fact, lacked that capacity:

... each individual could arrogate to himself what had been a divine monopoly, that of creating the human world, with the ambition of recreating it. If he found obstacles standing in his way, he attributed them to the perversity of adverse wills rather than to the opacity of things; the Terror's sole purpose was to do away with those adversaries.¹⁰

The real focus of Furet's concern, however, was the connection, in the left's political imagination, between the October Revolution and the French revolutionary tradition. The connection was even amenable to being drawn in different ways, to suit different agendas within the left: for liberals, the October Revolution could be a modern version of 1789; for radical republicans, it could be the promise to realise the ambitions of 1792; or, for socialists, it could be a replay of the Paris Commune of 1871. Most crucial, though, was the Jacobin connection.

Stalinism, and its 'excesses', became equated with Robespierre's logic – the revolutionary dictatorship as the only means of preserving national unity at a time of extreme danger. This was the utilitarian justification for violence. Thus did the French left sail close to granting the Jacobin Terror a legitimacy in retrospect (justified by war, invasion, and necessity); and thus were the Bolsheviks able to blackmail the allegiance of the heirs to the Jacobin legacy.¹¹ Furet's final work, *The Passing of an Illusion* (1995), reversed the viewpoint: not Jacobinism refracted through the prism of (anti-) communism, but communism refracted through the prism of (anti-) Jacobinism:¹²

The October Revolution ... owed its power over the contemporary imagination to a revival, at a hundred year's remove, of the most potent image in modern democracy – the revolutionary idea.¹³

Where, for Furet, in the guise of political theorist by other means, the central theme in both revolutions *ought* to have been the rights of man, the central theme in each case became, instead, the social conditions of the masses – and the masses apprehended as a unity. And because they were identified as a unity, the fate of those deemed to be 'enemies of the people' was, by that measure, all the more sealed.

Ostensibly, *The Passing of an Illusion* was a general autopsy of communism. It was part of a broader *fin de siècle* exercise in historiographical stocktaking, and in this it was kindred to *The Black Book of Communism*.¹⁴ But the interesting part is where the text parted company with more established historiographical

positions; for instance, that the Russian Revolution had a necessary cause in the First World War, or that the relationship between fascism and communism was one of mutual interaction. The innovative position that critical reviewers made most of was Furet's idea that the politics of anti-fascism served as a spur to communist legitimacy in the post-war West.¹⁵ Yet arguably the core of the book – which largely passed with far less comment – was Furet's conception of 'the revolutionary passion'. This is where Furet came the closest to explicitly identifying revolutionary violence as regenerative violence.

The revolutionary passion, for Furet, was the consequence of bourgeois self-hatred. First, bourgeois self-hatred had existed in the radical Jacobin phase of the French Revolution, at the point where the Revolution reached beyond the bourgeois self-interest, to become 'the denunciation of the bourgeois from within the bourgeoisie'. Second, it existed in both types of twentieth-century totalitarianism: 'the bourgeoisie incarnated capitalism, the forerunner (for Lenin) of Fascism and imperialism, and (for Hitler) of Communism ... the origins ... of all they detested'. The bourgeoisie was a category defined 'entirely by economics', by 'the accumulation of riches'. No wonder then that it was 'hated', and no wonder that the bourgeois too should secretly share in that 'passion' himself – out of a 'guilty conscience'.¹⁶ The consequences of this dissatisfaction with modern bourgeois materialism would, for Furet, be far reaching. 'The twentieth century', he wrote, 'would bring all of this to light'; there would be a 'resumption of the revolutionary passion believed extinguished by the nineteenth century'.

Both fascism and communism were 'imbued with *immanence*': they sought to 'overthrow the bourgeois world ... in the name of the future'.¹⁷ In the passage to the future, the moment of revolution was crucial. Once again, as in the earlier text, revolution is characterised by extreme voluntarism:

Revolution is a rupture in the ordinary order of days and a promise of collective happiness both within and by virtue of history. ... It came to symbolize, above all, the role of volition in politics and was the proof and even the guarantee that people can tear themselves away from this past in order to invent and construct a new society. It was the opposite of necessity ... it was also a way of reinvesting religious ambitions in politics, since revolution itself is a quest for grace. ... *The revolutionary passion transforms everything into politics...*¹⁸

Furet's account is both overwrought and a little idiosyncratic. It is also left unclear whether the Jacobin interlude itself was 'totalitarian', or whether instead (on a more plausible claim) there was both affinity and influence with respect to those later movements that were more deserving of the appellation. Certainly, (dis)continuity in this sense must be a moot point, on Furet's presentation of the issue: 'By way of bolshevism', he concludes, 'the Jacobin party enjoyed an illustrious twentieth century.'¹⁹ But Furet was not alone, in the context of the reaction against Marxism in French intellectual culture, in picking out the revolutionary passion as the root of twentieth-century totalitarianism. Stéphane Courtois, in *The Black Book of*

Communism, did the same. Overall, the *Black Book* took up positions that were unnecessarily controversial; it advanced the type of conception of totalitarianism, for example, which simply generalised from the Stalinist experience to communism's global record across the twentieth century. However, Courtois' essay in the volume emphasised that the French Revolution had been the 'founding experience' of revolutionary violence. It also extrapolated directly from Furet. Furet, noted Courtois, had rightly demonstrated that a 'particular idea of revolution' – and one that had an intimate connection to violence – had been born with Jacobinism, whereby terror (quoting Furet) would be 'the means by which revolution ... would forge the new human beings of the future'.²⁰ This had 'prefigured a number of Bolshevik practices'; for instance, with Lenin, the violence of the Russian Revolution shifted ethos, from being a 'reactive defensive mechanism' to an 'active process'.²¹ Courtois expressed a distance from some of the detail of the stance he ascribed to Furet: Marx did not take up Jacobinism directly, and in any case there was a non-Western, native tradition of revolutionary violence that fed into Bolshevism as well. Yet Courtois endorsed the broad thrust – the focus on extreme voluntarism.

All of the foregoing helps to explain the earlier captivity of French intellectuals to the Soviet 'myth'. In fact, figures like Furet and Courtois were not the first to address that issue. Sometime before them, Albert Camus and Raymond Aron did the very same. But at the time the voices of Camus and Aron had been exceptions. To large extent they were either neglected

or dismissed. It was not until a calmer intellectual climate prevailed in France, from the mid-1970s onwards, that their writings came to be received both more substantially and more sympathetically. Indeed, thus received, Camus and Aron's ideas served to give shape to the account of the revolutionary passion. Certainly, Furet found particular inspiration in the philosophy of Aron, and Tony Judt has suggested that he can be regarded too as the 'natural heir' of Camus.²² For these reasons it is therefore interesting to take stock of what Camus and Aron had to say.

Albert Camus' contribution to the understanding – and the unmasking – of the revolutionary passion was in virtue of having written his study of revolt, *The Rebel* (1951). The title of Camus' study itself is revealing. In the French, *L'Homme révolté*, the title played off two meanings: man 'in revolt' and 'revolted' man – man in disgust at (the present state of) revolt.²³ Camus' uppermost target, like Furet's later, was communism/Marxism: whether Camus' indictment of the former was meant to go so far as to encompass the latter is a matter of some interpretive dispute. 'All modern revolutions', observed Camus, 'have ended in a reinforcement of the power of the state.'²⁴ Thus they had betrayed their original intentions – which, for Camus, always remained noble: whether Camus' account was, or was not, anti-Marxist, it was never conservative. But violence, not power, was Camus' most pressing theme. This is evident in the hostile reaction to the publication of *The Rebel* among Camus' former allies on the French left – who did not fail to see what Camus saw, so much as they consciously refused to outright condemn it.²⁵ Camus repudiated any attempt to justify violence

philosophically; for his former allies, revolutionary violence would create the good society. Camus, in rejecting its role, was therefore disparaged for having become a 'beautiful soul'. His book, said his opponents, implied a 'Red Cross mentality'; it was a 'beautiful expression of moralism', which could only ever mean a 'refus[al] to undertake anything in the world'.²⁶

The difference between the two parties, however, was not really one of temperament, because this was only a surface expression of more fundamental disagreement. The underlying difference was the deep history Camus found in communist violence – where the other party was disposed to find only contingent 'excesses'. The conceptual apparatus that Camus set up in *The Rebel* sought to house both 'rational state terrorism' – the revolutionary violence of communism; and 'irrational state terrorism' – fascism. There was a deep history at issue in either case, Camus announced, since the 'nihilist inheritance' made it possible to 'deify' either 'reason' or 'the irrational': Nazism, on this logic, also 'belong[ed] to the history of rebellion'.²⁷ The modern period, for Camus, started with 'metaphysical' rebellion. This was man's 'protest against his condition'.

Nietzsche was a vital figure. Although Camus was broadly sympathetic towards what he construed as being Nietzsche's confrontation with 'the absurd',²⁸ he judged his lethal contribution to political thought to have been the philosophical acceptance of murder.²⁹ In the wake of this unravelling of metaphysical rebellion came 'historical' rebellion. The former had meant individual rebellion, whereas the latter looked towards humanity the species. Originally, political revolution in modern times had entailed the practice

of 'regicide': the Jacobin faction accepted the murder of the king. Thereafter came the practice of 'deicide'. For Camus, in the more figurative sense, God was murdered so that – crucially – history would be raised in his place. Once morality became located (only) within history, then murder would be limitless. And rather than lack unambiguous philosophical refutation, limitless murder would have active philosophical endorsement: individual human beings would be expendable along the historical path towards the future. In the final analysis, however, Camus' presentation of either rational or irrational state terrorism as the terminus of this intellectual trajectory was slightly misleading. Nazism may have laid claim to Nietzsche's ideas (and largely legitimately, on Camus' verdict); but it is not so evident what it owed to historical rebellion, the account of which, in *The Rebel*, seemed very much constructed with Stalinism in mind.

Like Camus, Raymond Aron was exercised, in his own way, by the dangers of the revolutionary passion. The theme is amplified in Aron's *The Opium of the Intellectuals* (1955) and *Democracy and Totalitarianism* (1965) and, prior to these works, in the less well-known essay, 'The Future of Secular Religions' (1944). For Aron, the French Revolution was, once more, an important point of reference, and in relation to Stalinism specifically. Parts of *Democracy and Totalitarianism* examined the Soviet Union itself. Aron noted, in terms quite similar to Camus, that there was an intimate connection between Soviet violence and ideology, to the point that, in its most developed form, it resisted rational explanation. Some kinds of Soviet violence *were* more easily explained: terror against

rival parties and terror against class enemies. But 'from 1917 to 1936 revolutionary terror, instead of gradually abating, redoubled in force in proportion to the stability of the regime'.³⁰ The result was the expansion of the Gulag and, on Aron's particular example, the theatrics of the Moscow Show Trials, with its practices of forced confession: resisting rational explanation in the last analysis, 'the terror wrapped itself up a ritual confessions which were in themselves extraordinary because they besmirched the regime'.³¹

In *The Opium of the Intellectuals*, Aron was more concerned to investigate the Soviet project's fellow-travellers, particularly in France. The idea of revolution had the precise status of a 'myth': it was a revered idea, and it inclined individuals not only to support the Soviet project, but to invest it with certain expectations. Aron identified with the discipline of sociology, and on a sociological definition revolution meant 'the sudden and violent supplanting of one regime by another'. But revolution *qua* myth fostered 'the expectation of a break with the normal trend of human affairs'.³² It therefore leant itself to the Marxist (mis)understanding that revolution could be 'the end of pre-history'. Why should this particularly resonate in France? Because, thought Aron, and as Furet was to spell out meticulously later on, of its own indigenous revolutionary tradition. Camus' row with Jean-Paul Sartre and others a few years earlier was itself, Aron observed, proof of this – revolution had been a 'sacred word' that the pair disagreed on, though elsewhere 'such a controversy ... would scarcely be conceivable'.³³ Camus had implied the Jacobin/Bolshevik connection; the hostile reaction to *The Rebel* likewise

implied that French Marxists were conditioned by an unconscious fidelity to Jacobinism: Camus, scorned Sartre, had 'made his Thermidor'.³⁴

While in *Democracy and Totalitarianism* and *The Opium of the Intellectuals*, Aron's primary focus is on the revolutionary passion in relation to communism, the earlier essay, 'The Future of Secular Religions', also encompassed Nazism within the same broad remit. Moreover, Aron did so in such a way that directs our attention to the analogy that holds up between totalitarian revolutionary violence and Judeo-Christian beliefs. Both Nazism and communism, Aron argued here, were 'secular religions'. Communism's 'hyper-rationalism' may have masked what it owed to Kierkegaardian leaps of faith – a characteristic which, he implied, was more straightforwardly analogised to patterns of 'devotion' evidenced in enthusiasm for Nazism – yet within the terms of communist discourse, revolution served as the crucial element in its 'eschatology': the conviction that 'salvation' lay just beyond a moment of apocalyptic catastrophe.³⁵

The revolutionary violence current in totalitarianism is like the utopian current, in that it can be given quite coherent rendition in a religious idiom. This point, however, should not be taken to indicate that there is a *dependence* on prior religious traditions. As with each of the core totalitarian currents, revolutionary violence is a self-standing – and secular – current of thought (a status that undermines the attempt to encompass totalitarianism within the terms of the political religion thesis). But there is a relationship of affinity that stands. Specifically, there is an *analogy*,

one between totalitarian revolutionary violence and Judeo-Christian patterns of belief concerning 'eschatology' and 'apocalypticism'. And the analogy is analytically useful, since it brings into clearer focus this dimension of the mindset at work in totalitarian movements.

Furet, Camus, and Aron all made the connection: for Furet, revolution itself was 'a quest for grace'; for Camus, state terrorism, in its communist form at least (if not fascist), involved the 'deification' of man; and the symmetry was even more crucial in Aron's judgement. The more specific point of the connection, however, is the justification – or, rather, *sanctification* – of violence, as the instrument of regeneration. The common motif is the idea (which in its original expression was eschatological) that, through violence, a corrupt world can be made uncorrupted again. The motif is most pronounced in certain heretical, medieval Christian discourses;³⁶ and it is shared not only with Nazism and Stalinism, but with terrorist movements out-of-power, like the Red Brigades, as Alessandro Orsini has shown. Eschatological politics here is, on Orsini's account, pictured even more accurately with reference to the heretical phenomenon of 'Gnosticism'. Gnosticism brings into view two aspects of revolutionary violence. First, it brings into view the privileged position of a 'gnostic elite': 'gnosis' (from the Greek) means superior knowledge, accessible only to 'the elect'; the elect of modern movements is the revolutionary 'vanguard'. Second, it shows the recurring themes of a 'gnostic mentality': waiting for the end, radical catastrophism, and obsession with purity. The sum total of these attitudes, which maps neatly

onto the mindsets of both Nazism and Stalinism, is well summarised by Orsini:

the world is immersed in pain and sin; it is populated with 'infected' presences that attack the purity of the elect; the last day is near, when evil people will be punished for their misdeeds.³⁷

The religious analogy is, therefore, as in the case of totalitarian utopianism, an effective device for pinpointing some important features of totalitarian thinking on revolutionary violence. Albeit, as analogy, prior religious patterns of belief only explain totalitarian revolutionary violence in the *non-causal* sense, by making things plainer. The philosophical figure most eligible to serve as revolutionary violence's representative figure is in fact the philosophical atheist, Friedrich Nietzsche. (Camus, in *The Rebel*, portrays Nietzsche as yet another figure in a succession of secular priests, though this is only, indeed, an extension of the same analogy.) Nietzsche's name has long been connected with Nazism, in particular, in a tradition that stretches back to the Nazi era itself, both in Nazism's own identifications, and in Allied wartime propaganda. It is therefore crucial to separate out the right from the wrong reasons for associating Nietzsche's philosophy with totalitarianism.

Broadly speaking, Nazism's emphasis – far less pronounced than often thought – was on Nietzsche and the Aryan ideal; wartime propaganda concurred, in making much of the *übermensch* (overman) and the 'blond beast'; and post-war thought highlighted the translation of philosophical irrationalism into political

irrationalism.³⁸ A brief evaluation of these sorts of reasons might state as follows. The least convincing affinities are in the areas of nationalism and anti-Semitism. Nietzsche often decried nationalism as an example of the kind of 'petty politics' he loathed, and although, in common with many racial nationalists, he viewed humanity in terms of a natural inequality, this was always something that was far from being fixed in biological characteristics, since it was subject to assertion – the 'will to power'. Nietzsche, in consequence, could have had little affinity with Nazism's derivation from racial science. Neither can he be placed in sympathetic relation to Nazism's utopian current: he would never have come to conceive the community in 'thick' terms, since he celebrated the individual and disparaged 'the herd'. But the issue of revolutionary violence is different. The will to power could legitimate a politics unconstrained by conventional moral categories (this much, as we have seen, Camus noted). Beyond that, it could foster an intellectual climate not only in which amoralism could suspend the normal restraints on acts of violence, but in which some acts could serve as regenerative. Nietzsche frequently associated the will to power with a transformative capacity and pursuing it, as a motive for action, was the mark of a 'healthy', as opposed to 'decadent', life.³⁹

Of course, in no sense should these connections be overstated. A representative thinker, on the conception set out in Chapter 2, typically exercises the type of influence in intellectual history that is indirect. In Nietzsche's case, the influence is also distorted: Nietzsche, as Berel Lang points out, was promoting individualist attempts at self-creation – and

he presented these as cultural projects; he never endorsed the kind of 'common' will to power that Nazism entailed, and in which the will to power was (re)cast in unambiguous physical and militaristic terms.⁴⁰ In consequence, Nietzsche's thought should be approached – far from being Nazi thought's first cause – but in more circumspect fashion, as an intellectual source shedding light upon the way that totalitarian movements came to think of the place of violence in politics. This connection, as we shall see, stretches to Stalinism as well. Revolutionary violence is a totalitarian current that can be understood as flowing down two separate tributaries, in a leftist and rightist orientation respectively. In neither is Nietzsche the earliest figure of significance. Rather, each passes through a stage of the general reception of Nietzsche's ideas, and is shaped by it in ways that would have otherwise not been the same.

The leftist orientation

As we have seen, the revisionist historians of the French Revolution and, before them, Camus and Aron, registered the relationship with communism. They may have wished instead to turn an eye even further back in time, to the thought of Niccolò Machiavelli. Machiavelli has a well-deserved reputation as the first political thinker of note to give serious attention to the issue of violence in politics. The attention that he gives to violence leads him to a version of the utilitarian justification: rulers who are new to power are best advised to use 'extraordinary measures, such as resorting to violence', to secure the foundations of

their rule. On this conception, violence is a transient, necessary evil, not an indirect good: the requirement is 'cruelty well-used'.⁴¹ But while it tends to be obscured by the familiarity of his rendition of the end-justifies-the-means rationale to justify the repression of political enemies, Machiavelli also touches on the idea that, in certain circumstances, violence can be regenerative. He by no means gives the idea full expression. Nonetheless, influence here is more pertinent than affinity: what Machiavelli has to contribute to the topic of revolutionary violence becomes absorbed into a radical republican tradition that passes through Jacobinism and, thereafter, into communism, as E. A. Rees has amply demonstrated. In Rees' estimation, there is an ideological phenomenon best conceived as 'revolutionary Machiavellism', which traverses the 'original' Machiavellism of Machiavelli himself and the Machiavellian inheritance in later political thought – across Marx (in his voluntarist mode at least); the native Russian revolutionary tradition; and Lenin and Stalin.

'Revolutionary Machiavellism' entails amorality – violence becomes permissible. But it also entails a cultivation of *virtuoso* citizens. As Rees states of the transmission of this ideological phenomenon into the Stalinist period, 'revolutionary Machiavellism was not simply a political manual of how to win power, it was also infused with a quasi-religious socialist vision of the transformation of mankind'.⁴² The legacy of Machiavelli, in this sense, is a fear of degeneration and the loss of *virtù*. For Machiavelli, on this reading, the practice of violence *could* be an indirect good, since men's exercise of martial capacities could rebound back on to men's capacities as citizens, serving to counter the selfish pursuit of private interest.

In light of this legacy, the contrast sometimes drawn between Machiavelli's justification of violence (instrumental) and Jacobinism's justification (regenerative) appears a little stark.⁴³ Nevertheless, it still serves to underline an important difference. What Machiavelli may only have ever gestured towards, Jacobinism made less ambiguous. The key figure here, as Furet rightly makes clear, is Maximilien Robespierre, 'the Incorruptible'. As with Machiavelli, the classical concept of *virtù* was central to Robespierre's radical republican view.⁴⁴ Machiavelli often linked *virtù* to necessity: to exercise *virtù* was to do whatever was necessary to master the forces of circumstance and secure the state. Likewise, the Jacobin faction made much use of the same formula. The Jacobin politician and journalist, Jean-Paul Marat, stated it in a nutshell in this defence: 'who cannot see that I want to cut off a few heads to save a great number'.⁴⁵ However, the innovative move was to make plain the 'positive' justification for revolutionary violence. The chief feature of this was the active embrace of the idea of 'terror', in the context of Robespierre's articulation of an increasingly radical agenda for the revolutionary project: 'the republic of virtue'. Robespierre's articulation of this agenda aimed at the replacement of 'egoism', 'vanity', and 'love of money' with 'morality', 'greatness of soul', and 'love of glory'.⁴⁶ But all these promises of virtue over vice were for Robespierre empty, without the recourse to the most drastic measures. As the Jacobin Terror proceeded, the guillotine shifted from its original conception – as a humane instrument of execution – to become an expression of liberty itself. And Robespierre presented the matter bluntly. 'Do you want a Revolution without a revolution?', he asked the National Convention, in

November 1793.⁴⁷ He disclosed the rationale itself in a speech in the same forum one month later:

Outside, all the tyrants surround you; within, all the friends of liberty are conspiring. ... We must stifle the internal and external enemies of the Republic, or perish with it; and in this situation, the first maxim of your policy should be that the people are led by reason, and the enemies of the people by terror.

If the mainspring of popular government in peacetime is virtue, the mainspring of popular government in revolution is virtue and terror: virtue, without which terror is fatal; terror, without which virtue is impotent. Terror is nothing but prompt, severe, inflexible justice; it is therefore an emanation of virtue. It is less a special principle than a consequence of the general principle of democracy applied to our homeland's most pressing needs.⁴⁸

In Robespierre's rendering, the status of terror in a time of revolution was still, at one level, a justification out of necessity. But this speech broaches the more innovative theme, which was present in both Jacobin thought and practice: the idea of 'purifying' France through the purging of its 'enemies'. The Public Prosecutor of the Revolutionary Tribunal, Antoine Quentin Fouquier-Tinville, tasked with trying those charged with counter-revolutionary activities, expressed the idea of regeneration through a more imaginative idiom:

If we purge ourselves, it is because we want the right to purge France. ... *we intend to prune the dead branches of this great tree.* The great measures we have

taken are like gusts of wind that make the rotten fruit fall and leave the good fruit on the tree; afterwards you will be able to pick those remaining and they will be ripe and tasty; they will carry life into the republic. I don't care if there are many branches, if they are rotten. It's better that a smaller number remain, as long as they are green and sturdy.⁴⁹

Accordingly, by virtue of the Jacobin phase of the French Revolution, regenerative violence now featured not only in political thought (as it had in Machiavelli, and even then only very indirectly), but in political practice. To quote Martin Malia, 'revolution now came to mean a creatively violent process ushering in a new world-historical epoch, and the creation of "new men"'.⁵⁰ Alexis de Tocqueville even estimated that the Revolution's ideal became no less than 'a regeneration of the whole human race'.⁵¹ Important in this was that the potential reach of the regenerative justification exceeded the justification out of necessity: adversaries were denied the right to exist. Moreover, the pool of adversaries expanded in the Jacobin mindset, because they were imagined (rather than actual) adversaries. This was the complementary aspect of the same innovation performed by Jacobin revolutionary violence: the invention of the category 'enemy of the people', which was to exercise an unmistakable influence on the Bolshevik lexicon. Enemies of the people were, in Robespierre's words, 'those who, in any manner and no matter with what mask they ha[d] concealed themselves ... sought to thwart the progress of the Revolution and prevent the strengthening of the Republic'.⁵²

As Hannah Arendt argued, Robespierre's allusions to 'masks' and 'concealed' identities are not coincidental. They are, instead, to be taken seriously. 'Tearing the mask of hypocrisy off' became, reckoned Arendt, the French Revolution's 'favoured simile'; in its most logically developed form it implied 'tearing the façade of corruption down and of exposing behind it the unspoiled, honest face of the *peuple*'.⁵³ Furthermore, because of the deception and deceit, the people were liable to need some privileged party, like the Jacobin faction, to judge its interest on its behalf, a position out of which Lenin was later able to develop the account of 'vanguardism'. In sum, never far from the Jacobin conception of revolutionary violence was the idea of the moral regeneration of 'the people'. Robespierre did not formulate his ideas out of nothing. But in Robespierre's particular case, personality was decisive. As his biographer Ruth Scurr concludes, 'he can be accused of insanity and inhumanity, but certainly not of insincerity'.⁵⁴

What did Marx and Engels make of these positions on violence that the prior Western revolutionary tradition bequeathed them? This is the question that raises itself next. It does so since the case associated with the revisionist historians rests on the assumption of a sympathetic reception. Textually, there is evidence both for and against a sympathetic reception. On balance, the most likely scenario is that Marx and Engels handed over to the subsequent Marxist tradition a legacy in which violence was accepted as necessary rather than actively embraced. Regardless, of course, to some extent, it remained for the Bolsheviks themselves to make what they would of that legacy: to discard, to adopt, or to reconfigure.

Marx's most often-quoted stance on violence appears in *Capital*. Violence, he wrote there, was 'the mid-wife of every old society, pregnant with a new one'.⁵⁵ In this statement Marx was simply recognising the role of revolutionary violence within his teleological reading of historical progress. He was thereby invoking the utilitarian justification. Indeed, Engels invoked the same; elucidating Marx's stance, he described violence as 'the instrument with the aid of which every social movement forces its way through and shatters the dead fossilised political forms'.⁵⁶ But this defence of violence as 'the driving force of history' was only a defence of violence in the abstract.⁵⁷ To gauge a full sense of Marx's perspective, it is necessary to consider Marx's analyses of particular cases. These appear in several of his shorter, political writings.

In the early 1840s, the young Marx took up a critical position on the Jacobin project. The position was more directly critical of the theoretical agenda than it was of the perpetration of acts of terror. But, nevertheless, it was a position that presented terror in reproachful terms, because it identified terror as the consequence of the failure of that agenda. The young Marx thought that the French revolutionary bourgeoisie had sought, in the 1790s, to act upon two contradictory impulses: one impulse was universalist (the freedom of the individual); the other was particularist (the freedom of the bourgeois). For the young Marx, the French revolutionary bourgeoisie had sought first to escape the contradiction by denial and, thereafter, by terror. This was an account that echoed Hegel's own explanation of the Terror: that the Terror had been the result of a (premature) attempt to overcome division between

civil society and the state. It was an account that also echoed Benjamin Constant's distinction between the liberty of the ancients and the liberty of the moderns: where the ancients had valued participation in public life, moderns wished to pursue private goods.⁵⁸ The young Marx's was, therefore, a complex account, but in its most accessible form it pictured the Jacobins in a state of illusion, since they fluctuated between affirming free economic competition and decrying great inequalities of wealth: 'What a terrible illusion it is to have to recognise and sanction in the rights of man modern bourgeois society, the society of industry ... and at the same time to want afterwards to annul the *manifestations of the life* of this society in particular individuals.'⁵⁹

Some of Marx's writings in the 1850s would appear to bear witness to a changing position on violence and, perhaps, a more relaxed attitude toward it. Marx's tone, in particular, seems to change. In *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* revolutionary action – and, again, its failings in past experience – is presented in theatrical terms: the drama of class struggle provides Marx with his rhetorical frame. Marx here associates French revolutionary violence with 'heroism': 'unheroic as bourgeois society is, it nevertheless required heroism, sacrifice, *terror*, civil war and national conflict to bring it into the world'.⁶⁰ The revisionist, parliamentary socialist Eduard Bernstein is reported to have been shocked by all of Marx and Engels' 'jovial talk' about violence;⁶¹ notably, *The Eighteenth Brumaire* contains plenty of casual references to 'bayonets', 'sabres', and 'muskets'.⁶² The last substantial word that Marx has on the subject features

in his defence of the Paris Commune, *The Civil War in France*. In this widely read pamphlet (and as well as consciously mythologising the Communards, in the hope of invigorating future revolutionary action), Marx came to revise the view expressed earlier in the *Communist Manifesto*: there could now be no question of simply waiting for the state to wither away. Rather, the lesson he took from the Communards was that the existing state, and all the institutions it comprised (standing army, police, and so forth), had to be actively destroyed.⁶³ Revolutionary action thus came to have an enlarged scope. Moreover, violence once more passes, at best, as a secondary theme: although it is hardly to be unexpected, in light of the pamphlet's purpose, the only loss of life – 'carnage' – that comes in for censure are the reprisals aimed at the defeated Communards themselves (which, indeed, involved the massacre of a number in the thousands).⁶⁴

Overall, a reasonable judgement, therefore, would be that, although Marx's treatment of violence was never systematic (his concern with violence seems periodic, when the occasion happens to take him to it), he gave it endorsement; never quite enthusiastically, but in ways that were often simply indifferent to the issue of its extent and justification. Marx thereby transmitted to the Bolsheviks a set of presuppositions about violence which could be creatively adopted; in other words, taken on board and developed further. Both Lenin and Trotsky *were* enthusiastic about violence, both in the abstract, and in particular cases: Jacobin terrorism was an example to be followed and, for Lenin, the shortcoming of the Commune was that it had preferred 'to exercise moral influence'

on its enemies rather than annihilating them.⁶⁵ Intellectually, Bolshevism engaged in creative adoption by revisiting Robespierre's theme, which Marx had largely ignored: that violence could be wedded to moral rejuvenation. In addition, from an entirely different direction, Bolshevism also integrated some themes which emerged out of Nietzsche's thought.

Early Bolshevism made repeated reference to Jacobinism in its development of a conception of revolutionary violence. One aspect of that was vanguardism. Lenin took from Jacobinism the notion of revolutionary minority dictatorship. 'The history of all countries', wrote Lenin in *What is to be Done?*, 'shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade-union consciousness'.⁶⁶ As such, the working class would need to be led by a group of disciplined revolutionaries, defined by their having acceded to (full) socialist consciousness. In this, Lenin alluded directly to Jacobinism: 'the Jacobin, indissolubly linked with the *organisation* of the proletariat, which has recognised its own class interests, that is precisely the *revolutionary social democrat*'.⁶⁷ Also, in one sense, the vanguard idea was Nietzschean: it placed the weight on the role of 'a vanguard *elite*'. In fact, though it is superfluous to pursue the issue, since Lenin's uptake of the Western revolutionary tradition was sufficient in itself to provide this conception of political action with its dominant complexion, Lenin drew significantly upon the nineteenth-century Russian tradition of revolutionary conspiracy, in which the most notable figures were Nikolai Chernyshevsky and Serge Nechaev, who each, like Nietzsche, identified with nihilism, and who

sometimes (like Nietzsche in *The Gay Science*) made the connection between destruction and creation.⁶⁸

The extension of the vanguard idea was the full extent of what this vanguard was entitled to do in the name of the revolution. Lenin shared in an extreme voluntarism – some commentators on his thought have even wondered if he was a ‘secret doubter’ regarding historical progress.⁶⁹ Lenin viewed force, ‘unrestricted by any laws’, as integral to ‘the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat’, which, in turn, was ‘rule won and maintained by the use of violence’.⁷⁰ Furthermore, Lenin was responsible for officially inaugurating the ‘Red Terror’ in 1918: Bolshevism’s introduction of the institution of the concentration camp dated from this time.⁷¹ In many ways, it is more interesting to note what Trotsky said of revolutionary violence, rather than rehearse the more familiar ideas of Lenin, since it shows how pervaded Bolshevik thought and practice was by the same sort of stance. Leon Trotsky, later himself the victim of Stalinist violence, was equally explicit, in 1920, if not more so. In *Terrorism and Communism*, Trotsky addressed the legitimacy of the measures to be taken in the context of civil war, and determined as follows. There was to be no evasion, by insisting on only addressing violence in the abstract: ‘The problem is to make a civil war a short one; and this is attained only by resoluteness in action’. Trotsky not only accepted the Bolshevik-Jacobin analogy; he implied that the Bolsheviks owed them an obligation to imitate them: ‘Our forefathers, in centuries gone by, did not take the trouble to prepare the democratic way – by means of revolutionary terrorism – for milder manners in our revolution’. On the Paris Commune: Trotsky did not,

like Marx, duck the question of the Communards' own violence, to play up the gore of the reprisals instead. The Commune, Trotsky was ready to acknowledge, 'was drowned in blood', but both sides were engaged in a brutal confrontation, and the mistake of the Communards was not to have engaged in that fiercely enough. To be sure, the thrust of Trotsky's justificatory strategy was 'expediency', not 'principle': 'terror can be very efficient against a reactionary class which does not want to leave the scene of operations'.⁷² But in passages of *Terrorism and Communism*, the expediency justification shades off into a projection of moral regeneration:

We were never concerned with the Kantian-priestly and vegetarian-Quaker prattle about the 'sacredness of human life'. We were revolutionaries in opposition, and have remained revolutionaries in power. *To make the individual sacred we must destroy the social order which crucifies him.* And this problem can only be solved by blood and iron.⁷³

Bernice Rosenthal, who has systematically investigated the reception of Nietzschean ideas in the Soviet period, has gone so far as to argue that Trotsky's defence of terrorism is one such example of Bolshevik thought and practice pressing Nietzsche into service. Not only in the 1920 pamphlet, but 'in speech after speech', Rosenthal detects a Nietzschean presence in Trotsky's message: 'he urged soldiers to show their will to power, to be brutal, violent, merciless, because the Revolution required it'.⁷⁴

So, where Marx had wavered, both Lenin and Trotsky were less equivocal. We are left with a final issue: How,

if at all, is Stalin responsible for having further developed the leftist orientation on revolutionary violence? Noteworthy are at least three developments. First, in the loosest sense, there is the continued absorption of a kind of Nietzschean ethos. Second, there is the articulation of a specifically Stalinist endorsement of terroristic state activities; which is, at the same time, arguably Stalin's only original contribution to Marxist theory. Third, and in Stalinist practice rather than theory, there is evidence of the specific kind of phenomenon that Hannah Arendt noted in relation to Robespierre's violence: that the dynamic of revolutions can let loose powerful, emotive societal demands for the 'corrupt' to be 'unmasked'. Each of these points should be expanded. The combined effect is to show that, in the totalitarianism of the Stalinist Soviet Union, the leftist orientation on revolutionary violence culminated – in much the same way that Furet, Camus, and Aron theorised – in an extension of Jacobin themes, coloured further by conceptions which can quite easily be mapped onto Machiavellian and Nietzschean positions regarding political life.

Rosenthal opines that, in the Soviet period, during and immediately following revolution and civil war, Nietzsche 'reinforced *hard* interpretations of Marxism', and played a salient part in the contemporary admiration for the quality of 'hardness'.⁷⁵ This was Nietzsche's contribution to the picture of the Soviet New Man. It must remain somewhat open whether Nietzsche is better conceived in this as affinity or influence. Rosenthal's general thesis makes space for various of the possible range of types of intellectual antecedent. All the following factors were in play, she states: 'the

political unconscious', 'extrapolation' on the basis of prior 'internalisation', and 'literal-minded' uptake of ideas. Moreover, officially, of course, Nietzsche's thought was ideologically suspect. In the very least, though, giving some import to the Nietzschean connection adds to an understanding of Soviet political culture in a formative period. Montefiore, for instance, attests to the broad identity of this culture thus: 'during the Civil War, the Bolsheviks, clad in leather boots, coats and holsters, embraced a cult of the glamour of violence, a macho brutality that Stalin made his own'.⁷⁶ Rosenthal proceeds to make further claims, not about Soviet culture in general, but about Stalin's worldview specifically. Stalinism, she says, should be apprehended 'through a Nietzschean prism that centres on the "will to power"'. Why? Because, as a 'nonrational drive, it helps explain policies that were economically counterproductive and gratuitously cruel'.⁷⁷ Once more, however, in the absence of any smoking gun evidence – like direct readership and citation – affinity is more plausibly confirmed than is influence. Yet that does not mean that Stalin did not explicitly take up the extreme voluntarism which was already pronounced within the Marxist-Leninist tradition, and which therefore shared in the same spirit as Nietzschean philosophy – even if the actual influence at work was really that of the Jacobin tradition.

Stalin's only original contribution to Marxist theory, in the view of Kolakowski (and excepting the doctrine of 'socialism in one country'), was his doctrine of the 'intensification of the class struggle'.⁷⁸ 'Intensification' meant that, as the building of socialism progressed, the class struggle was to become increasingly fierce. What,

asked Stalin, in his usual didactic fashion, in 1929, was the reason for the intensification of the class struggle? His answer: 'Our advance, our offensive...' together with 'the fact that the capitalist elements have no desire to depart from the scene voluntarily'.⁷⁹ Stalin elevated this to official state ideology. Intellectually, it was crude and scarcely coherent; by the time it was enunciated, official state ideology had already declared that there were no antagonistic classes left in existence.⁸⁰ But, as Kolakowski notes, it served one vital intellectual function: 'the justification of a system of police terror'.⁸¹ Indeed, its enunciation in a strong form in 1937 (albeit not its first form) shortly preceded the start of the Great Terror. On Erik van Ree's conjecture, it was the expectation that class enemies would fight all the more harder, the weaker they became, which 'set Stalin off on his fatal course towards mass murder'.⁸² The doctrine, moreover, was highly voluntarist; viewed against the orthodox Marxist canon, almost heretically so. And it also spoke to Nietzschean motifs (as David Priestland notes of Stalin's language, it was certainly 'full of romantic themes': Soviet political subjects were to be 'active', 'energetic' fighters who fought 'against the current', who rejected a 'dead', 'mechanical' approach to life).⁸³ While not outright embracing the idea that acts of violence could themselves be creative, it marked one of these occasions again when the leftist orientation on revolutionary violence far exceeded the utilitarian's justification: it rested on paranoia and a distinctive psychological portrait of political opponents. It was also a perspective on political violence which could incorporate a similarity with religion. As Stalin addressed the Old Bolsheviks

about to fall victim to the looming Terror: 'Maybe it can be explained by the fact that you lost faith'.⁸⁴ The effect of the doctrine was also, on Arendt's reading, to invert the familiar proverb on violence often attributed to Stalin, so that it became: 'you can't break eggs without making an omelette'. It was as though, Arendt continued, 'the breaking and breaking and breaking of eggs were suddenly and automatically to produce the desired omelette'.⁸⁵

The same sort of concern with apostasy, and certainly the zeal with which it was pursued, informs the Stalinist practice of 'unmasking' enemies. This was perhaps most acutely manifested (in the example which Aron emphasised) in the staged theatrics of the Show Trials, with the logic of the confession of party notables who had fallen into error. But the practice was also, as historians like Jochen Hellbeck and Shelia Fitzpatrick have shown, a feature of Soviet society in the far broader sense, targeted at non-party folk.⁸⁶ Stalin often expressed the view that opponents were to be identified not by deed but by faith. He told Beria, his secret police chief, that: 'an Enemy of the People is not only one who does sabotage but one who doubts the rightness of the party line. And there are a lot of them and we must liquidate them'.⁸⁷ Accordingly, as in Arendt's account of Robespierre's Terror, rooting out hypocrisy so that virtue extinguished vice was one aspect of the Soviet attempt to promote a new kind of personality.

The rightist orientation

The totalitarian revolutionary violence current flows down a separate tributary in its relation to Nazism: the

rightist orientation. One obstacle to the acknowledgement of this relationship is the legacy of a reluctance towards describing fascist ideology, in general, as being revolutionary. The reluctance, however, derives from a particular ideological agenda, and certainly not from either fascism's or, more narrowly, Nazism's own self-understandings: the fascist sense of revolution might have been different from the communist sense of revolution, but fascism had its own conception of revolution nonetheless.⁸⁸ Anti-totalitarian thought in France showed far less interest in analysing the rightist orientation on revolutionary violence; unsurprisingly, in *The Black Book of Communism*, for instance, Nazism was only present to the extent that it enabled communism to be damned by association. In one regard, the comparative lack of interest is deserved: while the intellectual canon of Marxism-Leninism leaves behind what is a relatively high-level debate on the ethics of violence, Nazism leaves behind nothing ever quite approaching that (the exception, as we shall see, is Georges Sorel, though Sorel, who died in 1922, never identified with Nazism as such). Yet this should not annul a more substantial point, articulated in practices rather than texts. Nazism's relation to revolutionary violence – in comparison to Stalinism's – is characterised by a far more explicit celebration of violence as an intrinsic quality in itself; in particular, by a quite developed aesthetic quality. It is important to emphasise that Nazi violence *per se* did not always entail regenerative violence. As it has been suggested, there may have been at least two other sources: the violence implicit in the organisation of nation-states; and the militarist-cum-racialist violence

already established in colonialism.⁸⁹ However, these sources of violence are explicable within the terms of Nazism's reception of the utopian and scientific currents: violence could be the result of Nazism's utopia of national authenticity, and the rationale for colonialism was, in significant ways, social Darwinian.⁹⁰ Acts of violence themselves were, for Nazism, creative, when they involved revelling in the transgression of traditional moral standards. In this way, as Ernst Nolte long ago contended, Nazism could entail 'a dark love of force for its own sake'.⁹¹

From where did Nazism take its earliest legitimization for the practice of violence as a regenerative force? Categorically, it did not emerge out the French Revolution. Joseph Goebbels could have been speaking for Nazism's ideological character in general when he declared, at the time of the Nazi seizure of power, 'the year 1789 is hereby erased from history'. From this, however, it should not be concluded automatically that Nazi violence had no connection to French revolutionary politics whatsoever. There is another case to examine first. There is an admissible claim that Nazi violence was, at its earliest, articulated in some form in the *reaction against* the French Revolution. The relevant source in this case are the ideas of the Savoyard theorist of counter-revolution, Joseph de Maistre.⁹² In *Considerations on France* (1797), Maistre argued that violence was simply in the normal order of things. Moreover, in the long term, violence could have positive side-effects: 'Now the real *fruits* of human nature – the arts, sciences, great enterprises, lofty conceptions, manly virtues – are due especially to the state of war'.⁹³ We have seen earlier in the chapter

that Robespierre, at certain times, sought to justify the Terror in regenerative terms. Ironically, the same motif passed into Maistre's indictment of the Terror. For Maistre, the political theologian, the eighteenth-century Enlightenment was a blasphemous falling away from God's will: man was seeking to put himself in the place of God. The French Revolution was the logical political expression of that blasphemy, and the termination of the Revolution in bloodshed was implicit in its first premises. However, on Maistre's strange presentation of the matter, the bloodshed was not to be regretted. It was to be welcomed. The bloodshed was divine punishment for the Enlightenment's blasphemy. But like all acts of Providence, it had its own reason. 'Never has the Divinity shown itself so clearly in any human event', Maistre wrote, adding that 'if vilest instruments are employed, punishment is for the sake of regeneration'.⁹⁴ Maistre's image of divine punishment as purification was the curious mirror image of Jacobinism's own conception of the Terror.

There is something appealingly orderly about an intellectual history of political violence in which Nazism and communism respectively lay claim to the twin legacies of French revolutionary and counter-revolutionary violence. Unfortunately, the evidence cannot fit the theory, unless it is forced. The most that can be said is that Maistre's ideas share a modest affinity with Nazi thought and practice. There is no basis for inferring an influence. Even the case when it is put in its strongest terms only maps an indirect influence, where the mediating figure is Charles Maurras, leader of the royalist, extreme right movement, *Action*

Française.⁹⁵ Several of Maistre's themes resonate, in the ideological sense, with Nazism; in addition to the general infatuation with violence and, within that, the specific metaphor of purification *through* violence, there is the militant anti-intellectualism. Yet still, the affinity is incomplete: Maistre's ideas are deeply shaped by a Catholic orthodoxy, which inevitably gives rise to significant areas of disagreement.⁹⁶ Accordingly, while Maistre warrants examination in relation to the rightist orientation on revolutionary violence, it would be misplaced to argue that he plays a founding role in its construction.

The important stage in its construction comes, in fact, with Nietzsche himself. Not all the imputed connections between Nietzsche and Nazism have much ground for endorsing them, as we saw earlier. But the thinking on violence is the important connection. Furthermore, as with the leftist orientation, there is the consequence of Nietzsche's challenge to the Enlightenment mainstream in the broadest sense. This is the check on compassion and the contribution towards an emerging cult of 'hardness'. In other words, the general reception of Nietzsche's philosophy maps onto an intellectual climate more permissive of acts of cruelty and inhumanity: after Nietzsche, the conceivable terms of political action change decisively. But at a point where the rightist orientation separates off from the leftist orientation, Nietzsche exercises a specific line of influence on Nazism. This involves the idea of myth. Nietzsche's statement of the 'will to power' undermined the status of objective truth. Myth, rather than reason, would be the basis for (re)producing 'healthy' (over decadent) forms

of life. Nietzsche was not much concerned with the issue of how the masses might be brought to respond to this diagnosis of a general cultural predicament. This was, though, an issue which was now open for others to pursue. Significantly, it was the issue which Georges Sorel, the French theorist of revolutionary syndicalism, took up. Sorel is a peculiar figure. His thought emerges out of the philosophical traditions of the left, but comes to have an important relation to the totalitarian right. To be sure, that relation is primarily a strong affinity; it registers as a weaker kind of influence, being in different parts indirect, unconscious, and adoptive. Nevertheless, it gives further shape to the understanding of regenerative violence which is subsequently taken up in Nazism itself.

Georges Sorel exercised an influence on Nazi thought which, even cast in the strongest terms that are plausible, was indirect, unconscious, and adoptive. It would have been indirect and unconscious because there would have been third parties involved: certainly, there is no evidence that Hitler himself ever read Sorel, although others affiliated with the Nazi movement, like Carl Schmitt, did so with some enthusiasm.⁹⁷ It would have been adoptive, because a final conceptual move beyond Sorel's own thought was required, in order that it fit the Nazi vision. But Sorel is vital to an appreciation of the rightist orientation on revolutionary violence, since it is Sorel, in *Reflections on Violence* (1908), who elucidates in the clearest terms what was to become Nazism's variant of the idea that violence could go hand in hand with creation. Sorel was, in his early self-identification, a participant in the voluntarist revision of turn-of-the-century, scientific and

determinist Marxism.⁹⁸ Yet the direction of influence which that might imply was never to materialise. Sorel came, in the course of time, to admire Lenin; and third parties like Antonio Gramsci and Georg Lukàcs claimed to have been influenced by Sorel. But Lenin himself dismissed Sorel's ideas.⁹⁹ That Lenin should have done so was, in fact, logically consistent: where Lenin's voluntarism entailed an imposed solution to the determinist impasse – the (self-) empowerment of a revolutionary vanguard, Sorel's voluntarism entailed instead the idea that, with respect to the masses, socialism had to be made *desirable*.¹⁰⁰ And it was precisely in relation to violence that Sorel thought that socialism was capable of becoming so.

In the thesis advanced by Zeev Sternhell, the uptake of Sorelian ideas figures, rather, in fascist ideology. The terms of Sternhell's argument restrict him from fully endorsing the proposition that Sorelian violence is Nazi violence (in a controversial approach Nazism, for Sternhell, should not be classed as 'fascism', since in analytical terms this inhibits the understanding of both those phenomena). Yet a repositioning of Sternhell's thesis can be undertaken in order to bring Sorel's relationship to Nazism more clearly into focus. Such a repositioning ought not to detract from a recognition that Sorelian themes, in the general sense, informed Italian Fascism far more expansively than they did Nazism; unlike Hitler, Mussolini did read *Reflections on Violence*, at the time it was published, and, according to Richard Wolin, he 'greeted it as an epiphany'.¹⁰¹ But it is violence which is at issue here. Nazism came to sanction violence to a degree and of a kind which was absent in Italian Fascism, and one of

the sources of that violence was Sorel's conception of creative violence.

At the centre of Sorel's thought is the attempt to renew Marxism through the integration of the role of myth. In running counter to myth, the Enlightenment was worthy only of reproach. Herein lay the philosophical significance of Nietzsche. In Sternhell's summation, for Sorel, Nietzsche was among those figures who 'heralded a movement of renewal capable of repairing the damage' which the Enlightenment had caused.¹⁰² Sorel therefore sought to translate Nietzsche's philosophy within a leftist field of reference. Economism and determinism were, argued Sorel, to be opposed, for 'socialism is a moral question, inasmuch as it provides the world with a new way of judging all human acts, or – to use Nietzsche's famous expression – with a total revaluation of things'.¹⁰³ But Sorel opposed parliamentarianism as well as determinism: myth, and together with violence, were henceforth to be creative of virtue. Of all Marx's concepts and categories, what mattered alone was class struggle.¹⁰⁴ And because the masses needed to be inspired to pursue that struggle, myths had their role to perform. The particular myth that Sorel struck upon was the myth of the general strike; what mattered in the general strike was not in the least its structural relevance to a transition in power. Revolutionaries could be 'entirely mistaken in fantasizing about the idea' and yet still it would be crucial to 'preparing the revolution' since it would embody 'in a perfect manner all the aspirations of socialism'.¹⁰⁵ It was because Sorel observed that strikes could involve violence that he was led to consider the problem of the ethics of violence itself.¹⁰⁶ Hence the

crux of the issue. As Sternhell makes explicit, the justification of violence is not only 'an essential element in his thought', but Sorel moves unmistakably from the instrumental justification to the justification on the grounds of regeneration.¹⁰⁷ Sorel moves from one to the other in the following key passage of *Reflections on Violence*:

proletarian violence, carried on as a pure and simple manifestation of class war appears... as a very fine and heroic thing; it is at the service of the immemorial interests of civilization; it is not perhaps the most appropriate method of obtaining immediate material advantages, but it may serve to save the world from barbarism.¹⁰⁸

For Sorel, then, the case for violence was principled. In a metaphor he was fond of repeating, violence would restore the class struggle with 'energy'. It would be indispensable to the new morality. He meant this to be clear, one can only suppose, because he was careful in defining his terms. The term 'violence', he thought, should be used exclusively to refer to 'acts of revolt' against the state; the bourgeois social order, instead, rested on 'force'. (Sorel repudiated that use of force which Lenin and Trotsky were to take as their template, Jacobin state terrorism.)¹⁰⁹ Also noteworthy is that Sorel makes liberal use of the analogy with certain Judeo-Christian ideas which, as we saw earlier in the chapter, captures so well what was imagined to be at stake in such acts of revolt: he made positive references to the 'warrior' ethos of the early Christians, and he thought that *Capital* (if only were it to be understood

correctly) was an 'apocalyptic text'.¹¹⁰ Because myth, heroism, decadence, and regeneration assumed such elevated status in what had been intended originally as a renewal of Marxism, Sorel effectively allowed for the final conceptual move, beyond his own thought, which would steer his philosophy in the direction of Nazism. The identity of the relevant collective political subject in the Sorelian scheme proved to be unfixed: the nation in revolt could easily replace the revolutionary proletariat.¹¹¹

François Furet gave brief consideration to the connection between totalitarian violence and 'the philosophical idea of violence developed by Sorel', only to conclude that they had not much to do with one another. Furet's reason for concluding thus was, at one level, a sound one. Totalitarian violence, argued Furet, 'was born of an event', 'not of an idea': the First World War. On the basis of the experience of 1914–18, he expanded, 'the dual habit of violence and passivity' was generalised, and newly enfranchised masses were exposed to a political education by proxy, in the shape of mobilisation for war.¹¹² But this kind of political education was quite capable of integration with exactly the same sorts of attitudes towards violence which Sorel had vindicated (and indeed, Sternhell's thesis itself contends that 'the true dimensions' of 'the historical significance of Sorelianism' only became apparent in the period following the First World War).¹¹³ It is in the mutual interaction of war and Sorelian themes that we can locate the emergence of the Nazi practice of revolutionary violence. For Sorel, virtue was only formed in active combat. Therefore, even if National Socialist thought never

gave anything remotely like sustained attention to Sorel, the broad terms of Sorel's argument could lend legitimacy to its own attitudes concerning violence. In any case, other figures were quite capable of translating Sorelian themes into a German frame of reference. Ernst Jünger, for instance, author of novels like *Storm of Steel*, came to interpret the war years through the influence of Sorel: Jünger's writings may have been innocent of conceptions of race or biological determinism, but the myth of the war served as the basis of his plea for man to be remade in his 'natural' condition.¹¹⁴ The war, Jünger wrote, was 'the forge in which the world will be hammered into new limits and new communities'.¹¹⁵ The arguments of Sorel and Jünger also found acute resonance with a particular notion that Hitler took out of the wartime experience: fraternity through shared participation in combat.

Hitler's own thinking, at various times, contains positions which express the broad gamut of possible stances on violence which endorse it. As with Stalin's thought, so too for Hitler's – an extension of prior themes, repackaged in cruder form. There are stances which entail the positive appraisal of 'hardness'. There are also stances in which, above and beyond that, violence is glorified. The first kind of appraisal is evident in the basic language employed in *Mein Kampf*. For instance, in that text, the 'elimination' of those with no place in the new social order is incited to be 'merciless', 'pitiless', and 'brutal'.¹¹⁶ Heinrich Himmler's notorious 1943 Posen speech, to the SS elite, likewise evoked the same qualities: 'To have stuck this out, and – excepting a few cases of human weakness – to have kept our integrity, that is what has made us hard'.¹¹⁷

In a sense, this acceptance of 'hardness' corresponded to social life in the Third Reich at large, marked by a desensitising towards acts of humanity; Ian Kershaw comments that there was a 'moral indifference to violence', which was widespread.¹¹⁸ The second kind of appraisal – those stances in which violence is glorified – is a feature of Hitler's discourse at other times. Often, indeed, it was taken directly from the wartime experience. Neil Gregor has suggested that *Mein Kampf* transposes military vernacular onto the field of politics, with significant ramifications: political life is conceived in terms of 'attack' and 'defence'; for instance, with parties 'attacking and seizing the enemy position'.¹¹⁹ Moreover, much of Hitler's reading in the mid-1920s consisted in war literature, including Ernst Jünger. On the basis of Hitler's markings in the margins of such texts, Ryback infers that Hitler's real interest was in the emotional aspect of war, and the way in which violence itself can come to exercise transformative effects on the self.¹²⁰ Violence as regeneration was, in its most consequential form, of course, merged with anti-Semitism. Hitler made it evident that he was thinking in terms of a catastrophic kind of confrontation when he made his infamous address to the Reichstag in January 1939, which he was to refer back to time and time again during the Second World War:

If international finance Jewry inside and outside Europe should succeed in plunging the nations once more into war, the result will not be the bolshevisation of the earth and thereby the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe.¹²¹

On this rendering, Nazi violence was, indeed, purification: the eradication of an infected presence. Saul Friedlander has proposed that this was regenerative violence because the distinctive property of Nazi anti-Semitism was that it was 'redemptive anti-Semitism'; that is, to the anti-Semite, it offered redemption. In this way, a scientifically endorsed preoccupation with racial degeneration could become linked to 'the religious belief in redemption'.¹²² The rationale thereby became a perverse expression of the realisation of the New Man. Mass murder aimed at eradicating contamination also entailed overcoming the *fear* of contamination (because it sought to eliminate the reason for fear). So, for Aryan individual and community, violence could involve a transformation in identity. This, then, was the end point of the development of the rightist orientation on totalitarian revolutionary violence.

Conclusion

This book has explored the ideological history of totalitarianism. It has done so with the effect of corroborating three findings:

- (i) The book has tried to show the case for weaning the theory of totalitarianism away from its structural conception. On this repositioning of the theory, commonalities in systems of rule are of less interest than anchorage in a common intellectual trajectory.
- (ii) Both the form and the content of this common intellectual trajectory have been set out. First, the form has been argued to consist in the presence of three strands of thought or, as they have been called here, 'totalitarian currents'. The shared ideological space across Nazism and Stalinism is the outcome of the interaction of the three currents over time. Because this process of ideational articulation and reception is complex (itself an expression of the fact that measuring the causal significance of ideas in politics is complex), a vocabulary was developed for identifying the causal weight of *particular* ideas; specifically, the vocabulary

that was developed was directed at gauging variations in types of intellectual 'affinity' and 'influence'. Second, according to the argument set out, the content of totalitarianism's intellectual trajectory consists in *three* modernist currents: utopianism, scientism, and revolutionary violence. One important point at stake in this contention is that all three currents emerge, in the nineteenth century, in reaction to the mainstream of ideological modernity. Thus, to conceptualise the sources of totalitarianism as 'modernist' has been to capture the senses in which they are *post*-Enlightenment phenomena, both in their identity and their appeal. A further point that has been emphasised is that the three currents evolved and built up in ways which were not predetermined in advance. This is one reason, among others, why the stronger version of the political religion thesis is flawed. Political religion arguments tend to register the source of totalitarianism in a psychological need for 'meaning'. But in doing so they are obliged to sideline the ways in which totalitarianism's sources comprise intellectual contexts that are far from being fixed and unchanging, and instead mutate over time.

- (iii) A final finding that has been corroborated is the common participation of the three totalitarian currents in the idea of the 'New Man': totalitarian utopianism wanted man to live in a condition of authenticity, in union with his fellow man (who had to share in the same identity); totalitarian scientism provided this end-state

with an account of how it would materialise; and totalitarian revolutionary violence entailed that the activity of conflict and upheaval would itself give man a new direction.

In sum, these are the book's central three findings. The detail, though, also merits recapitulation. The second level of the book's ambition – to offer an assessment of the theoretical debate concerning totalitarianism, from 1945 to the present – can also be revisited, in the last part of this conclusion.

The structural conception of totalitarianism, long entrenched as the mainstay of the theory (whether, on that basis, it has been either endorsed or rejected), places all the emphasis on systems of rule. It is not a conception that is necessarily antagonistic towards recognition of totalitarianism's modernist character. But it does acknowledge that character in the wrong sort of place. A structural model of totalitarianism emphasises the technological capacities of the modern state. Yet an appreciation of the role performed by modern technology is incomplete if it is detached from a picture of its interaction with totalitarianism's prescriptive vision: it is the ideological commitments that are (also) modern. This book has suggested that totalitarian regimes, embodied in 'classical' form in Hitler's Third Reich and the Stalinist Soviet Union, should be defined in the terms of their core 'elements'; and where a structural model would identify elements with institutions or practices, a more credible model has been shown to cash those elements out with respect to beliefs, attitudes, and outlooks. Thus conceived, totalitarianism's elements were identified as: (i) an emotional appeal;

(ii) a post-liberal, post-individualist political philosophy; (iii) an active *pursuit of* technological modernity; and (iv) an experiment in reshaping humanity.

This is an insight that Arthur Koestler got at long ago. Thereafter the insight was buried, though. In particular, it was obscured by the application of the operative procedures of post-war social science. Yet both Nazism and Stalinism expressed the full gamut of the four elements just listed. Nevertheless, this should not efface the points of ideological difference between Nazism and Stalinism – points that the book has wished to labour. Importantly, when the two came to articulate a post-liberal, post-individualist political philosophy, they gave different answers to the question of how humanity was to be divided into (collective) units: where Stalinism gave social class as the answer, Nazism pointed to race. The ‘state’, however, could never have competed with these two powerful constructions of social identity. This is one salient reason why Italian Fascism should (continue to) be excluded from the category of totalitarianism, properly speaking.

In the place of the old structural model, the book argued for a ‘genocidal’ model of totalitarianism. It did so because the combined effect of totalitarianism’s core elements is to push societies in a genocidal direction. Genocide is a controversial term. It is a term that is rather more easily applied to the Nazi Holocaust than to any episode of Stalinism. But nonetheless, it is a term capable of doing justice to the general political violence of Stalinism, once the conceptual criteria are drawn out, and these criteria then matched to an empirical assessment of Stalinism’s realities. Moreover,

genocide does justice to moral intuition: the key consideration that vindicates the addition of 'totalitarianism' to the political lexicon in the very first place is the need – rightly felt – to ascribe specificity to the experience of political mass murder in the mid-twentieth century; this was mass murder having been sponsored by the leadership of a modern state, and having been exceptional in both intention and scale.

After having surveyed the elements, the book turned its attention to totalitarianism's 'sources'. Intellectual sources, it should have been clear, were by no means the only kind of source that exercised causal importance. But it was this kind of source that the book invested all of its efforts in exploring. Furthermore, the book did so because this is an ideological history that remains in dispute. The terms of this dispute begin to be tidied up once it is noted that three strands of thought – utopianism, scientism, and revolutionary violence – *overlap* in the ideological histories of Nazism and Stalinism respectively; unlike, say, biological racism or Marxism, which can only ever be shown to be exclusive to one, and alien to the other. Once again, even within commonality, there is difference. The three currents express themselves in different ways in the two totalitarian ideologies. Moreover, they develop down separate paths, albeit by proceeding from an initial inception, subsequent to the Enlightenment, later thickening out to gain fuller expression, in connection with changing intellectual contexts. Accordingly, the differences in ideological developments have been shown to be as follows: Communist utopianism can be tracked across a path that goes Fourier–Marx–Lenin–Stalin;

Nazi utopianism, across a path that goes Herder–Fichte–Hitler. Nazi scientism, which was racial, ran through Gobineau, Darwinism, and Houston Stewart Chamberlain, before it was modified within Nazi thought itself; Stalinist scientism, which was class-based, ran through Hegel, Marx, Darwinism, Engels, and Plekhanov, before Lenin, and then Stalin, gave it final complexion. Lastly, the book has proposed that the reception of the revolutionary violence current needs to be separated even more so, because there are distinctive leftist and rightist orientations. The leftist orientation passed via Jacobinism, Marx, and Engels (and being given a sort of prior legitimation in Machiavelli), before being subject to further revision in Bolshevik thought and practice; the rightist orientation, prior to National Socialism, passed most saliently via Nietzsche and Sorel.

Prior to the twentieth century, then, quite discrete histories can be (re)traced. But the real significance of the three currents was to take Nazism and Stalinism to consistent positions on fundamental issues. For both totalitarian ideologies, it was utopianism, scientism, and revolutionary violence that allowed them to answer the same questions that they found themselves needing to ask. The questions posed were, correspondingly: How will the terms of community be constructed? How will the terms of historical justification proceed? And how will the terms of political action be specified? It was the uptake of the utopian, scientific, and revolutionary violence currents that enabled the two ideologies to answer these questions consistently. Utopianism led both Nazism and Stalinism to conceive of the community in terms of a

collective political subject – frustrated in the present, but capable of flourishing in the future. Scientism led both to find a grounding in history: either, as in the case of Nazism, the collective units that were the principal historical actors were given scientific classification; or, as in the case of Stalinism, the historical actors were understood to participate in a historical process that was preordained. Revolutionary violence led both to approach political action in terms of bloody conflict, the pursuit of which not only had an instrumental purpose – to effect the moment of historical transition – but a regenerative purpose as well: the New Man would emerge transformed.

It is also because the reception of the utopian, scientific, and revolutionary violence currents of thought took the two ideologies to consistent positions on the same questions, that Nazism and Stalinism can be understood to share in an ideological history in which figure the same three ‘representative thinkers’. Using the idea of representative thinkers is an interpretive strategy that could easily mislead. Hence some attention has been given in the text to stipulating what the idea might mean. To be sure, totalitarianism has no ‘canonical’ source in the simple (and crude) sense: Stalinism is not reducible to Marx, for instance. To spell the same thought out, a representative thinker is *not* a thinker of whom it can be said that (s)he elucidated a full-blown totalitarian political theory before its time. Yet there are thinkers who express something like a preponderance of the central assumptions present within each of the three relevant currents of thought. As such, it was suggested that picking those thinkers out helps to lend clarity to the broader picture,

by means of a shorthand. What totalitarianism's representative thinkers had to say about the political and social world exhibited a strong *affinity* with what the two respective movements both later said – and went on to do. They also served as indirect *influences* upon what was later said and done – because they were important units in the actual transmission of the three currents *into* those movements. It was suggested that it is Rousseau who best represents totalitarian utopianism. Rousseau's plea that man might lead an 'authentic' existence was similar, in important ways, to the (utopian) standard of judgement that Nazism and Stalinism would come to apply to their existing societies. Furthermore, Rousseau was reworked by both Charles Fourier (on the left) and Johann Gottfried von Herder (on the right), each of whom were foundational figures in the articulation of Nazi utopianism and communist utopianism respectively. Darwin was argued to represent totalitarian scientism: he provided concepts – evolutionary progress, and progress through struggle – which, through mediated influence, became central to that current. Lastly, the representative thinker of totalitarian revolutionary violence is Nietzsche: although Nietzsche's influence was more direct in Nazism than in Stalinism (and even then, the influence in Nazism is often overstated, missing the specific location of his contribution), Nietzsche's idea that violence could be bound up with virtue was similar in substance to both the Nazi and Stalinist variants of that idea.

The intellectual history of anti-totalitarianism offers up, so this book has lastly tried to illustrate, a very interesting tale. Totalitarianism is not a neutral term

(if any political term ever is). But a close look at this tale takes us to a good understanding of the precise ways in which totalitarianism *never was* a neutral term. The second part of this study especially has attempted to shed light on the manner in which the changing contexts of post-1945 intellectual and political life regulated the meaning attached to totalitarianism, and regulated too the purposes to which a political theory of anti-totalitarianism was put. Utopianism, scientism, and revolutionary violence were each given rough diagnosis across these contexts. At each interval, though, the theorists of totalitarianism had a tendency to mistake the part for the whole. Their attention also tended to linger rather longer over one totalitarian ideology than it did over the other. For Cold War liberals, 'totalitarianism' was appealing because it facilitated critiques not only of 'actually existing socialism', but of intellectual Marxism *per se*. For critical theorists, the extension of fascism into 'liberal-capitalist' modernity was often the primary concern. And for anti-totalitarians in France, revolutionary political culture – together with revolutionary political discourse – was frequently the target.

It might well be asked: will the intellectual history of anti-totalitarianism have another episode in its tale? That, at the risk of cliché, must remain to be seen.¹ But the least that can be said is that the idea has proven to have a rich capacity for malleability. Overall, as best it could, this book sought to put a check on that malleability, by giving totalitarianism definitive shape.

Notes

Introduction

1. Two statements, made in passing, by two celebrated historians of Nazism and Soviet communism respectively, are good evidence of this tendency to assume that totalitarianism equals a structural model of political rule. See Ian Kershaw's observation that 'the totalitarian concept allows comparative analysis of a number of techniques and instruments of domination' (Kershaw, "'Working Towards the Führer": Reflections on the Nature of the Hitler Dictatorship', in, *Stalinism and Nazism: Dictatorships in Comparison*, ed. Ian Kershaw and Moshe Lewin [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997], 88). See also Robert Service's statement that '[f]ascism was in many ways a structural copy of [the Soviet order], albeit with a different set of ideological purposes' (*Comrades. Communism: A World History* [London: Pan, 2008], 9).
2. Note that here I argue against something of an emerging consensus. The case for classifying Fascist Italy as totalitarian has recently been argued most forcefully by Emilio Gentile. See Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy*, trans. by Keith Botsford (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996). On the other hand, Hannah Arendt long ago established a convention of excluding the Italian case, mainly because it lacks a murderous aspect on anything approaching the same scale. See Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (London: Schocken, 2004 [orig. 1951], esp. 256–9).
3. It is an intellectual red herring to construct an account of totalitarianism around Mussolini's article 'The Doctrine of Fascism' in the *Enciclopedia Italiana* of 1932 (in fact authored by the 'philosopher' of Fascism, Giovanni Gentile). This primary document source does have the distinction, though, of championing a positive conception of 'totalitarian', rendered equivalent with the Fascist conception of the state.
4. See Richard Shorten, 'Political Theology, Political Religion and Secularisation', *Political Studies Review*, 8, 2 (2010), 180–91.

5. Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914–1945* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 494. On the debate about the 'revolutionary' status of totalitarianism, fascism, and communism, see both Roger Griffin, 'Exploding the Continuum of History: A Non-Marxist's Marxist Model of Fascism's Revolutionary Dynamics', in *A Fascist Century* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 2008) and David D. Roberts, 'Fascism, Marxism, and the Question of Modern Revolution', *European Journal of Political Theory*, 9, 2 (2010), 183–201.
6. See Richard Shorten, 'The Failure of Political Argument: The Languages of Anti-Fascism and Anti-Totalitarianism in Post-September 11th Discourse', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 11, 3 (2009), 479–503.
7. Michael Geyer (with assistance from Sheila Fitzpatrick), 'Introduction. After Totalitarianism – Stalinism and Nazism Compared', in *Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism Compared*, ed. Michael Geyer and Sheila Fitzpatrick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 1–37.
8. On the German case, consult Jurgen Kocka, 'German History before Hitler: The Debate about the German *Sonderweg*', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 23 (1988), 3–16. For the continuity thesis in Russian history, see both Richard Pipes, *The Russian Revolution* (New York: Knopf, 1990) and R.C. Tucker, *Stalin in Power: The Revolution from Above, 1928–1941* (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1990).
9. See, for instance, Jeffrey Herf's suggestive notion of a 'reactionary modernism', which Herf first applied to the Third Reich and has since sought to apply more generally: Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Herf, 'Liberal Legacies, Europe's Totalitarian Era, and the Iraq War', in *A Matter of Principle: Humanitarian Arguments for War in Iraq*, ed. Thomas Cushman (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005). On anti-liberal political thought and practice, see Stephen Holmes, *The Anatomy of Antiliberalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).
10. On different strands of Marxism, see Alvin W. Gouldner, *The Two Marxisms: Contradictions and Anomalies in the Development of Theory* (London: Macmillan, 1980).
11. For a rejection of the concept, see Slavoj Žižek, *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism? Five Interventions in the (Mis)use of a Notion* (London: Verso, 2001).

12. Some texts that deserve credit for breaking with this tendency are David D. Roberts, *The Totalitarian Experiment in Twentieth-Century Europe: Understanding the Poverty of Great Politics* (London: Routledge, 2006), and Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).
13. For this astute observation, see John Connolly, 'Totalitarianism: Defunct Theory, Useful Word', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 11, 4 (2010), 819.
14. See Kershaw and Lewin (eds), *Stalinism and Nazism*.
15. See Anson Rabinbach, 'Moments of Totalitarianism', *History and Theory*, 45 (2006), 72–100.
16. Beyond Mao's China, the extension of the term 'totalitarian' to apply to the whole global range of communist regimes that evolved in the post-1945 era is conventional in some uses of the vocabulary. However, that use is rejected in this book. Another convention is that 'Stalinism' be used to include political rule in the satellite states of Eastern Europe after 1945. That is also rejected here.
17. Sheldon Wolin, *Democracy Incorporated: Managed Democracy and the Specter of Inverted Totalitarianism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).
18. Peter Baehr, 'The Novelty of Jihadist Terror', *Society*, 46, 3 (2009), 210–13.
19. Shorten, 'The Failure of Political Argument', esp. 491–6.
20. This is one drawback of the otherwise excellent account in Roberts, *The Totalitarian Experiment*. Recent historical surveys of this kind are: Alan Bullock, *Hitler and Stalin: Parallel Lives* (London: HarperCollins, 1991); Kershaw and Lewin (eds), *Stalinism and Nazism*; Henry Rousso (ed.), *Stalinism and Nazism: History and Memory Compared* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), trans. by Lucy Golsan et al.; Richard J. Overy, *The Dictators: Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004); Robert Gellately, *Lenin, Stalin, and Hitler: The Age of Social Catastrophe* (New York: Knopf, 2007).
21. See for example Margaret Canovan, *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of her Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), which locates totalitarianism at the centre of Arendt's political philosophy.
22. Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (London: Bodley Head, 2010), 19.

23. Intellectuals *were* drawn to totalitarianism, and the theme is a fascinating one. Nevertheless, it is not a principal theme of this book. See esp. Mark Lilla, *The Reckless Mind: Intellectuals in Politics* (New York: NYRB, 2001). For an excellent case study, see also Tony Judt, *Past Imperfect: French Intellectuals, 1945–1956* (London: University of California Press, 1992).
24. At this point detractors might still complain that I have made an argument for thinking in terms of, say, ‘Nazi political thought’ or ‘Bolshevik political thought’, but not in terms of Hitler’s or Stalin’s political thought as such. It is true that nothing specific has been said that implies the centrality of the worldview of political leaders. However, this is where some of the historians who count themselves as ‘revisionists’ of the totalitarian model have overreached themselves: for example, there may have been no straight line from *Mein Kampf* to the Holocaust, and the sources of power in Nazi Germany may have been more dispersed than was once thought to be the case, but this is not to have demonstrated that Hitler’s writings and speeches did not express a view of the world that was internally coherent and, moreover, one around which the Nazi state was organised. There are good discussions of these issues (by two leading protagonists) in Martin Malia, ‘Revolution Fulfilled: How the Revisionists are Still Trying to Take the Ideology out of Stalinism’, *Times Literary Supplement*, 15 June 2001, 3–4; and Sheila Fitzpatrick, ‘Revisionism in Soviet History’, *History and Theory*, 46, 4 (2007), 77–91. In respect of current historiographic trends, ‘post-revisionism’ tends to point towards the linguistic turn and a more sophisticated appreciation of discourse and discursive practices.
25. Czeslaw Milosz, *The Captive Mind* (London: Penguin, 2001 [orig. 1953]), 199.
26. Tzvetan Todorov, *Hope and Memory: Reflections on the Twentieth Century* (London: Atlantic, 2005).
27. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, vii–ix.
28. A fine attempt to do justice to the breadth and subtlety of Arendt on totalitarianism, which also reads her in connection with her interlocutors, is Peter Baehr, *Hannah Arendt, Totalitarianism, and the Social Sciences* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010).
29. On the historical approach to political thought, see Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, Vol. 1: *Regarding Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); and J.G.A. Pocock, *Political*

Thought and History: Essays on Theory and Method (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). One short case study on anti-totalitarian discourse that also takes this contextualist approach is Robert Brier, 'Adam Michnik's Understanding of Totalitarianism and the Western European Left: A Historical and Transnational Approach to Dissident Political Thought', *East European Politics and Societies*, 25, 2 (2011), 197–218.

30. Terence Ball, 'The Value of the History of Political Philosophy', in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Political Philosophy*, ed. George Klosko (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 51–3.

1 The Problem of the Modern

1. Note that my intended meaning of 'elements' in connection with totalitarianism differs from Arendt's. Arendt locates elements in the pre-history of totalitarianism (in the age of imperialism, for example). Her elements then 'crystallise' at a later point in time to constitute totalitarianism itself (see Hannah Arendt, 'A Reply to Eric Voegelin', in Arendt, *Essays in Understanding, 1930–54*, ed. Jerome Kohn [New York: Schocken, 2005], 401–8). I work the other way around. 'Elements' are observed within the actual experience of totalitarianism; and by working backwards, the strands of thought that shape a general combination of elements are identified and evaluated. Arendt also constructs elements more narrowly than I do because she is specifically concerned with the influence of 'practices', as opposed to the influence of 'ideas'. See Canovan, *Hannah Arendt*, 23.
2. For criticisms of the uses of 'modernity' in the humanities and social sciences, see Bernard Yack, *The Fetishism of Modernities: Epoch Self-Consciousness in Contemporary Social and Political Thought* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1997). As Yack argues, thinking within the limits of pre-specified categories can actually obscure the novelty and specificity of the problem at hand: distinctive developments are obscured by ahistorical generalisations. For a general indictment of 'medicine', see Mario Biogoli, 'Science, Modernity, and the "Final Solution"', in *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the 'Final Solution'*, ed. Saul Friedlander (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 185–206.
3. Perhaps the most pronounced example of this tendency for accounts of political religion to focus on violence is Michael Burleigh. See Burleigh, *Earthly Powers: Religion and Politics in Europe from the French Revolution to the Great War* (London:

- HarperCollins, 2005), and *Sacred Causes: Religion and Politics from the European Dictators to Al Qaeda* (London: HarperPress, 2006).
4. Arthur Koestler, *Darkness at Noon*, trans. by Daphne Hardy (London: Bantam Books, 1968 [orig. 1940]).
 5. David Cesarini, *Arthur Koestler: The Homeless Mind* (London: Vintage, 1999), 174.
 6. Koestler, *Arrival and Departure* (London: Vintage, 1999 [orig. 1943]).
 7. Uwe Klawitter, *The Theme of Totalitarianism in 'English' Fiction: Koestler, Orwell, Vonnegut, Kosinski, Burgess, Atwood, Amis* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1997), 56.
 8. The authoritative conceptual history is Abbot Gleason, *Totalitarianism: The Inner History of the Cold War* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). *Arrival and Departure* can be said to be prescient for the reason that the book contains one character's eyewitness account of the Holocaust, at a time when public opinion in the Allied countries was weakly informed of the facts, and often incredulous towards them: Klawitter, *The Theme of Totalitarianism in 'English' Fiction*, 37; Cesarini, *Arthur Koestler*, 202–3.
 9. *Arrival and Departure* is problematic on a political reading as well. George Orwell criticised it as 'a tract purporting to show that revolutionary creeds are rationalisations of neurotic impulses'. Orwell, 'Arthur Koestler', in *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters*, Vol. 3: *As I Please, 1943–1945*, ed. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (London: Secker & Warburg, 1970), 241–2. At the end of this section of dialogue, for instance, the Nazi agent is revealed to be the patient of a psychoanalyst character in the novel: a psychological problem, the reader is led to suspect, drives his political commitment.
 10. Stanley Payne's approach to fascism, which is one of the best known, finds 'the fascist negations' to be vital to the ideology's definition. The negations that Payne foregrounds are threefold: anti-liberalism, anti-communism, and anti-conservatism. It should be noted that, for Payne, there are positive commitments that define fascism as well. However, the tendency to define Nazism in the terms of what it is against is intended here to be a general diagnosis of a broader cultural response. See Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914–1945* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995).
 11. Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889–1936: Hubris* (London: Penguin, 2001), 58–60, 135, 245–7, 286; Neil Gregor, *How to Read Hitler* (London: Granta, 2005), 51.

12. Richard Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich: Nazi Conceptions of Christianity, 1919–1945* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Steigmann-Gall, 'Nazism and the Revival of Political Religion Theory', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 5, 3 (2004), 376–96.
13. On 'core' and 'peripheral' ideological commitments, see Michael Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 77–8, 82–4.
14. *Arrival and Departure*, 140.
15. *Ibid.*, 142. For a contemporaneous statement of the same point, see George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier* (London: Penguin, 1989 [orig. 1937]), 198–202.
16. *Arrival and Departure*, 140.
17. *Ibid.*, 141.
18. E.g., François Furet and Ernst Nolte, *Fascism and Communism*, trans. by Katherine Golsan (London: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 4.
19. *Arrival and Departure*, 141.
20. Elie Halévy, *The Era of Tyrannies*, cited in Jeffrey C. Isaac, 'Critics of Totalitarianism', in *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Political Thought*, ed. Terence Ball and Richard Bellamy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 187.
21. *Arrival and Departure*, 142, 143.
22. *Ibid.*, 144–5.
23. *Ibid.*, 145.
24. *Ibid.*, 147.
25. E.g., Albert O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before its Triumph* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003 [orig. 1977]).
26. E.g., Paul Hollander, *The Fellow-Travelers: Intellectual Friends of Communism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988).
27. Peter Baehr, 'Totalitarianism', *New Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 6 (2005), 2344.
28. Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. by Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity, 1990).
29. Roberts, *The Totalitarian Experiment*, esp. 62–8; Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, esp. 43–66.
30. Sigmund Neumann, *Permanent Revolution: The Total State in a World at War* (New York: Praeger, 1965 [orig. 1942]).
31. Emilio Gentile, 'The Sacralisation of Politics: Definitions, Interpretations and Reflections on the Question of Secular Religion and Totalitarianism', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 1, 1 (2000), 19.

32. Baehr, 'Totalitarianism', 2344.
33. Koestler, *Arrival and Departure*, 142.
34. Gentile, 'Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion: Definitions and Critical Reflections on Criticisms of an Interpretation', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 5, 3 (2004), 329.
35. See Jorg Baberowski and Anselm Doering-Manteuffel, 'The Quest for Order and the Pursuit of Terror: National Socialist Germany and the Stalinist Soviet Union as Multiethnic Empires', in *Beyond Totalitarianism*, ed. Geyer and Fitzpatrick, 180–227; Enzo Traverso, *The Origins of Nazi Violence* (New York: New Press, 2003); and Synder, *Bloodlands*. It is indeed appropriate – and overdue – that thinking on totalitarianism should address the topic of 'empire'. However, exaggeration is only a counter-productive way of making amends for a history of neglect. Certainly, the practices of imperialism are not continuous with the practices of totalitarianism. Nor even is it helpful to isolated 'empire' – or 'imperialist ideology' – as a current of totalitarianism in its own right. The 'crimes of colonialism' have their source in scientism – in some of the possible implications of Darwinism – so it is more useful to see scientism as the prior intellectual context for both of these political realities.
36. For Zeev Sternhell, biological racism even exempts Nazism from admission to the broad family of fascism. See Sternhell, with Mario Sznajder and Maia Asheri, *The Birth of Fascist Ideology: From Cultural Rebellion to Political Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 5–6. The adoption of racial laws did not take place until 1938 and is usually viewed, not as the outcome of domestic ideology, but as an artificial effort to imitate Nazi practice. This view has been challenged lately. However, in my opinion, there is not sufficient reason to reject it.
37. Gentile, 'The Sacralisation of Politics', 19–21.
38. Simon Tormey, *Making Sense of Tyranny: Interpretations of Totalitarianism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 180–1.
39. My encapsulation of the Enlightenment here is particularly indebted to Tzvetan Todorov, *In Defence of the Enlightenment* (London: Atlantic, 2009).
40. Jonathan Littell, *The Kindly Ones* (London: Vintage, 2010). On the book's reception, see Daniel Mendelsohn, 'Transgression', *New York Review of Books*, LVI, 5, 26 March 2009, 18–21.
41. *The Kindly Ones*, 393–400.

42. *Ibid.*, 393–4.
43. *Ibid.*, 394.
44. *Ibid.*, 395, 670. On this point see also Todorov, *Hope and Memory*, 35.
45. *The Kindly Ones*, 205–6.
46. Mussolini's credibility as a totalitarian dictator was disparaged in the interwar years and in the decades after; he was denigrated, for example, as either a 'sawdust Caesar' or a 'fraud': George Seldes, *Sawdust Caesar: The Untold History of Mussolini and Fascism* (London: Barker, 1936); A.J.P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964), 85. Since then important studies have characterised the regime of Italian Fascism as 'imperfect totalitarianism', 'failed totalitarianism', and 'arrested totalitarianism': respectively, Renzo de Felice, *Interpretations of Fascism*, trans. by B.H. Everett (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977); Alexander de Grand, 'Cracks in the Façade: The Failure of Fascist Totalitarianism in Italy', *European History Quarterly*, 21 (1991), 515–35; Juan J. Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2000), 7.
47. The following accounts all pursue the theory/practice distinction: Karl-Dietrich Bracher, 'The Disputed Concept of Totalitarianism, Experience and Actuality', in *Totalitarianism Reconsidered*, ed. Ernest Menze (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1981), 11–34; W. S. Allen, 'Totalitarianism: The Concept and the Reality', in *Totalitarianism Reconsidered*, 97–107; Claude Lefort, 'The Image and the Body of Totalitarianism', in *The Political Forms of Modern Society: Bureaucracy, Democracy, and Totalitarianism*, ed. John B. Thompson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986), 293–306; and Giovanni Sartori, *The Theory of Democracy Revisited*, Vol. 1: *The Contemporary Debate* (Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishers, 1987), 200. The phrase 'islands of separateness' is Friedrich and Brzezinski's (*Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, ch. 6).
48. Isaac, 'Critics of Totalitarianism', 184.
49. A. James Gregor, *Mussolini's Intellectuals: Fascist Social and Political Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).
50. Benito Mussolini, 'The Doctrine of Fascism', in *Ideals and Ideologies: A Reader*, ed. Terence Ball and Richard Dagger (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 288–97, 290.
51. *Rasse* and *volk* were not interchangeable in Nazi language. *Völkisch* roughly translates as 'ethnic'. Claudia Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 10.

52. Cited in Richard Weikart, *Hitler's Ethic: The Nazi Pursuit of Evolutionary Progress* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 56.
53. *Arrival and Departure*, 146.
54. Gentile, 'The Sacralisation of Politics', 18–19.
55. See Gentile, 'Fascism and the Italian Road to Totalitarianism', *Constellations*, 15, 3 (2008), 291–302: 'Fascism summarized the essential traits of its ideology in the myth of the State and in activism as the ideal of life. Fascist ideology was the most complete rationalisation of the totalitarian state, based on the statement of the supremacy of politics and on the resolution of the private with the public, as subordination of privacy-based values (religion, culture, morality, love, etc.) to the pre-eminent political power' (297).
56. Mussolini, conversely, thought there was plenty of shared ground between Fascism and Nazism. At a speech made in Berlin in 1937, at a time after the agreement of the Rome–Berlin Axis (when Mussolini might be thought to have had reason, therefore, to labour this shared ground), Mussolini portrayed Fascism and Nazism as sharing in 'many conceptions of life and history' – violence, work, youth, and so on. See Mussolini, 'The Berlin Speech', reprinted in *Fascism*, ed. Roger Griffin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 78–9.
57. It is also worth stressing that, from a methodological perspective, the analyst ought to have no issues with handling specificities and commonalities inherent to Nazism at the same time. As Roger Griffin has rightly observed: 'Clearly, if our exclusive concern is to reconstruct the history of Nazism in its particularity (idiographically), then the "fascist minimum" it shares with other movements is irrelevant. But once attempts made by the human sciences to make the dynamics and fate of Nazism more intelligible involve locating it within wider kinship systems of historical phenomena, then its genetic traits as a form of fascism become of central importance' (*The Nature of Fascism* [London: Routledge, 1995], 110).
58. Sternhell, *The Birth of Fascist Ideology*, 5–6.
59. Note, however, that the technological modernity of totalitarianism can easily lend itself to being overstated. As Timothy Snyder reminds: 'The Soviets and the Germans relied upon technologies that were hardly novel even in the 1930s and 1940s: internal combustion, railways, firearms, pesticides, barbed wire' (*Bloodlands*, xv).

60. On the development of the structural model, see Robert Fine, 'Totalitarianism', in *International Encyclopedia of Social and Behavioural Sciences*, ed. N. Smelser and P. Balter (Oxford: Pergamon, 2002), 15788–90; Baehr, 'Totalitarianism'; and Shorten, 'Totalitarianism', in *Encyclopedia of Social Problems*, ed. Vincent N. Parrillo (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008), 946–7.
61. Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), 9; italics added. The third part of Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* could potentially also be deemed representative of the structural model. However, the broad sweep of her thesis is more consistent with the genocidal model. Certainly, the Nazi extermination project is central to her reading and, for her, totalitarian government is characterised by 'shapelessness', to the point that she refers to 'the so-called totalitarian state' (*The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 392).
62. Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, 10–11.
63. Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism: The Founders, the Golden Age, the Breakdown* (London: W.W. Norton & Co., 2005 [orig. 1978]), 794.
64. Richard Overly, *The Dictators*, xxvii, 73.
65. Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, 4; italics added.
66. Karl Deutsch, 'Cracks in the Monolith: Possibilities and Patterns of Disintegration in Totalitarian Systems', in *Totalitarianism*, ed. Carl Friedrich (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954), 309.
67. Archie Brown, 'The Study of Authoritarianism and Totalitarianism' in *The British Study of Politics in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Jack Heywood, Brian Barry, and Archie Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 354. For a long time the authoritative definition of authoritarianism was that of Juan J. Linz. See Linz, 'An Authoritarian Regime: The Case of Spain' in *Cleavages, Ideologies and Party Systems*, ed. Eric Allard and Yrjo Littunen (Helsinki: Academic, 1964), 255. See also Paul Brooker, *Non-Democratic Regimes* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000).
68. Alfons Söllner, 'Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* in its Original Context', *European Journal of Political Theory*, 3, 2 (2004), 230. See also Vicky Iakovou, 'Totalitarianism as a Non-State: On Hannah Arendt's Debt to Franz Neumann', *European Journal of Political Theory*, 8 (2009), 429–47.

69. State control of munitions is a further totalitarian trait on Friedrich and Brzezinski's six-point syndrome. However, it is not a feature of the structural model more generally; unsurprisingly, given it is the norm in most advanced Western societies.
70. See especially the debate about the nature of the 'evil' embodied in totalitarianism and in the Holocaust in particular. For example, see John Gray, 'Communists and Nazis: Just as Evil?', *New York Review of Books*, LVII, 6, 8 April 2010, 37–9.
71. See especially Hannah Arendt's important formulation in 1945: 'The problem of evil will be the fundamental question of postwar intellectual life in Europe.' Arendt, 'Nightmare and Flight', in *Essays in Understanding, 1930–1954*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken, 2005), 134. Rough approximations to this question shaped the responses of Cold War liberals, critical theorists, and anti-totalitarians in France.
72. Sigrid Meuschel, 'Theories of Totalitarianism and Modern Dictatorships: A Tentative Approach', *Thesis Eleven*, 61 (2000), 87–98; Peter Grieder, 'In Defence of Totalitarianism Theory as a Tool of Historical Scholarship', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 8, 3–4 (2007), 563–89; Norman M. Naimark, 'Totalitarian States and the History of Genocide', *Telos*, 136 (2006), 10–25. Note also the rough typology that Roger Boesche has indicated: there are ancient and early modern tyrannies; there are twentieth-century tyrannies; and then, as an offshoot of twentieth-century tyrannies, there are 'genocidal tyrannies'. Boesche, 'An Omission from Ancient and Early Modern Theories of Tyranny: Genocidal Tyrannies', in *Confronting Tyranny: Ancient Lessons for Global Politics*, ed. Toivo Koivukoski and David Edward Tabachnik (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 33–42.
73. Samantha Power, *'A Problem from Hell': America and the Age of Genocide* (London: HarperCollins, 2003). Hannah Arendt, in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (London: Penguin, 1994), prefers the term 'administrative massacres' to 'genocide'.
74. 'Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide', reprinted in W. Schabas, *Genocide in International Law: The Crime of Crimes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 565. For a general discussion of the conceptual issues regarding genocide, see J. K. Roth (ed.), *Genocide and Human Rights* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), and Steven Lee, 'The Moral Distinctiveness of Genocide', *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 18, 3 (2010), 335–56.

75. Anne Applebaum, 'The Worst of the Madness', *New York Review of Books*, LVII, 17, 11 November 2010, 12.
76. Stéphane Courtois, 'Introduction: The Crimes of Communism', in *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression*, ed. Stéphane Courtois, Nicolas Werth et al., trans. by Jonathan Murphy and Mark Kramer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 16.
77. Shorten, 'The Rhetoric of Moral Equivalence', in *Evil in Contemporary Political Theory*, ed. Bruce Haddock, Peri Roberts and Peter Sutch (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 177–203.
78. For the rejection of the term genocide in connection with Stalinist violence, see Nicolas Werth, 'The Crimes of the Stalin Regime: Outline for an Inventory and Classification', in *The Historiography of Genocide*, ed. Dan Stone (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 400–19.
79. Norman M. Naimark, *Stalin's Genocides* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).
80. Werth, 'The Crimes of the Stalin Regime', 410.
81. Naimark, *Stalin's Genocides*, 58.
82. Werth, 'The Crimes of the Stalin Regime', 415. In contrast with Werth's careful position here, the Ukrainian famine was the subject of the most rhetorically polemical formulation of the moral equivalence between Nazism and communism in *The Black Book of Communism*: 'the deliberate starvation of a child of a Ukrainian kulak as a result of the famine caused by Stalin's regime "is equal to" the starvation of a Jewish child in the Warsaw ghetto as a result of the famine caused by the Nazi regime' (Courtois, 'Introduction: The Crimes of Communism', 15). See Shorten, 'Hannah Arendt on Totalitarianism: Moral Equivalence and Degrees of Evil in Modern Political Violence', in *Hannah Arendt and the Uses of History: Imperialism, Nation, Race and Genocide*, ed. Richard H. King and Dan Stone (New York: Berghahn, 2007), 173–90.
83. Naimark, *Stalin's Genocides*, 73.
84. Synder, *Bloodlands*, 42.
85. *Ibid.*, 53.
86. Eric Weitz, 'Racial Politics without the Concept of Race', *Slavic Review*, 61, 1 (2002), 18; Werth, 'The Crimes of the Stalin Regime', 413.
87. Naimark, *Stalin's Genocides*, 135.
88. *Ibid.*, 100, 109.

89. Baberowski and Doering-Manteuffel, 'The Quest for Order and the Pursuit of Terror', 213; Ronald G. Suny, 'Stalin and his Stalinism', in *Stalinism and Nazism*, ed. Kershaw and Lewin, 50.
90. On the case for continuity between Leninism and Stalinism, see Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, 766–70, 792; and Werth, 'A State Against its People', in *The Black Book of Communism*, 33–268. For a more mixed assessment of the issue, see Stephen Cohen, 'Bolshevism and Stalinism', in *Stalinism: Essays in Historical Interpretation*, ed. R.C. Tucker (New York: Transaction, 1999), 3–29.
91. Gellately, *Lenin, Stalin, and Hitler*, ch. 2; Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 13.
92. Gellately, *Lenin, Stalin, and Hitler*, 55–6, 59.
93. Michael Scammell observes that 'Gulag' has come to 'stand beside the word "Holocaust" as the name of one of the two great aberrations of twentieth-century civilization'. Scammell, 'Circles of Hell', *New York Review of Books*, VIII, 7, 28 April 2011, 46.
94. Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 27.
95. Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: A History* (London: Penguin, 2004), 3.
96. Naimark, *Stalin's Genocides*, 130.
97. Jan-Werner Müller, *Contesting Democracy: Political Ideas in Twentieth-Century Europe* (London: Yale University Press, 2011), 89.
98. Jean-Louis Margolin, 'Mao's China: The Worst Non-Genocidal Regime' in Stone (ed.), *The Historiography of Genocide*, 438–67; Peter Baehr, 'China the Anomaly: Hannah Arendt, Totalitarianism, and the Maoist Regime', *European Journal of Political Theory*, 9, 3 (2010), 276–86.
99. Baehr, 'China the Anomaly', 276.
100. *Ibid.*, 276.
101. Margolin, 'Mao's China', 439.
102. Brown, 'The Study of Totalitarianism and Authoritarianism', 374, n. 101.
103. E.g., Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 171: the camp is the 'nomos of the modern'.
104. Cf. Arendt's claim that 'the fear of concentration camps and the resulting insights into the nature of totalitarian domination might serve... to introduce... the politically most important yardsticks for judging events in our time, namely: whether they serve totalitarian domination or not' (*The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 442).

105. Tzvetan Todorov, *Facing the Extreme: Moral Life in the Concentration Camps*, trans. by Arthur Denner and Abigail Pollak (New York: Cosmopolitan Books, 1996), 27–8. Primo Levi expressed the same thought more laconically: ‘there’s no gas chambers at Fiat’ (cited in *ibid.*, 29).
106. Wolin, *Democracy Incorporated: Managed Democracy and the Specter of Inverted Totalitarianism*.
107. Cf. Irving Louis Horowitz, *Taking Lives: Genocide and State Power* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1982): there is an ‘essential nexus between genocide and statecraft’, and ‘most acts of genocide are highly organised activities of the state’ (xi–xiv). See also Mark Levene, ‘The Changing Face of Mass Murder: Massacre, Genocide, and Post-Genocide’, *International Social Science Journal*, 54, 174 (2002), 443–52: genocide, as a type of mass extermination, is ‘in some way bound up with state-led developmental programmes and aspirations’ (448).
108. Horowitz, *Taking Lives*, 10–11. For discussion, see Ann Curthoys and John Docker, ‘Defining Genocide’, in *The Historiography of Genocide*, ed. Stone, 9–41.
109. Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich*, 3.
110. Gentile, ‘The Sacralisation of Politics’; Gentile, *Politics as Religion*, trans. by George Staunton (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).
111. John Gray, *Al-Qaeda and What it Means to be Modern* (London: Faber, 2003); Gray, *Heresies: Against Progress and other Illusions* (London: Granta, 2004); Tzvetan Todorov, ‘Totalitarianism: Between Religion and Science’, trans. by Brady Bower and Max Likin, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 2, 1 (2001), 28–42.
112. Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, 96, 74; Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (London: Doubleday, 1967), 4.
113. Walter Benjamin, ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’, in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. by Harry Zohn (London: Fontana, 1973), 211–44; Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, 96.
114. Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, 140; George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1964); Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1961).
115. Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, 260, 262.

116. *Ibid.*, 174. Griffin asks: does 'the anomy-transcending modernism of Marxism' originate in 'the existential needs of Marx himself'?
117. Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, 88.
118. E.g., Gentile, *Politics as Religion*, 10–12.
119. E.g., Raymond Aron, 'The Future of the Secular Religions', in *The Dawn of Universal History: Selected Essays from a Witness of the Twentieth Century*, trans. by Barbara Bray (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 177–202. For the distinction, see Philippe Burrin, 'Political Religion: The Relevance of a Concept', *History & Memory*, 9, 1–2 (1997), 321–49.
120. Eric Voegelin, 'The Political Religions', in *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, Vol. 5, ed. Max Henningsen (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2000).
121. Martin Blinkhorn, 'Afterthoughts. Route Maps and Landscapes: Historians, "Fascist Studies" and the Study of Fascism', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 5, 3 (2004), 516. The dependence of political religion theory on particular psychological dispositions is earliest evident in Jacob Talmon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1952), 11, 254; and Talmon, *Political Messianism: The Romantic Phase* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1960), 518.
122. David D. Roberts, "'Political Religion" and the Totalitarian Departures of Inter-war Europe: On the Uses and Disadvantages of an Analytical Category', *Contemporary European History*, 18, 4 (2009), 392.
123. Roberts, *The Totalitarian Experiment*, 51; Yack, *The Longing for Total Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 14–20.
124. E.g., Jeffrey K. Hadden, 'Toward Desacralizing Secularization Theory', *Social Forces*, 65, 3 (1987), 587–611; Rodney Stark, 'Secularization, R.I.P.', *Sociology of Religion*, 60, 3 (1999), 249–273; Callum G. Brown, 'The Secularisation Debate: What the 1960s Have Done to the Study of Religious History', in *The Decline of Christendom in Western Europe, 1750–2000*, ed. Hugh McLeod and Werner Ustorf (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
125. Roy Wallis and Steve Bruce, 'Secularization: The Orthodox Model', in *Religion and Modernization: Sociologists and Historians Debate the Secularization Thesis*, ed. Bruce (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 8.
126. Richard Shorten, 'The Status of Ideology in the Return of Political Religion Theory', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 12, 2 (2007), 171.

127. Gentile, *Politics as Religion*; xi–xxiii; Burleigh, *Earthly Powers*; Burleigh, *Sacred Causes*; Voegelin, ‘The Political Religions’.
128. Richard Shorten, ‘Political Theology, Political Religion, and Secularisation’, *Political Studies Review*, 8, 2 (2010), 186.
129. Burleigh, *Earthly Powers*; Burleigh, *Sacred Causes*; Gentile, ‘The Sacralisation of Politics’, 18–19.
130. Richard Shorten, ‘The Enlightenment, Communism and Political Religion: Reflections on a Misleading Trajectory’, *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 8, 1 (2003), 16. Totalitarianism is certainly portrayed as an ‘inevitable’ outcome of the decline of Christianity in the more nostalgic, anti-modernist renditions of political religion theory, principally Eric Voegelin’s.
131. Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983 [orig. 1966]); Milan Babík, ‘Nazism as a Secular Religion’, *History and Theory*, 45, 3 (2006), 383–94.
132. David D. Roberts, ‘Fascism, Modernism and the Quest for an Alternative Modernity’, *Patterns of Prejudice*, 43, 1 (2009), 94.
133. Gentile, ‘The Sacralisation of Politics’, 18, 19.
134. For an expansion of this reading of political religion, see Shorten, ‘The Status of Ideology in the Return of Political Religion Theory’, esp. 179–82.
135. Talmon, *Political Messianism*.
136. Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, 22.
137. Carl Becker, *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1932).
138. Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 25–54.
139. Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages* (London: Pimlico, 1993), 281–8.
140. Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, 26–56.
141. E.g., Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion*, 1–33.
142. John Gray, *Black Mass: Apocalyptic Religion and the Death of Utopia* (London: Penguin, 2007), 28; Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History: The Theological Implications of the Philosophy of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), 61.
143. Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, 108–13.

2 The Problem of Intellectual Antecedents

1. Jan-Werner Müller, ‘The Triumph of What (If Anything)? Rethinking Political Ideologies and Political Institutions in

- Twentieth-century Europe', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 14, 2 (2009), 214.
2. David Beetham, *The Legitimation of Power* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991), 5–6. These two approaches are identified traditionally with political philosophy and social science respectively. Note that Beetham's account attempts to reconcile aspects from both approaches.
 3. Cf. Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, trans. by Thomas McCarthy (Cambridge: Polity, 1988).
 4. Roger Griffin, 'The Palingenetic Political Community: Rethinking the Legitimation of Totalitarian Regimes in Inter-War Europe', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 3, 3 (2002), 24–43; Paul Corner (ed.), *Popular Opinion in Totalitarian Regimes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 6.
 5. There is a good discussion of some of the issues in shorter-term legitimation in Devin O. Pendas, 'Explaining the Third Reich: Ethics, Beliefs, Interests', *Modern Intellectual History*, 5, 3 (2008), 573–96.
 6. E.g., Talmon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy*, 11.
 7. E.g., Martin Malia, *Alexander Herzen and the Birth of Russian Socialism* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1965), vii.
 8. E.g., Kolakowski, 'Marxist Roots of Stalinism'.
 9. E.g., Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*; Talmon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy*; Enzo Traverso, *The Origins of Nazi Violence*, trans. by Janet Lloyd (London: The New Press, 2003).
 10. E.g., Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion*, 4.
 11. E.g., Robert Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (London: Penguin, 2005), 18.
 12. E.g., Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future* (New York: Penguin, 1993 [orig. 1961]), 26–7.
 13. E.g., Steven Lukes, 'On the Moral Blindness of Communism', in *The Lesser Evil*, ed. Dubiel and Motzkin, 153.
 14. In 1934, for example, the German press carried a caption beneath a photograph of Hitler visiting the Nietzsche archives at Weimar, which read: 'The Führer before the bust of the German philosopher whose ideas have *fertilised* two great popular movements: the Nationalism Socialism of Germany and the Fascist movement of Italy.' Cited in Jacob Golomb and Robert S. Wistrich (eds), *Nietzsche, Godfather of Fascism? On the Use and Abuses of a Philosophy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 1; italics added.
 15. E.g., Steven E. Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany, 1890–1990* (London: University of California Press, 1992), 2, 3.

16. E.g., Perry Anderson, 'Components of the National Culture', in *English Questions* (London: Verso, 1992), 71.
17. E.g., Judith Shklar, *After Utopia: The Decline of Political Faith* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 237–8.
18. Leonard Schapiro, *Totalitarianism* (London: Pall Mall, 1972), 72. My argument concerning the central relevance of 'affinity' and 'influence' as ideational terms of reference is heavily indebted to Schapiro's earlier discussion. Note that Schapiro is right to add the caveat that 'of course, there may well be cases where affinity and influence coincide, without the necessity of deducing one from the other' (73). See also Richard Shorten, 'The Ambiguities of Antecedents and Legacies: Political Ideas and Political Extremes in the Twentieth Century', *European History Quarterly*, 36, 4 (2006), 574–85.
19. Schapiro, *Totalitarianism*, 72.
20. *Ibid.*
21. Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 25.
22. Ira Katznelson, *Desolation and Enlightenment: Political Knowledge after Total War, Totalitarianism and the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 91.
23. Charles E. Maier, 'Consigning the Twentieth Century to History: Alternative Narratives for the Modern Era', *American Historical Review*, 105 (2000), 809.
24. Roger Chartier, *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution*, trans. by Lydia G. Cochrane (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 2; Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism*, 18.
25. Note that, on this understanding, however much 'cultural preparation' does to solve the problem of origins, it opens up a new can of worms by raising the question of the relationship between imagination and reality.
26. Cf. Michel Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin, 1991), 76–100.
27. Traverso, *The Origins of Nazi Violence*, 150, 153.
28. Lisa Disch, 'More Truth than Fact: Storytelling as Critical Understanding in the Writings of Hannah Arendt', *Political Theory*, 21, 4 (1993), 676.
29. Eric Voegelin, 'The Origins of Totalitarianism', *Review of Politics*, 15, 1 (1953), 69, 70; italics added.
30. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, vii.
31. Domenico Losurdo, 'Towards a Critique of the Category of Totalitarianism', *Historical Materialism*, 12, 2 (2004), 29–30, 36.

32. Ibid., 36.
33. Todorov, *Hope and Memory*, 27–30.
34. Arendt, 'A Reply to Eric Voegelin', in *Essays in Understanding*, 403; Disch, 'More Truth than Fact', 683. Disch presumes that Arendt takes 'crystallization' from Kant and 'solidification' is, hence, Disch's extrapolation from Kant. Jacob Talmon also uses the crystallization metaphor (*The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy*, 11). Recall here that Arendt's account of derivation put the accent on ideas, not practices.
35. Ernst Nolte, 'The Past that Will Not Pass Away', in *Forever in the Shadow of Hitler? Original Documents of the 'Historikerstreit'*, ed. James Knowlton and Truett Cates (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1993), esp. 22.
36. See Furet and Nolte, *Fascism and Communism*; Richard Shorten, 'Europe's Twentieth Century in Retrospect? A Cautious Note on the Furet/Nolte Debate', *The European Legacy*, 9, 3 (2004), 285–304.
37. R. H. S. Crossman, *Plato Today* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939); Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, Vol. 1: *The Spell of Plato* (London: Routledge, 1999).
38. Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. by Ralph Manheim (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, c.1943), 432–3, 446–7, 448–9; Frédéric Rouvillois, 'Utopia and Totalitarianism', in *Utopia: The Search for the Ideal Society in the Western World*, ed. Roland Schaer, Gregory Claeys, and Lyman Tower Sargent (New York and Oxford: The New York Public Library/Oxford University Press, 2000), 330.
39. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 123.
40. Cited in Geoffrey Wheatcroft, 'Hello to All That!', *New York Review of Books*, LVIII/11, 23 June 2011, 32.
41. Plato, *The Republic*, trans. by Desmond Lee (London: Penguin, 1987), 182; Popper, *Open Society*, Vol. 1, 139.
42. Quentin Skinner, 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas', *History and Theory*, 8, 1 (1969), 22–3.
43. George Kateb, 'The Adequacy of the Canon', *Political Theory*, 30, 4 (2002), 485.
44. Dominick LaCapra, *History and Memory after Auschwitz* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 6.
45. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 444.
46. Ibid., ix.
47. E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (London: Penguin, 1961), 62–3.
48. See Baehr, *Hannah Arendt, Totalitarianism, and the Social Sciences*, 134. Note that there is a case for ordering 'unique' and

- 'unprecedented' differently. Cf. Dan Stone's comment that 'in reality the "unprecedentedness" thesis is only a more sophisticated version of the uniqueness thesis'. Stone, 'The Historiography of the Holocaust: Beyond "Uniqueness" and Ethnic Competition', *Rethinking History*, 8, 1 (2004), 131.
49. Berel Lang, 'The Evil in Genocide', in *Genocide and Human Rights*, ed. John K. Roth (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 8.
 50. Erik van Ree, 'Stalin as Marxist: The Western Roots of Stalin's Russification of Marxism', in *Stalin: A New History*, ed. Sarah Davies and James Harris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 164.
 51. E.g., Mabel Berezin, *Making the Fascist Self: The Political Culture of Interwar Italy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997).
 52. Roberts, *The Totalitarian Experiment*, 39–45; Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany*, 1–16, 315–30.
 53. Steven E. Aschheim, 'Imagining the Absolute: Mapping Western Conceptions of Evil', in *The Lesser Evil: Moral Approaches to Genocide Practices*, ed. Helmut Dubiel and Gabriel Motzkin (London: Routledge, 2004), 75; Leszek Kolakowski, 'Looking for Barbarians: The Illusions of Cultural Universalism', in *Modernity on Endless Trial* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 256.
 54. Cf. Jonathan Rée, *Philosophical Tales* (London: Methuen & Co., 1987), 42–3.
 55. George Catlin, *The Story of the Political Philosophers* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1939), 238; Robert M. MacIver, *Leviathan and the People* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), 95; R. H. S. Crossman, *Government and the Governed* (London: Christophers, 1940), 69.
 56. Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1961), 660, 674.
 57. Richard Weikart, *From Darwin to Hitler: Evolutionary Ethics, Eugenics, and Racism in Germany* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 16.
 58. Ball, 'The Value of the History of Political Philosophy', 52.
 59. Muller, *Contesting Democracy*, 94.
 60. Weikart, *Hitler's Ethic*, 11.
 61. Timothy Ryback, *Hitler's Private Library: The Books that Shaped his Life* (London: Vintage, 2010), 90.
 62. Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003), 3.
 63. Robert C. Tucker, *The Soviet Political Mind: Stalinism and Post-Stalin Change* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1972), 107.

64. Rees, *Political Thought from Machiavelli to Stalin*, 226.
65. *Ibid.*, 222.
66. Müller, 'The Triumph of What (If Anything)?', 214.
67. Keith Baker, 'On the Problem of the Ideological Origins of the French Revolution', in *Modern European Intellectual History: Reappraisals and New Perspectives*, ed. Dominick LaCapra and Steven Kaplan (London: Cornell University Press, 1982), 205.
68. E.g., Rees, *Political Thought from Machiavelli to Stalin*, vii.
69. Berel Lang, *Act and Idea in the Nazi Genocide* (London: University of Chicago, 1990), 192.
70. Cf. H. Stuart Hughes, *Consciousness and Society: The Reorientation of European Social Thought, 1890–1930* (London: Vintage, 1977); J.W. Burrow, *The Crisis of Reason: European Thought, 1848–1914* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press).
71. Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies*, 166–7.
72. See, for example, Ron Rosenbaum, *Explaining Hitler: The Search for the Origins of his Evil* (London: Macmillan, 1998).
73. I am indebted to Robert Pogue Harrison for this conception of intellectual influence as 'adoption'. See Harrison, 'The Faith of Harold Bloom', *New York Review of Books*, LVIII, 15, 13 October 2011, 43.
74. Sarah Davies and James Harris, 'Joseph Stalin: Power and Ideas', in *Stalin: A New History*, ed. Davies and Harris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 12.
75. David Priestland, 'Stalin as Bolshevik Romantic: Ideology and Mobilisation, 1917–1939', in *Stalin: A New History*, ed. Davies and Harris, 181–201. See also Priestland, *Stalinism and the Politics of Mobilization: Ideas, Power, and Terror in Interwar Russia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1–57.
76. Tony Judt, *The Burden of Responsibility: Blum, Camus, Aron, and the French Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 105.
77. The observation is Judith Shklar's. See Shklar, *After Utopia*, 237–8.
78. Anderson, 'Components of the National Culture', 71.
79. Cited in Gleason, *Totalitarianism*, 118.
80. Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany*, 2; italics added.
81. Georg Lukács, *The Destruction of Reason*, trans. by Peter Palmer (London: Merlin, 1980 [orig. 1952]), 84–5.
82. E.g., T. L. Akehurst, 'The Nazi Tradition: The Analytic Critique of Continental Philosophy in Mid-century Britain', *History of European Ideas*, 34 (2008), 549.

83. André Glucksmann, *The Master Thinkers*, trans. by Brian Pearce (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1981), 96.
84. Jacques Derrida, *The Ear of the Other* (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), 24.
85. Martin Jay, 'Should Intellectual History Take a Linguistic Turn? Reflections on the Habermas–Gadamer Debate', in *Fin-de-Siècle Socialism* (New York: Routledge, Chapman & Hall, 1988), 33.
86. The term 'layers' I borrow from David Roberts. See Roberts, *The Totalitarian Experiment*, esp. 23–30.
87. Weikart, *Hitler's Ethic*, 148; Ree, *The Political Thought of Joseph Stalin*, 253. Italics added.
88. Richard J. Evans, *In Defence of History* (London: Granta, 1997), 157.

3 Utopianism

1. Rabinbach, 'Moments of Totalitarianism', 87–8.
2. See, for instance, Jan-Werner Müller, 'Fear and Freedom: On "Cold War Liberalism"', *European Journal of Political Theory*, 7, 1 (2008), 45–64.
3. Russell Jacoby, *Picture Imperfect: Utopian Thought for an Anti-Utopian Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 7.
4. Karl Popper, 'Utopia and Violence', in *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1995), 360; Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Vol. 1, 166.
5. Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Vol. 2: *The High Tide of Prophecy: Hegel, Marx, and the Aftermath* (London: Routledge, 1999), 354.
6. Malachi Hacohen, *Karl Popper: The Formative Years, 1902–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), esp. 353–54, 397, 426.
7. Karl Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism* (London: Routledge, 2002), 3.
8. Popper, *Open Society*, Vol. 1, 3.
9. Popper, 'Utopia and Violence', 358.
10. Ramin Jahanbegloo, *Conversations with Isaiah Berlin* (London: Peter Halban, 1992), 4.
11. Steven Lukes, 'Isaiah Berlin in Conversation', *Salmagundi*, 120 (1998), 92.
12. Isaiah Berlin, 'Two Concepts of Liberty', in *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 169.

13. Berlin, 'The Apotheosis of the Romantic Will', in *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*, ed. Henry Hardy (London: Fontana, 1991), 211–12.
14. Berlin, 'Historical Inevitability', in *Four Essays on Liberty*, 51–2.
15. Berlin, 'The Pursuit of the Ideal', in *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*, 16.
16. Isaiah Berlin, *Political Ideas in the Romantic Age: Their Rise and Influence on Modern Thought*, ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 54.
17. Berlin, 'Two Concepts of Liberty', 131, 147.
18. Talmon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy*, 2.
19. Talmon, *Political Messianism*, viii; Talmon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy*, 2.
20. Popper, 'Utopia and Violence', 362.
21. Becker, *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers*; Michael Walzer, 'Isaiah Berlin: The History of Ideas as Psychodrama', *European Journal of Political Theory* (forthcoming).
22. Talmon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy*, 3.
23. *Ibid.*, 19, 6.
24. Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 6, 8, 11, 39, etc.
25. Lyman Tower Sargent, *Utopianism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 86.
26. Judith Shklar, 'The Political Theory of Utopia: From Melancholy to Nostalgia', in *Utopias and Utopian Thought*, ed. Frank E. Manuel (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1967), 101–59.
27. As Ernest Tuveson notes, in certain Christian traditions in seventeenth-century Europe, the millennium 'came to be considered as a true utopia', according to 'the method of God'. Karl Mannheim, who thought that utopias were systems of thought proposed by oppressed groups with an interest in transforming society, likewise regarded the 'chiliasm' of the Anabaptists to be the first 'configuration of the utopian mentality' in the modern era. Tuveson, *Millennium and Utopia* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), ix–x. Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, trans. by Louis Wirth and Edward Shils (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), 190–7.
28. Paul Berman, *Terror and Liberalism* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2004), 48–51.
29. Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, 35–6.
30. George Kateb, *Utopia and its Enemies* (London: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), 5–6.

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32. Nicole Pohl, 'Utopianism after More: The Renaissance and Enlightenment', in *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, ed. Gregory Claeys (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 74.
33. Northop Frye, 'Varieties of Literary Utopias', in *Utopias and Utopian Thought*, ed. Manuel, 48.
34. Iain Hampsher-Monk, 'Rousseau and Totalitarianism – With Hindsight?', in *Rousseau and Liberty*, ed. Robert Wokler (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 271.
35. Talmon, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, 22.
36. Hampsher-Monk, 'Rousseau and Totalitarianism', 279.
37. E.g., Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Vol. 2, 81.
38. Isaiah Berlin, 'Rousseau', in *Freedom and its Betrayal*, ed. Henry Hardy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002 [orig. 1952]), 46.
39. Shorten, 'The Ambiguities of Antecedents and Legacies', 575.
40. Berlin, 'Rousseau', 41–2. On Rousseau as a counter-Enlightenment thinker, see Graeme Garrard, *Counter-Enlightenments: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (London: Routledge, 2006), 17–28.
41. See Vincent Geoghegan, *Utopianism and Marxism* (London and New York: Methuen, 1987), 8–21.
42. *Ibid.*, 11, 17.
43. Charles Fourier, *The Theory of the Four Movements*, ed. Gareth Stedman Jones and Ian Patterson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
44. Talmon, *Political Messianism*, 127.
45. Frank E. Manuel and Fritzie P. Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979), 651.
46. See esp. Gouldner, *The Two Marxisms*, 32–64.
47. Berlin, *Karl Marx: His Life and Environment*, 4th edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).
48. Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, 335–7.
49. Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, with an Introduction and Notes by Gareth Stedman Jones (London: Penguin, 2002), 222.
50. Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, 336.
51. Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 391.

52. Marx, 'From the Paris Manuscripts', in *Early Political Writings*, ed. Joseph O'Malley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 74, 76.
53. Peter Frizsche and Jochen Hellbeck, 'The New Man in Stalinist Russia and Nazi Germany', in *Beyond Totalitarianism*, ed. Geyer and Fitzpatrick, 308, 317.
54. Manuel and Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World*, 446.
55. Robert Wokler, 'Rousseau and Marx', in *The Nature of Political Theory*, ed. David Miller and Larry Siedentop (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 224; David Leopold, *The Young Karl Marx* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 262–71.
56. Geoghegan, *Utopianism and Marxism*, 22–34.
57. Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, 255. In their mature philosophy, Marx and Engels try even harder to extirpate the traces of the utopian inheritance. See esp. Engels, 'Socialism: Utopian and Scientific', in Marx and Engels, *Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy*, ed. Lewis S. Feuer (London: Fontana, 1976), 109–52.
58. Burleigh, *Earthly Powers*, esp. 222–52.
59. Stedman Jones, Introduction to *The Communist Manifesto*, 9.
60. Marx, 'From the Paris Notebooks', 72.
61. See Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, 243; Marx, 'Critique of the Gotha Programme', in Marx, *Later Political Writings*, ed. Terrell Carver (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 222.
62. Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, 244.
63. Lenin, 'The State and Revolution', in *The Lenin Anthology*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (London: W.W. Norton & Co., 1975), 374, 380.
64. *Ibid.*, 344.
65. Isaiah Berlin, *The Soviet Political Mind: Russian Culture under Communism* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2004).
66. Boris Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago* (New York: Pantheon, 1991), 297.
67. Joseph Stalin, 'Report to the Eighteenth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolshevik) on the Work of the Central Committee', in *The Essential Stalin: Major Theoretical Writings, 1905–52*, ed. Bruce Franklin (London: Croom Helm, 1973), 387; Ree, *The Political Thought of Joseph Stalin*, 93.
68. Martin Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia, 1917–1991* (New York: Free Press, 1994), 491, 501.

69. On the change in Talmon's position, see Yehoshua Arieli, 'Jacob Talmon – An Intellectual Portrait', in *Totalitarian Democracy and After*, ed. Yehoshua Arieli and Nathan Rotenstreich (London: Frank Cass, 2002), 21.
70. Talmon, *Origins of Totalitarian Democracy*, 6–8.
71. Talmon, *Political Messianism*, 514–15.
72. Lang, *Act and Idea in the Nazi Genocide*, 183–99.
73. Herder, 'Another Philosophy of History for the Education of Mankind', in *Another Philosophy of History and Selected Political Writings*, trans. by Ioannis D. Evrigenis and Daniel Pellerin (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2004), 8.
74. *Ibid.*, 11–12, 19, 20, 44, 69, 76, 103; Zeev Sternhell, *The Anti-Enlightenment Tradition*, trans. by David Maisel (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2010), 88–9.
75. Herder, 'Another Philosophy of History', 29.
76. Cited in George W. Stocking, *Volksgeist as Method and Ethic* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 73.
77. Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 345, 384.
78. Berlin, *Three Critics of the Enlightenment: Vico, Hamann, Herder*, ed. Henry Hardy (London: Pimlico, 2000), 220–5.
79. *Ibid.*, 235.
80. *Ibid.*, 233.
81. Berlin, 'European Unity and its Vicissitudes', in *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*, 179–80.
82. Michael Ignatieff, *Isaiah Berlin: A Life* (London: Vintage, 2000), 247.
83. Berlin, 'Political Ideas in the Twentieth Century', in *Four Essays on Liberty*, 7.
84. Berlin, 'Joseph de Maistre and the Origins of Fascism', in *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*, 91–174.
85. Sternhell, *The Anti-Enlightenment Tradition*, 88–9. On Fichte and Nazism, see also Bertrand Russell, 'The Ancestry of Fascism', in *In Praise of Idleness* (London: Routledge, 2004 [orig. 1935]), 53–71.
86. Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation*, ed. Gregory Moore (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 103.
87. Talmon, *Political Messianism*, 199–201.
88. Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation*, 196.
89. Cited in Moore, 'Introduction', in *Addresses to the German Nation*, xxii.
90. Talmon, *Political Messianism*, 229–92; David Ohana, 'J.L. Talmon, Gershom Scholem and the Price of Messianism', *History of European Ideas*, 34 (2008), 175.

91. Efraim Podoksik, 'Anti-totalitarian Ambiguities: Jacob Talmon and Michael Oakeshott', *History of European Ideas*, 34 (2008), 211.
92. *Political Messianism*, 201.
93. Popper, *Open Society*, Vol. 2, 31.
94. Berlin, 'European Unity and its Vicissitudes', 198.
95. Isaiah Berlin, 'Two Concepts of Freedom: Romantic and Liberal', in *Political Ideas in the Romantic Age*, ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 155–207. In some formulations, Berlin also gave the two conceptions national affiliations, though this is later dropped: romantic liberty was 'German', the liberal conception was Anglo-French. Berlin, *Freedom and its Betrayal*, 50–73, esp. 52, 54.
96. Berlin, 'Two Concepts of Freedom: Romantic and Liberal', 155.
97. *Ibid.*, 177–8.
98. Berlin, *Freedom and its Betrayal*, 69.
99. Ryback, *Hitler's Private Library*, 129, 130.
100. *Ibid.*, 130.
101. Talmon, *Political Messianism*, 515.
102. Cf. Roberts, *The Totalitarian Experiment*, 80.
103. Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Ippermann, for example, depict Nazism as a racist utopia, not a nationalist utopia: 'the object was to create a utopian society organised in accordance with the principles of race'. Burleigh and Ippermann, *The Racial State: Germany, 1933–1945* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 3.
104. For instance, the case of Richard Wagner's contribution to Nazism is one that straddles the two categories of (utopian) nationalism and (scientific) racialism. Wagner ran together national inauthenticity, redemption and, indeed, anti-Semitism: see esp. Steven E. Aschheim, "'The Jew Within": The Myth of 'Judaization' in Germany', in *Culture and Catastrophe: German and Jewish Confrontations with National Socialism and other Crises* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995), 45–68. In his 1850 essay 'Judaism in Music', for instance, Wagner associated German 'Judaization' – in turn, betokening the undue extension of philistine materialism – with national decay. Furthermore, 'the Jew' here took on a status that was more than (merely) symbolic: it was hardly feasible to separate the 'Jewish spirit' from flesh-and-blood Jews. However, in arguments like Wagner's, 'biological' discourse so far does

- not intrude: the point of connection (which might easily be mistaken for equivalence) is perhaps really the theme of contagion. Accordingly, one can surmise that accounts that assimilate Wagner to social Darwinism – or, for that matter, to Gobineau – go too far. E.g., Robert Gutman, *Richard Wagner: The Man, His Mind, and His Music* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1968); Paul Lawrence Rose, *Wagner, Race and Revolution* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992).
105. Cf. Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (London: Abacus, 1997).
 106. Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience*, 48, 10.
 107. Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889–1936: Hubris* (London: Penguin, 2001), 59, 449, 290.
 108. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 56.
 109. Cited in Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889–1936*, 305.
 110. Weikart, *Hitler's Ethic*, 111.
 111. Michael Burleigh, 'The Legacy of Nazi Medicine in Context', in *Medicine and Medical Ethics in Nazi Germany*, ed. Francis R. Nicosia and Jonathan Huener (Oxford: Berghahn, 2004), 119.
 112. Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (London: Pimlico, 2007), 199–200.
 113. Gregor, *How to Read Hitler*, 26.
 114. Fritzsche and Hellbeck, 'The New Man in Stalinist Russia and Nazi Germany', 311, 339.
 115. Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, 101.
 116. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 6, 14, 17.

4 Scientism

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2. Antonio Gramsci, 'The Revolution against *Capital*', in *History, Philosophy and Culture in the Young Gramsci*, ed. Pedro Cavalcanti and Paul Piccone (St Louis, MO: Telos, 1975); Herbert Marcuse, 'The Foundation of Historical Materialism', in *Studies in Critical Philosophy*, trans. by Joris des Bres (London: New Left Books, 1972), 3.
3. Max Horkheimer, 'The Jews and Europe', in *Critical Theory and Society: A Reader*, ed. Stephen Eric Bronner and Douglas Kellner (New York: Routledge, 1989), 78.

4. Aschheim, *Culture and Catastrophe*, 6.
5. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. by John Cumming (London: Verso, 1997), xi.
6. *Ibid.*, 9.
7. *Ibid.*, 55. On Odysseus, see Yvonne Sherratt, 'The *Dialectic of Enlightenment*: A Contemporary Reading', *History of the Human Sciences*, 12/3 (1999), 35–54.
8. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 96, 95.
9. *Ibid.*, 192.
10. Anson Rabinbach, 'Why Were the Jews Sacrificed?: The Place of Anti-Semitism in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*', *New German Critique*, 81 (2000), 49.
11. Eike Gebhardt, Introduction to the 'Critique of Methodology' section of *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, ed. Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt (New York: Continuum, 1982), 512, 374.
12. Dirk Moses, 'Genocide and Modernity', in *Historiography of Genocide*, ed. Stone, 165.
13. Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 207.
14. Michel Foucault, 'Politics and Reason', in *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977–1984*, ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman (London: Routledge, 1990), 59; italics added.
15. Foucault, 'Power and Sex', in *ibid.*, 119.
16. Richard Wolin, *The Wind from the East: French Intellectuals, the Cultural Revolution and the Legacy of the 1960s* (Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010), 348.
17. James Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 171.
18. Alan Milchman and Alan Rosenberg, 'Michel Foucault, Auschwitz and the Destruction of the Body', in *Postmodernism and the Holocaust*, ed. Milchman and Rosenberg (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998), 204; Michael Walzer, 'The Politics of Michel Foucault', in *Foucault: A Critical Reader*, ed. David Couzens Hoy (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 63.
19. E.g., Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–77*, ed. Colin Gordon (Brighton: Harvester, 1980), 115–16.
20. Foucault, Preface to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (London: Athlone, 1984), xiii.
21. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Modern Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), 169.

22. *Ibid.*, 228.
23. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 152.
24. Paul Patton and Meaghan Morris (eds), *Michel Foucault: Power, Truth, Strategy* (Sydney: Feral, 1979), 126.
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5 Revolutionary Violence

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Conclusion

1. The most recent episode took place in connection with political Islamism and the events of September 11, 2001. See especially Berman, *Terror and Liberalism*. Intellectually speaking, however, this episode was shallow. It should hold greater interest for the study of political rhetoric.

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