

ANARCHISM REVISITED: A NEW PHILOSOPHY

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François Aubral and Xavier Delcourt. CONTRE LA NOUVELLE PHILOSOPHIE. Paris: Gallimard, 1977.*

One can well see how, beneath all the democratic and socialistic phrases and promises of Herr Marx's programme, there survives in his State everything that contributes to the truly despotic and brutal nature of all States, whatever their forms of government, and that in the last resort, the People's State so strongly recommended by Herr Marx, and the aristocratic-monarchic State maintained with such skill and power by Herr Bismarck, are completely identical in the nature of both their internal and external aims. Externally there is the same deployment of military power, which means conquest; internally, there is the same employment of armed forces, the last argument of all threatened political powers, against the masses who, tired of always believing, hoping, accepting and obeying, rise in rebellion.

—Michael Bakunin

GCS: It is not often our privilege to write on writers recently treated by *Newsweek*, *Playboy* (français), *Der Spiegel*, *Time*: Bernard-Henri Lévy, André Glucksmann, Jean-Marie Benoist; and Maurice Clavel, Guy Lardreau, Christian Jambet, Philippe Némó . . .

The critical response in the French academy has been one of derision. (There has been a good deal of favorable response, admirably recorded in *Contre la nouvelle philosophie*, especially in the rich footnotes. A bizarre taste of it may be had from *Délivrance: face à face* [Paris: Seuil, 1977], transcription of a series of television encounters between Maurice Clavel and Philippe Sollers.) The editor of *La Quinzaine littéraire* [no. 257,

* As will become abundantly clear, this review was written before the recent French elections. We choose to publish it unchanged as a monument to that noble failure. GCS/MR

1-15 June, 1977] felt obliged to apologize obliquely in introducing what seemed to have “turned out to be” a collection of positive reviews of some of the texts of the new philosophy. By contrast, the famous newsmagazines are enthusiastic. They mention that the new philosophers are young (actually, Clavel will not see fifty again); that they are handsome (actually, only Lévy and Glucksmann are, perhaps Benoist as well; the others’ photographs are never printed); that they are erudite (we would submit that they are schoolmen, and that their material seems erudite because academic philosophy, in whatever guise, hardly ever hits the bestseller lists); that they write out of disillusionment with the events of May 1968 in France, that they are the greatest thing to hit the French scene since Sartre, and that they champion the rights of the individual against any theory of collectivism or state control.

Whether these persons are indeed champions of the rights of the common man is a question we will examine in greater detail. Here suffice it to say that the references to sixty-eight and Sartre are supplied repeatedly by the new philosophers themselves. (As Gilles Deleuze and the authors of *Contre la nouvelle philosophie* demonstrate, the impact of this group is due much more to self-advertisement—media hyp—than to a conscientious readership.¹) The discussion of the role of 1968 in the new philosophy in Aubral and Delcourt’s book is most astute; but the discussion of the group’s relationship to the French intellectual scene after Sartre (so to speak) is less good.

Jacques Rancière notices that the attitude of *Contre la nouvelle philosophie* is protective of the Great Tradition: Guérin misreads Nietzsche; Nêmo, Lacan; Jambet and Lardreau, the master-slave dialectic; Clavel, Kant; Dollé, Heidegger; and so on [*La Quinzaine littéraire*. no. 257, pp. 6-7]. It is all, the two authors suggest, a matter of catching an audience by name-dropping. No doubt, Rancière counters. But this sort of name-dropping started, he adds, not with this group, but with the game-playing Left intelligentsia of the sixties, who took a losing gamble in 1968. It is conceivable that Rancière would not be totally at odds with the new philosophers in their vehement denunciation of Althusser.

Our concern is not with their open break with Althusser (who plots in Marx a course from humanist ideology to antihumanist science), of which they write enough; but rather with another aspect of the sixties, the so-called post-structuralist “modernity” bred of the new interpretations of Nietzsche and Freud: the texts of Deleuze, Derrida, Foucault, Lacan. We cannot agree with Aubral and Delcourt that “what drags behind the label ‘new philosophy’ seems totally alien to contemporary philosophy, which is alive and well elsewhere” [14]. We would rather suggest that, in a certain sense, the new philosophy is a consequence of learning the lesson of post-structuralism too well. Before we consider the implications of such a suggestion we must ask, who are these new philosophers? How do they define themselves? What are their tenets? How do they relate to the *current* political scene, in France and in Europe?

MR: The “new philosophers” could be said to exist in name only. The homogeneity of the movement rests on a mutual espousal of heterogeneity. Hence, their “program”: a rejection of authority of any kind whatsoever (be it right or left), a pessimistic belief that the Master (any form of authoritarian power, from parents to states) is ineliminable, that the only moral alternative is neutrality or a Christian detachment from the arena of power, that the only political alternative is a perpetual revolt which dances constantly out of the grasp of the Master in the hope of a future free from mastery; a condemnation of reason as a weapon which reinforces mastery in the form of state power; and finally (and it is this which has earned them notoriety) an arraignment of Eurocommunism, as well as of Marx and of socialism in general, as a

¹ Gilles Deleuze, “A propos des nouveaux philosophes et d’un problème plus général,” Minuit, Spring 1977.

modern Master whose inevitable expression is Gulag. An anarchist like Bakunin might have smiled benevolently, paternally upon them.

Given the French electoral situation, however, (whatever you may think of Eurocommunism) to many it seems like the wrong moment to be shouting "Gulag!" If it had come after the elections, the new philosophy would have counted as criticism, but now, before the elections, it seems, despite its claims to be "more left than the left," to be serving the ends of the right. In itself, outside of the electoral context, the new philosophy appeals to many liberals disturbed by the abuse of human rights in Russia. (On the other hand, it also appeals to many good people who are disturbed by socialism and use the human rights issue as an excuse to attack it.) The new philosophers' opposition to Soviet communism on this count is undertaken in good conscience, but it is not unique. What sets them off strikingly from the "human rightists" is their generalization from the Soviet example to all of Marx and all socialism. Perhaps someone schooled in Althusser's "reading" of Marx (as many of these young men are) would come to see in that text a blueprint for an inhumane Gulag. But that reading is far from absolute (especially when its scientism is seen as a reaction to the excessively "humanist" existential Marxism which preceded it). A more "critical," non-"institutional" reading might engender less prodigiously anti-scientific, anti-Marxist sons. Anti-Marxism of this sort, from within the leftist camp, is not unique either (Glucksmann borrows more from Bakunin than just a prophetic style; at times, sentences seem transposable), but it is new for the French intellectual left. Leftists have gone after the Communist Party before, but for an organized (loosely) anarchist intellectual movement to take on "Karl Capital" Marx is prodigal indeed. All one can say is—we haven't seen the likes of it since Emma Goldman.

Because of the French right's appropriation of the new philosophers, Aubral and Delcourt can get away with accusing them of being a new liberal right, and indeed, the new philosophers sometimes seem to be saying that given a choice between the neo-fascist radical right and the ex-stalinist left, Giscard's centrism might be the best bet. Rancière, less agitatedly polemical than Aubral and Delcourt, seems less off-target in his characterization: "I see not the expression of a 'New Right,' but rather the time-honored tactic of the trade-union machines that, in order to share in the power of state and management, denounce those who challenge them as agents of bosses and power" ["Reply to Lévy," *Telos* (Fall 1977), p. 120]. Rancière is here describing Lévy's way of responding to Aubral and Delcourt. He goes on to accuse the new philosophers of attempting to monopolize dissidence and of basing their claims to radicalism on the social position of the intellectual in a publishing network instead of on any genuinely subversive activity.

Here, we would agree with Rancière against Aubral and Delcourt. The new philosophers do not represent a new right. However, we would disagree with Rancière's depiction of them as trade union hacks. Their rejection of any and all authority places them within the outlines of traditional anarchism. Bakunin, Tucker, Malatesta, Goldman would all have agreed with the new philosophers in their denunciation of the State and in their disjoining of governmentalism and revolution. The traditional anarchists lacked the fashionable post-structuralist vocabulary; nevertheless, they came to the same conclusion as the new philosophers: Marxism will merely be one more form of state authority. In one regard, however, the new philosophers surpass their predecessors, who were all rationalists. Armed with the anti-rational theories of Derrida, Foucault, and Lacan, they locate the origin of authority in reason. Reason, as an ordering and excluding, systems-making machine, lies behind the desire to reduce anarchy to hierarchy. Theory, Party, State; Gulag—in that progression is plotted the movement from rational thought, as a form of theoretical mastery, to the camps, as a form of practical mastery. These new anarchists can therefore push the old anarchists' accusation one step further: Marx's system, because it is a rational system, is in itself authoritarian.

Nevertheless, it is disturbing that the new philosophers' libertarian polemic is directed overwhelmingly against Marxism. If your cause is truly libertarian, why devote entire books to attacking socialism while mentioning Pinochet only in pass-

ing? The accusing finger tends unquestionably leftward. This weighing of the scales of judgment can in part be attributed to Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago*, whose appearance a few years ago made more than one leftist, including Sollers, who has come out for the new philosophers, think twice about party communism. The dominant position of Marxism in Parisian intellectual life must also be considered. Given that Marxism has become the intellectual orthodoxy, any academic avant garde movement will make it a target of revolt. The new philosophy can be seen as a symptom of Parisian intellectual generational turnover. Schooled in the scientific, theoretical, rational, intellectual-vanguard Marxism of Althusser, these young men are now throwing off their father, and this liberation takes the form of an inversion of the paternal values. This might explain their rage against theory, science, reason, intellectual vanguardism, and Marx, all of which they lump whole-sale with Gulag and the camps. Rancière also sees them in the light of a reverse Althusserianism: "Are not these anti-barbaric urgencies, this bare-handed struggle of the new anti-Marxist thinkers, simply the reverse of the Marxist Althusser's 'class struggle in theory?' We have here the simple inversion of a postulate formulated in the same terms: those who attribute all of socialism's ills to the fact of not having read the texts properly are answered by those who attribute the trouble to their having been read too well" [p. 121]. We would argue that the new philosophers are mistaken in confusing Althusser with Marx. And the answer to their objections might lie not in rejecting Marx, but in rejecting Althusser's scientism which has occluded the critical, "humanist" Marx.

Lévy has said that "the only tenable position for a pessimist philosophy is probably that of anarchism" [*Le Monde* 27 May 1977; cited by Tim Jenkins, "The Death of Marx: A Media Event," *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford* (Michaelmas) 1977, p. 120]. While in some regards, especially its anti-statism, the new philosophy seems anarchistic, it lacks the optimism of the original anarchists, the optimism which permitted the Spanish anarchists to collectivize the land in Andalusia and begin moving towards a stateless society. The new philosophers call for a resistance to power, but their Foucaudian conviction that power is ubiquitous and ineluctable prevents them from calling for the destruction of the coercive state in the hope of a free society flowering from the ruins. Jambet and Lardreau at least offer the possibility of laying a wager on an impossible, unreasonable future revolution, one which would be completely "out of this world." They are closer to the ethical anarchism of Kropotkin or Goldman, than to the laughing, rebellious anarchism of Bakunin, which Glucksmann espouses, in that they believe people's minds and values must be changed before anarchism is possible. The new philosophers do resemble the Spanish anarchists of the thirties, whose opposition to the left assured the right's victory in the first republican elections, in that they seemingly would sacrifice the left's electoral victory in fear of the Gulag they see lurking on the wings of the Common Program. Jambet and Lardreau comment in an interview: "For us it's not a matter of defeating the right, because it's not certain we want a master from the left" [*Le Magazine Littéraire* May 1976; cited by Jenkins].

Within the light of the elections, and given the imbalance in its polemic—more anti-left authoritarian than anti-right—, the new philosophy takes on the character of a reactionary force. Furthermore, the anarchist ideal of complete autonomy, if not accompanied by a positive vision of social justice which would eliminate not only states but also all social, political, and economic hierarchization and exploitation, can easily be recuperated within the libertarian, laissez-faire program of conservative political economy. Last year in the *New Republic*, Lévy wrote: "The Socialist utopia, once it has come about, is the consummate form of order and the police state. This gives birth, therefore, to a new extreme left whose program is reduced to one pure and simple commandment: govern as little as possible. It gives birth to a new desire for revolution with no goal beyond the very fact of revolution" ["Trouble in Red City," Oct. 8, 1977]. The least-government principle is, of course, a rallying cry of ordinary American conservatism. The capitalist philosophy of self-determination, in externals not unlike Proudhon's economic anarchism, calls for a policy of non-

interference on the part of government. Devoid of any vision of social, political, or economic justice, however, Lévy's ideal auto-teleological revolution, unlike Proudhon's theory of absolute competition, seems indistinguishable from the conservative libertarian position, which demands an on-going non-revolutionary revolt to keep bourgeois society and the capitalist economy vigorous, young, and intact.²

The platform of the new philosophers to whom we are giving close attention—Jambet, Lardreau, Glucksmann, Lévy—can be reduced to three basic tenets: first, the Master can never be escaped or eliminated; second, reason always serves the ends of mastery; and third, the worst modern Master (because it preaches liberation while enslaving) is socialism. We shall present these tenets through a discussion of three books: *L'Ange: pour une cynégétique du semblant* [Paris: Grasset, 1976], *Les maîtres penseurs* [Paris: Grasset, 1977], and *La Barbarie à visage humain* [Paris: Grasset, 1977].

Aubral and Delcourt do little justice to Jambet and Lardreau, the writers of *L'Ange*. They misrepresent them through skillful misquotation as Christian fanatics and Stalinists. If anything, Jambet and Lardreau are Christian anarchists; their ideal is the mass heretical movement which erupted in the second century, breaking with all orthodoxy and all authority only to be recuperated and domesticated by the established church. Jambet and Lardreau are fascinated by the return of the Master to bring heresy into line, and their description of that eternal return in terms of the structures of desire and of the signifier is equally fascinating.

"Pour une cynégétique du semblant," the book's sub-title, orients the book toward a tracking down of the concupiscence and narcissism implicit in all rational knowledge and all desire. In Lacan, the *semblant* is that function of the Imaginary which makes of all objects of desire specular images of the self. It projects a semblance of identity or oneness where there is really only irresolvable division and conflict. The notion of the semblant also implies that one can never speak the truth about oneself or one's world. The mastery of the signifier is such that one can say one thing and the opposite will be meant. Such is the case in denial—*Verneinung*. The subject denies a desire, but the signifier of negation indicates, outside the subject's control, an affirmation of that desire. Jambet and Lardreau use the model of *Verneinung* to describe the structure of rebellion: the Rebel's negation of the Master contains a gesture of submission. Opposition becomes reflection.

For Jambet and Lardreau, there is no real, no nature, no history. All is discourse, and in this manichean world, there are only two discourses in constant conflict, the Master's and the Rebel's. Since the Master attempts to foreclose the Rebel, reducing the two to a one, to a semblance of identity, the problem for those on the side of the Rebel (as Jambet and Lardreau are) is to find a mode of revolt which would be absolutely autonomous. Such a revolt would escape the affirmation-in-negation of *Verneinung* by avoiding the desire to foreclose the Master (that is, to be the Master once again by collapsing the manichean two into a one). This revolt should side-step that semblance of identity and somehow maintain the manichean duality. Jambet and Lardreau's name for that possibly autonomous revolt is the Angel, an unknow-

² New philosophical anti-Marxism might be less problematic if, like some of the Third World critics of communism, it offered a feasible alternative for bringing about a just world. Muammar Gheddafi's popular socialism is the one possibility which seems to escape the pitfalls the new philosophy attributes to communism—statism, party domination, hierarchical rational control, planning: "And if I say that communism, born as a reaction to capitalism, in order to save man, has also failed, this statement would also require proof; there is proof . . . We now come to the economic aspect of this theory: socialism. According to the definition of the Third Universal Theory, it is not communism, nor yet the reformist movements existing in Europe. Socialism is a concept apart, completely different from communism and capitalism . . . If we entrusted the political organs of society to an individual or to a group, the result would still be a dictatorship and the problem would not be solved . . . There is no other solution but that of entrusting political power to the whole of society . . . Society will itself be a political organ" (Address delivered at the "Symposium on the Thought of Nasser and De Gaulle," held at Benghazi, 1 March 1975). Gheddafi goes on to outline a system of Basic Popular Congresses which feed into General Congresses and allow everyone to have a part in government.

able figure who doesn't know sexuality and who, therefore, stands outside the closed circle of desire which binds the Rebel to the Master.

Aubral and Delcourt's mockery latches onto this "angelism," but it is clear they misunderstand it. Jambet and Lardreau work it out in terms of Lacan's theory of desire. Desire is the specular image of law. Desire and prohibition are inseparable. They call on Pierre Legendre's application of Lacan to politics to push this observation a step further: the discourse of the Rebel is the specular image of the discourse of the Master. It is the Master's prohibition, his demand for love, which institutes desire on the part of the Rebel. To step out of the circle of power, the Rebel must renounce desire, follow the heretical Origen's example of self-castration. Only then might the Angel announce itself and a purely anarchic, heretical revolt be conceivable. Mixing Lacan with Foucault, Jambet and Lardreau say that a renunciation of desire is necessary because total *jouissance* (*à la* Sade) is equivalent to a reduction of all to the Master reason, to the singular cogito whose power is knowledge and whose light (as in Enlightenment, *Lumières*) casts the Rebel into obscurity. Pure reason without feeling as in Sade is analogous with Althusser's terrorizing science of Marxism³ which, like the cogito's semblance of identity, would reduce duality to oneness. And oneness, for Jambet and Lardreau, means the camps.

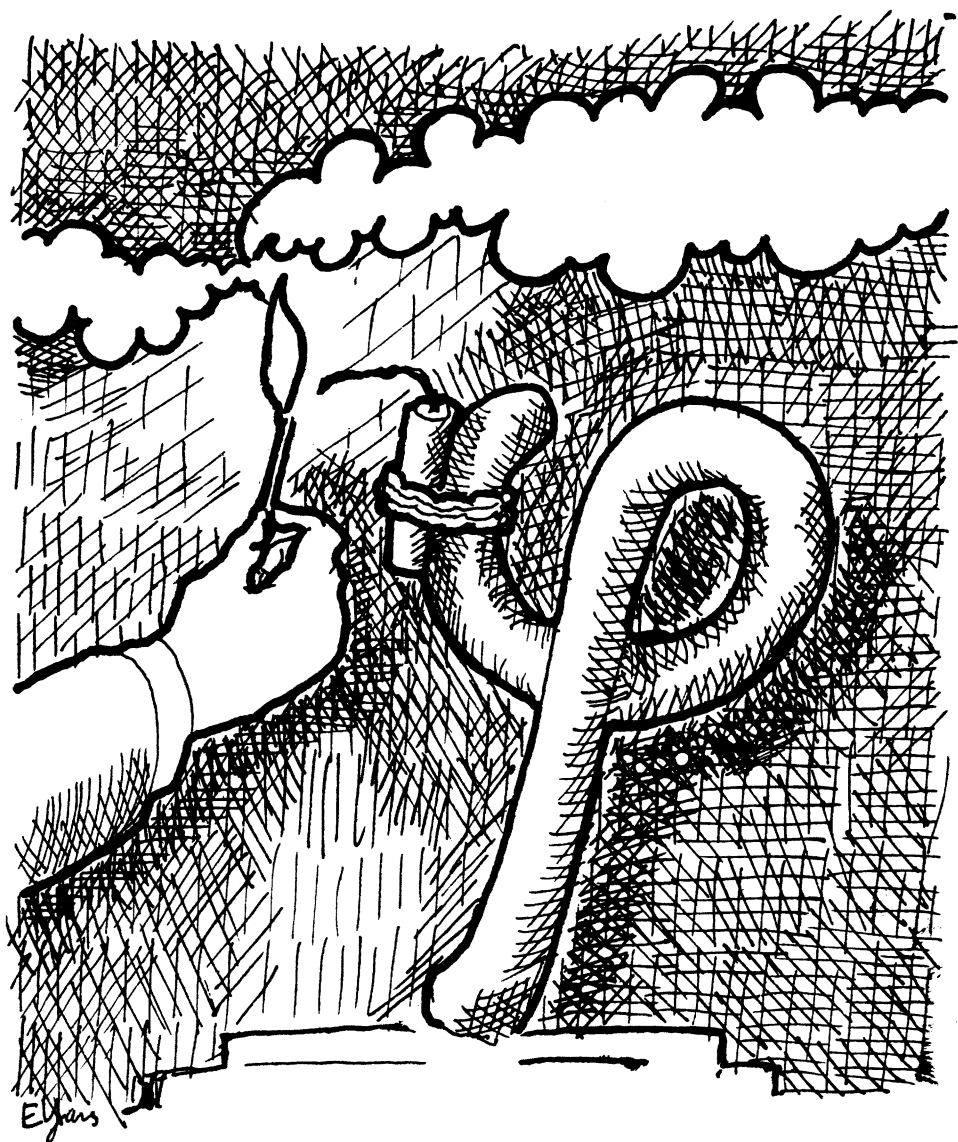
To track down the semblant, then, is to fight against oppression and authority in the hope of a pure revolt which would not, like all revolution so far, merely serve as a springboard for furthering the Master's power.

Glucksmann, in *Les maîtres penseurs*, makes a similar point: masters always pass power on to other masters, and revolution inevitably works to reinforce mastery. Jambet and Lardreau had distinguished between what they call "Marxist ideological revolution," which is merely an exchange of masters, and cultural revolution, a changing of minds rather than means of production which engenders heresy on a mass scale. Glucksmann opposes state power and the resistance of the pleb, that remainder ("*reste*," Derrida's word, as are some of Glucksmann's other terms—"*entre-deux*," "*indécidable*"; political anarchy finds a readymade vocabulary in Derrida's philosophical anarchism) which laughs ironically at the Master's power and manages to escape his domination through art. Like his mentor Bakunin, Glucksmann is a populist and an anti-Marxist. He calls Marxism a rational theology, one more example (with Hegel and Fichte) of the terror of statist theory, which always seeks to subjugate and control the anarchic freedom of the pleb. Gulag, the possibility of the camps, is already inscribed in Marx's text in that it is a rational theory which has decided how things are and which therefore constitutes a law that demands obedience and precludes contradiction. *Sekomma* "*C'est comme ça*," that's how it is—as Jambet and Lardreau, citing Lacan, put it. The power of the rational, theoretical logos resides in truth statements which silence contestation. Marx's theory, then, is authoritarian from the very outset, killing the contradictory undecidability of rebellion by virtue of its very rationality. Glucksmann cites Hegel: to think is to dominate, and he argues that neither the Russian nor the Nazi camps would have come about if the 19th century German master thinkers hadn't prepared the way with their state theories.

Glucksmann opposes Eurocommunism and the (now perhaps defunct) Left Coalition with as much passion as Bakunin showed against the First International. It represents yet another form of mastery through state organization, yet another form of power elitism whose calculations will close off rebellion. To nationalize is to dominate, and he suggests that the free market was condemned by Marx because its anarchy could not be mastered.

Clearly, Glucksmann thinks in massively over-simplified terms, resorting to leaping analogies in order to create questionable equations: the Thirty Years War becomes the Vietnam of the 17th century; all Marxism becomes Stalinism or Gulag; the dictatorship of the proletariat is Hegel's monarchial state is Fichte's police state. This

³ At one point, Jambet and Lardreau tell of spending half their time in the Bibliothèque Nationale trying to come up with the right reading of Capital.



determined ignoring of historical and textual specificity provokes Aubral and Delcourt to complain correctively at one point—no, Gulag does not derive from Marx but from the actions of the Bolshevik party. To no avail. And the fact that Eurocommunism has renounced the dictatorship of the proletariat and separated itself from the Moscow international makes no difference either. It is a rational party organization; it must be Gulag. That a thinker who gives so much privilege to difference and discontinuity should be so taken by identities and analogies should perhaps be surprising. Unlike Derrida, from whom he takes a vocabulary, but apparently nothing more, Glucksmann is incapable of the agile, Nietzschean dance which allows one to avoid the naive rational identities one condemns in others.

Lévy admits having written *La Barbarie à visage humain* hastily, but even this confession cannot excuse its irresponsibility with a philosophic face. It does, however, emphasize one aspect of the new philosophy which is closely tied to Lévy—it is a publicity and marketing phenomenon. A book had to be written fast; it did not particularly matter on what, as long as it was ready for the FNAC shelves by the Spring. There is little in the book that cannot be found in a more rigorous, less vulgarized form in Jambet, Lardreau, and Glucksmann. What is new here is the

generalization of the attack on Marx to an attack on all progressive thinking. The leap is given even less justification than Glucksmann's history-smashing analogies. And the tone is one of someone saying something for the sake of effect; it does not convince.

La Barbarie is addressed to the "institutional left . . . who will soon have our destiny in their hands" [p. 12]. It is a hand-book of banalized libertarian political theory made easy: the individual should always be valued over the collective. It is a chastisement of socialism for subsuming the individual to a social relation; socialism would reduce all to the herd, thereby substituting homogeneity for heterogeneity. The libertarian's determination to resist any form of social organization which would limit the individual's sovereignty lies behind Lévy's "anti" style of thinking and writing. Against more than he is for, Lévy, as Aubral and Delcourt rightly point out, would never finish revolting against every possible manifestation of power. "To which I would like to oppose exactly the inverse thesis," Lévy's favorite locution, exhibits this attitude on the level of style. In this, he follows his Nietzschean credo: to undo rather than to unite. His style of calculated undoing leads to catchy paradoxes: the bourgeoisie is more Marxist than Marxism; Marxism suppresses the "irruptive specificity" of the medieval rebel, therefore it is counter-revolutionary; because socialism is not revolt, it is reaction. We have suggested that Lévy is the one new philosopher under discussion here whose "anarchy" could be characterized as being ordinary conservatism (with an avant gardist tinge) parading as leftism. Near the end of his book, he discusses the necessity of resisting the "socialist barbarism": "To witness the unspeakable and hold back the horror, to save what can be saved and to refuse the intolerable: we no longer refer to the world, but at least we can stand vigil [*veiller*] that it doesn't undo itself . . ." [p. 223]. This call to vigilance runs counter to his previous condemnation of reason as the surveillance of irrational revolt. It is at moments like these that Lévy's "leftism" seems to resemble right-wing thinking, which also proclaims the spontaneous freedom of the autonomous individual, his revolt against any impingement on his liberty, while at the same time standing vigil that nothing undo that freedom—a socialist revolution, for example.

Of the new philosophers, Lévy least merits serious consideration, although from the point of view of publicity and publication, he is the mastermind of the movement. Jambet and Lardreau, the "*christo-gauchistes*," are worth taking more seriously. Their re-reading of Sade (against the trend of recent years) as a blueprint for class exploitation is accurate. Their attack on the neo-heraclitan school of vague freudo-nietzscheanism will not easily be refuted. Glucksmann's populist anarchism and his preoccupation with the Soviet Gulag fit him into the most recent wave of critical leftists who are no longer disposed to accept the old excuses and rationalizations for non-democratic socialism. In his iconoclastic fervor, however, he tends to take Nietzsche's injunction literally, philosophizing with a hammer instead of with a fine-point pen. And ultimately, this makes his book less interesting than *L'Ange*.

Whether or not they are interesting or boring, anarchist or liberal, the new philosophers come out on the other side from the left in the upcoming elections. Their electoral role at this historical moment is more important than what they are. They must be judged, then, according to one's opinion of Eurocommunism—its "revisionism," its "reformism," its "statist" aspirations.⁴ If you decide to side with the new philosophers against Eurocommunism, however, as a true revolutionary taking umbrage with reform or as a loyal Marxist-Leninist upset by revisionism, you should keep in mind what wonderful new friends you'll acquire in the process—Kissinger, Chirac, perhaps even Pinochet.

GCS: Whatever might be their relationship to the current political situation, the thought and idiom of the new philosophy is marked by their masters: Foucault,

⁴ On this account, see Fernando Claudin's excellent *Eurocomunismo y socialismo* [Madrid: Signo XXI, 1977], a much better background book than Santiago Carrillo's *Eurocommunism and the State* [London: Weishart, 1978].

Derrida, Deleuze, Lacan. The debt to Foucault and Lacan is acknowledged; Deleuze (more often Lyotard, ostensibly because he is an easier target) is damned as a member of the ignoble and irresponsible intellectual elite; Derrida is hardly mentioned, yet he is also there.

Our argument, then, is that *Contre la nouvelle philosophie* misses the point somewhat in its assessment of the tie between the new philosophers and the elder post-structuralists. In this section we shall concentrate on the most influential of the new philosophers: Glucksmann and Lévy. We shall look again at *L'Ange* because Aubral and Delcourt's misreading of it is characteristic and instructive.

"Structuralist Michel Foucault, probably the most respected intellectual in France, has praised the upstarts for reminding philosophers of the 'bloody' consequences that have flowed from enlightened social theories," writes *Newsweek* [August 22, 1977]. The "upstarts" have claimed Foucault as their own. "Reading it [Foucault's *La Volonté de savoir*] attentively I [Lévy] realized that it owed much, even if implicitly, to *L'Ange*." " 'In the name of what do you [Foucault] do what you do? Will you not say; of Man?' He answered: 'In the name of the outcasts, and of those shut in through humanism.'—'Therefore for a vaster, more universal, and thus truly humanist humanism!' I [Clavel] said to him" [CNP, p. 183].

Foucault inspires Glucksmann in particular because the former has insisted that power is irreducible, that one must attend to power on the micro-level, that no system can do away with the structures of power, that a system can at best merely shift them. In *La Cuisinière et le mangeur d'hommes* [Paris: Seuil, 1975] Glucksmann speaks for the outcast, the pleb. He defines this person as "outside" the structures of power in terms of that structure: "The history of the pleb is not dominated by the desire of something—power, goods, honors—but is rather invested in the desire 'to be in no way oppressed'" [p. 217]. Such a definition, the cornerstone of Glucksmann's idea of action, takes for granted Foucault's notion that power will always congeal into systems, that there will always be marginal outcasts who will keep the enclosure of power defined.

La Cuisinière is in fact a two-hundred-odd page favorable review of Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago* in terms of Foucault's reading of European prison-systems and lunatic asylums. Glucksmann's situating of concentration camps and their rationale into the seventeenth and eighteenth century development of prisons and asylums, as well as his dismissal of a specifically revolutionary ideology as a product of the nineteenth century, are immediately recognizable results of Foucault's teaching. Glucksmann repeatedly suggests that the status of the pleb (Solzhenitsyn's *kulak*) in Soviet Russia is that of the madman in enlightened Europe. One feels as though one were reading an appendix to Foucault's *Madness and Civilization*. Glucksmann's reasoning seems a little sweeping (as indeed Foucault's own work often appears) but not necessarily meretricious. Why should the Kremlin be considered socialist? is one of Glucksmann's chief questions in *La Cuisinière*. Also, that Marx was hazy about the future, that all his data were collected from the bourgeoisie rather than the working-class and that he had, at any rate, described the primitive stage of the accumulation of capital (the one Soviet Russia had to enter after the October Revolution) as brutal and exploitative, although the Russian leaders felt obliged to conceal that. There is nothing in the book that would necessarily question the electoral feasibility of a revised socialist Eurocommunism coming into being in a developed capitalist society. By the time Glucksmann comes to write his enormously popular *Les Maîtrese-penseurs*, however, one feels the edge of his writing blunted for the sake of the party-line of the new philosophy. He begins arguing by the wild analogies we have already mentioned. A sort of dogged "Nietzschean" stance begins to emerge, of which more later.

Aubral and Delcourt seek to exculpate Foucault by putting him outside of moral and political responsibility: "For Foucault . . . political questions are not posed in terms of pessimism or optimism. Let us leave those toys to the 'new philosophers.' The author of *La Volonté de savoir* . . . thinks power in terms of positivity, strategies, connections and lines of force" [p. 300]. It should be indicated here that the passage

they cite from Foucault is not necessarily discordant with the new philosophical idea of the individual in resistance against the structuration of systematic power. Our contention against Aubral and Delcourt here is however more general: that a "pure" academic theory does in fact lend itself to "crude" political translations; and that the political "pessimism" of the new philosophers does spring in part from Foucault's thought.

So much so that a longish answer to a question in a 1975 interview with Foucault gives us Glucksmann's argument entire. The end of that interview is interesting. There Foucault indeed undercuts the vehement polemic of a Glucksmann or a Lévy against the mythic *agents* of power, while at the same time guarding his freedom as a detached observer: "The interest is to see—not the project that has presided over all that [the politics of the body]—but to see in terms of strategy how the pieces are put in place" ["Pouvoir/Corps," *Quel Corps?*, Sept.-Oct. 1975, p. 5]. Yet if the many specifically Foucauldian projects outlined in the texts of the new philosophy are ever accomplished, they will no doubt be used to identify the presiding project of Mastery that can then be invoked in order to spell an end to all collective political action.

Derrida worked out his thought in terms of the undecidability of truth by cautioning against becoming pessimistic about it, and endorsing the hilarity of free play. Yet his own work remains melancholy, for, according to him, free play (or indeed anything) cannot be chosen. We must remain within the metaphysical enclosure, and all binary oppositions are inevitably fouled up by the mechanics of difference. The indefiniteness of the discourse of mastery, the impossibility of any decisive and systematic course of actions, the viability of nothing but the contingent and ad hoc gesture of the rebel (as distinct from the ideological revolutionary)—these recurrent new philosophical themes can thus be seen as Derridean.

MR: If the new philosophy has a coherent theory of revolution, it is this: revolution is impossible because the same always returns in the opposite. The Master can never be altogether eliminated because to oppose him is merely to reaffirm his power. And whatever alternative is set up in opposition to the Master will be yet another Master. Clearly, this theory can't be attributed to Derrida alone. It also derives from Foucault's idea that power is ultimately irreducible and from Lacan's work on the inescapability of the subject's enslavement to the (an) object. Derrida, however, is the one new philosophical mentor who has articulated this pervasive post-structuralist pessimism in terms of the structure of opposition itself. Deconstruction shows the poles in the binary oppositional couples of metaphysics to be differed-deferments of each other, the same though different. Each pole is as much the other as it is "itself"; hence each returns eternally in its opposite, "is" its opposite. Each pole exists only as an in-between, an "*entre-deux*," not as an autonomous, unconditioned entity. Metaphysics, defined as a system of opposites, can never be escaped, because to attempt to step outside metaphysics is to place oneself in opposition to metaphysics, that is, to repeat it. Like any other opposition, the opposite of metaphysics will be the eternal return of metaphysics. There is, then, no opposite of metaphysics which would not be metaphysical. In new philosophical vocabulary: since the Master is defined as a control placed on that which opposes his power, to oppose him is simply to turn oneself into a trampoline which lifts the Master even higher. And even if one succeeded in revolting, one would only replace the Master, not eliminate mastery as such.

At best, Derrida's pessimism invites a non-hermeneutical act of reading, more sleight-of-hand than interpretation, which attempts to generate a new way of thinking that would avoid the old system of hierarchical oppositions. At worst, it would engender a paralysis of all radical action that founds itself on pre-critical oppositions. By problematizing the very structure of opposition, deconstruction neutralizes the specific oppositions which sustain radical political practice—conservative/radical, fascist/socialist, reactionary/revolutionary—and it thus theoretically, and for all practical purposes, suspends the possibility of radically opposing any system from a

position outside that system. The outside would merely be the inside once again. The consequences of this way of thinking in the new philosophy are equally two-fold. On the one hand, it gives rise, as in Derrida, to unthinkable “quasi-concepts,” such as the Angel, which simultaneously acknowledges the impossibility of revolt and yet promises escape. On the other hand, it produces the facile, existential despair of a Lévy, the professional prophet of doom. Here, Derrida’s argument for the return of the same in the opposite, becomes grounds for individual despair as well as for a moralistic political neutrality: if socialism is merely fascism once again, the same though different, why bother to struggle? Why take any part? That the radical stance of opposition is undercut by Derrida’s argument seems undeniable, but this should not become an excuse for existential, romantic lamentation. It should justify opting to undermine rather than overwhelm or reject if one wishes to undo a system. If anarchy rather than hierarchy is the “first principle,” why give validity to the old hierarchical system by placing it in the lower position of a new hierarchy, when one can work loose the inherent, though suppressed, anarchy of the system itself? The new philosophers have learned from Derrida the theoretician of logocentric mastery, but they fail to take advantage of the practical tool deconstruction affords for a critique of the ideology of mastery. At least this is true of Lévy and Glucksmann, the two who have the most Derridean words to throw around.

GCS: As people closer to Vincennes than to the École Normale, Aubral and Delcourt remain silent about Derrida. If they had discussed him, they would no doubt have taken up his defense and pointed out that a Némoto, invoking a negative theology, “vulgarizes” Derrida’s text, that not only what a thing is, but what it is not, is undecidable; they would perhaps have pointed out that when Glucksmann talks about the truth as subject (Hegel) and as desert (Nietzsche) he condenses and “banalizes” the deconstruction of the sovereign subject into a generality that helps him sloganize. Our point would be, as usual, that Derrida’s discourse contains within itself the rudiments of the new philosophical program. If to say all revolution is based on binary and decidable oppositions and therefore impossible is “impure” Derrida, it is perhaps because a Derrida is capable of hedging himself around with constant self-qualifications.

Glucksmann, who is Foucault’s former student, says nothing of Derrida. But his material is permeated by the project of difference: he accuses the master thinkers of announcing the metaphysics of the death of metaphysics, and then challenges them through the necessarily contingent act of the resister.

Lévy, who is Derrida’s former student, takes occasional shots at him. Often, as in the case of his comments on Rousseau (34f), the criticism turns out to be a representation of his master’s thought. *La Barbarie* is full of a Derridean take on things: saying that the possibility of action is at the same time its impossibility and thus a qualified refusal of political action; knowing that “we are captives of a world, of a closed circle where all paths lead to the same infallible abyss” [p. 122]. Lévy’s project is to “deconstruct” any notion of a retrievable or natural human goodness.

But the most interesting case is *L’Ange*, and here *Contre la nouvelle philosophie* misses the mark. For the authors read *L’Ange* simply as a comic adventure in pseudo-mysticism. Actually, as we have partially explained, *L’Ange* bases its impossible angel on Derridean and Lacanian premises, and its language is very highly coded within that particular conceptual framework. Occasionally those premises are confused, but the basis is unmistakable. At any other time, the book would have read as a curious exercise; now, within the electoral context, and through exploitation by Lévy and his publicity machine, and read as only an invitation to mystic Christianity by people who lack the post-structuralist allegorical key, that book, together with such odd phenomena as Maurice Clavel and the arch-orthodox Monseigneur Lefevre, is creating a certain a-political fashion for disengagement from political reality rather like the vogue for “going orange” in England.

“*Que l’ange vienne*”—Let the angel come—is Jambet and Lardreau’s choice of

syntax, a “performative” locution avoiding the risks of constataion. And the figure of the Angel, escaping the binary distinction between Master and Rebel, is an impossible attempt to step out of a metaphysical enclosure that Jambet and Lardreau know cannot be escaped. The only thing to do, knowing this, is to choose—make a *pari*. They have learned the Derridean lesson well, though they lack Derrida’s flair. Difference and the undecidable—Derrida’s unadmitted “master-words”—shimmer in a net of argument in Derrida’s own text that expertly keeps itself “also play.” The Angel, with no device to conceal post-structuralist despair, can be made to seem merely ridiculous. Aubral and Delcourt have chosen their quotations strategically for that very reason. Most people, understandably, will not read *L’Ange*. The footnote in *L’Ange* about slaves and women (on p. 24) will be bruited about when the new philosophers are discussed. I would venture to say that, in invoking the slave and the woman as *sans-raison*, in presenting themselves as inescapably *raisonnable*, and therefore incapable of speaking for the former, Jambet and Lardreau are more out-front than a Derrida who comes close to saying that he would like to speak as a woman, at the same time as he puts the man-woman opposition under the famous erasure. At the same time as I recognize its harmful potential, I feel sorry for *L’Ange*. At no other time would it have earned all this notoriety. As it stands, it is more victim than culprit. There is a certain innocence in being able to declare that as rebels the authors of the book are Pierre Rivière, the famous real-life multiple murderer who is the hero of Foucault’s famous book.

The real impact of the Derridean mood upon the entire group is the desire to be Friedrich Nietzsche. *Les Maitres-penseurs* bases a lot of its rhetoric against Marx upon the latter’s inability to laugh as Rabelais or even as Socrates, whom Hegel (who is Marx, of course) quenched. There one notes the post-Bataille vogue of the laughing Nietzsche instantly. But, more significantly, Glucksmann’s so-called argument against Nietzsche at least did not hide what the violence of master-thinking involved. And, yet more significantly, the greater part of the book is titled like Nietzsche’s autobiography *Ecce Homo*. Nietzsche’s chapter titles are: “Why I Am So Clever,” “Why I Am So Wise,” and so on. Glucksmann’s: “Why I am so revolutionary,” “Why I am so learned,” “Why we are so metaphysical,” “How I became a fatality.” One chapter is subtitled “Nietzsche For All”, while another begins “*Ecce Maestro!*” As other people before Glucksmann have found, to be Nietzsche is out of the question; the latter’s singular work is against discipleship. *Les Maitres-penseurs* ends therefore on a feeble note, in sentences that sound like a tame version of *La double séance* or the Nietzschean ending of *Glas*: “History plays in the between-the-two [*l’entre-deux*], language makes everything circulate—like the peasant and the artisan of Marx—divided in two—neither all nor nothing . . . There one resists or yields, without ever avoiding the battle against oneself” [p. 310]. The end of the *Cuisinière* is yet more disappointing—a sort of Paterian injunction to burn always with a hard, gemlike and so on. Highly implausible as an electoral alternative to the possibility of Eurocommunism.

Lévy’s Nietzschean pose is striking and pervasive. It is the inspiration of the self-consciously iconoclastic immoralist-moralist’s stance that we have already discussed. That stance and rhetoric come to a head at the end of *Barbarie*. You will remember how much Derrida made of “I have lost my umbrella” in his talk on Nietzsche some years ago in Cérisy. Now Lévy’s postface begins: “I have lost the compass and with it the list of ports” [p. 219]. The previous chapter had ended: “Nothing remains but ethics and moral duty . . . And that is why I have so often spoken in imperatives” [p. 218]. This is no doubt what Nietzsche understood most simplistically. Our point is that the craze to be a moral-immoral Nietzsche who escapes the double bind of philosophical inaction comes out of Bataille through Derrida.

Of *L’Ange*’s Nietzscheanism a sufficient hint will be to note a marginal summary of the authors’ trip out of the metaphysical enclosure: “Dispersed . . . only one master, Dionysos. Surviving, there is only master: the crucified. The history of rebellion is par-delà Dionysos and the Crucified” [p. 58].

Some of Aubral and Delcourt's mockery in *Contre la nouvelle philosophie* can be explained by the fact that the new philosophers are against Vincennes, more especially Deleuze and Lyotard. Somewhat grudgingly the new philosophers express admiration for Deleuze's work, but for Lyotard (especially *L'économie libidinale*) they have nothing but contempt.⁵ Their chief argument is that the Vincennes pair, by defining the state of being-oppressed as a production of desire and a source of *jouissance* have once again spoken for the Master and undermined resistance. Jambet and Lardreau (rightly or wrongly, a question we cannot discuss here) accuse them of positing a flow of desire, prior to all interdiction, that is not structured like a language—which is Lacan's contribution to the body of Freudian speculation—after remarking that Lyotard claims to have done away with the bind of *Verneinung*: "For Lyotard, the miracle is already accomplished; what twenty years of confrontation did not grant to Nietzsche is accorded to him (by what grace?)" [p. 214]. Yet, in spite of these accusations, for Némó, Lévy, Lardreau, and Jambet the problem, psychoanalytically understood, is the inescapable emergence of Oedipus, and contingent ways of getting around it; they work within the lineage of Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*. Aubral and Delcourt suggest that for Deleuze and indeed for Lacan, "Oedipus" is a structure and that the new philosophers have turned him into a familial or political tyrant. We would argue that the neat distinction between "structure" and an "actual" tyrant is precisely what is put into question by Freud, Deleuze, or Lacan, and that, once again, the new philosophers are a continuation and a consequence of the post-structuralist work that we have learned to applaud.

Contre la nouvelle philosophie gives an adequate account of the new philosophers' vehement espousal of Lacan. Aubral and Delcourt are perhaps right in suggesting that the new philosophers confuse the Imaginary and the Real. But then, in a few pages of a vindication of Lacan, they show Lacan to be much more "Real"-istic than these scamps would make him out to be. We would submit that Lacan's category of the "Real" is elusive enough to accommodate the political despair of the new philosophers. Neither Lacan nor the new philosophers will be saved by a false simplification like Aubral and Delcourt's below: "The signifier uses a pole turned toward the Imaginary, but there is a second, turned toward the Real. This second pole leads to the Symbolic" [p. 107].

The real debt of the new philosophers to Lacan has little to do with the three orders. It is an awareness of the Freudian discovery that one cannot say what one means nor mean what one says. Whatever your declared intentions, the entire network of the psyche, if it could be deciphered, would give the lie and thus constitute the whole slippery truth beyond your grasp. Why then decide to decide, why act, why diagnose a political reality as the basis of action? It is this dilemma that the new philosophers invoke repeatedly in the name of the *semblant* (semblance, pretense). It would be fruitless here to summarize the early Lacan's explanation of this permanent and moving gap between "saying" and "meaning" in terms of the need and the desire for the phallus, or his integration of that need and desire into the Oedipal idiom, learning to spell out the name of the Father. At any rate, Jambet and Lardreau know that the business of mastery (they are not slaves) is mixed up with the business of sexuality (they are not women). And so, literalists as they are, they construct the nonconcept of the castrated angel (for whom castration is irrelevant), who might escape the disabling enclosure of sexuality. Derrida had the prudence to choose the unfunny name difference (but his hymenotics might have seemed nearly as mockable if they had more explicitly formed part of the wrong side of an electoral situation); Lacan remains outside the game by his wittily Olympian and self-chosen role of the divine doctor.

⁵ MR: Not that Lyotard has warm feelings for them. Instructions paiennes [Paris: Galilée, 1977] recounts the history of the new philosophy as a kind of Parisian intellectual jungle telegraph by means of which the "récit" passes from Jessie (Jesus) to Clavie (Clavel) to Sollie (Sollers) to Nemie (Némó) to Gluckie (Glucksmann) etc. Ironically, after all the polemics, Lyotard's version of a pious, just, paganistic politics seems indistinguishable from the perpetual irrational resistance politics proposed by some of the new philosophers.

MR: Is the latest Parisian fashion worth taking this seriously, especially now that Parisian intellectuals are already condemning it to the oblivion of “last year”? The new philosophers certainly take themselves seriously, and their self-conscious fashionableness will encourage the enthusiastic curiosity the latest French thing usually inspires in American gallophiles. Witness this review. But too, perhaps their seriousness about themselves should move others to take them as seriously as we have here. The easy thing to do would be to join Aubral and Delcourt in dismissing the new philosophy with a handy tag—“new right” or “fascist.” The new philosophers are not fascists. They are libertarian leftists, if not outright anarchists. If they seem reactionary to American leftists, it may be because we do not have the luxury of a majority left coalition against which we can rebel. And the French PC, with its cynical behavior in 1968 and its subsequent polemics against the Maoists and the extremists (some of the more important new philosophers—Glucksmann, Jambet, Lardreau—are ex-Maoists), certainly hasn’t earned either the love or the loyalty of those who went into the streets ten years ago. We shouldn’t think, however, that the new philosophy represents a kind of wicked revenge on the part of disappointed *gauchistes*. Solzhenitsyn’s role can’t be emphasized enough, nor can the influence of the Russian East European dissidents. The new philosophy represents a serious questioning on the part of leftists of the part that party communism has played in history. These thinkers aren’t certain that electoral party communism will produce results much different from those of revolutionary and imperialistic party communism—despite Althusser and Marchais’ assurances to the contrary. It is unfortunate, however, that an anarcho-gauchiste desire for anything but the party-state solution should play so easily into the hands of those in power. As *Time* put it: “In the current context of French politics, the leitmotiv of the New Philosophers may well be the theme that many are yearning to hear” [September 12, 1977].

GCS: Something else that we should realize as you said, this is the petulant game-playing of the first boys in the most prestigious school in a small and educationally still intensely hierarchized and centralized country—yet another version of the Barthes-Foucault-ENS-Vincennes-Lacan feud. In 1973, Bernard-Henri Lévy published a book on Bangladesh (*Bangla Desh: nationalisme dans la revolution* [Paris, Maspéro]; he had gone to Bangladesh at Malraux’s behest). That long book makes very clear that Lévy loved the abortive revolution in Bangladesh so much because upper middle class students played a controlling part in it. It seems to us that a good part of Lévy and Glucksmann, the ones who give the impetus to the new philosophy, is a lament for lost youth, a passing of the era of the student avant-garde. It is not for nothing that they emphasize their youth and beauty in media interviews. It is impossible to convey through quotation how much Glucksmann’s model of the recuperation of the worker by the master-state is a picture of *normalisation* (as in “*école normale*”). It is the fantastic strength and weakness of the closed intellectual world of Paris that such nostalgic and petulant pedagogic-generational revolt should play a role in the country’s political future. There is no parallel in the American academy. (The example of the Vietnam movement is absolutely inapplicable; that movement, whatever its effects, was exceptional, and precisely not contained by the universities.) In a very curious sense, these men would like to break the toy if they cannot have it to play with. Because the American and the English scene are so different from this milieu, you will not hear this note in a Stanley Aronowitz or a Paul Johnson (Oxonian, Catholic, ex-editor of the *New Statesman*, ex-member of the Labor Party, admirer of *The Gulag Archipelago*). We might remember this fact, both as a warning and a relief, before we decide to jump to the peculiarly Parisian tune of Aubral and Delcourt. It is a brave little book, and if we have seemed too harsh upon it, it is because of the manic Francophilia of the American group to which we belong.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Michael Ryan are members of Graft, a small non-profit organization with centers in Charlottesville, Chicago, Iowa City, and Madison. Next year the organization expects to publish its first book, a study of East European intellectuals working in Paris, under the title *De bulgari eloquentia*.