

Vocabulary of European Philosophies, Part 1

The publication in November 2004 of *Vocabulaire Européen des Philosophies: Dictionnaire des Intraduisibles* (Editions du Seuil/Dictionnaires Le Robert) was a major philosophical event, not only in France but for European philosophies as a whole. Edited by Barbara Cassin, composed over a twelve-year period by a group of 150 contributors, and weighing in at about one-and-a-half million words, the *Vocabulary* is both a massive work of historical and philosophical scholarship and a philosophical intervention in its own right. In the essay that follows, Howard Caygill provides a preliminary assessment of its importance as a philosophical dictionary. Here, I shall briefly register some of the *Vocabulary*'s most distinctive features and indicate something of the significance of the long entry 'Subject', which follows, in a translation by David Macey, edited by Barbara Cassin and Peter Osborne. English translations of the entries 'Gegenstand/Objekt', 'Object' and 'Res' will appear in Part 2 of this dossier, in the next issue of the journal, *RP* 139 (September/October 2006).

The *Vocabulary* is exceptional, first and foremost for its acknowledgement of the plurality of languages that constitute the European philosophical tradition. This acknowledgement is twofold. First, it has entries for terms in ten main European languages – four ancient (Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Arabic) and six modern (English, French, German, Italian, Russian, Spanish) – as well as occasional and sometimes surprising entries for others, such as the Basque 'Gogo', a distinctive reception of the Greek *anima*. An irreducible element of linguistic plurality is thus preserved in the structure of the project. Second, through its use of French as a metalanguage (the language of the *Vocabulary* itself), it endeavours to specify the conceptual differences carried by the differences between languages, not in a pure form, but via the fractured histories of translation through which European philosophies have been constituted. An irreducible element of translational commonality is thus also present. Maintaining this twofold, eminently dialectical stance is a self-consciously paradoxical task. It involves the utilization of a number of different strategies: an unusually high level of linguistic plurality within any particular entry, 'foreignization' in translation, and the

constant thematization of translation in the writing of the history of terms – to name but three. The use of the term 'untranslatables' in the *Vocabulary*'s subtitle, *Dictionary of Untranslatables*, marks this paradoxical stance. For while the plurality of languages registers the conceptually elemental status of language (this is a vocabulary – a history of words, not of concepts; or at least, conceptual history subjected to linguistic history), these terms are also thereby selected for translation. 'Untranslatable' here thus denotes the existence of an inevitable excess and remainder in translation, and hence the interminability of the process of translation – its inherent problematicity and productivity – rather than any kind of reverence for an illusorily pure singularity of particular languages.

The *Vocabulary*'s strategic thrust is thus on two fronts simultaneously: against the allegedly uniquely philosophical significance of particular languages (a claim most commonly made on behalf of Greek and German); and against what the French call *globish*, a developing universal 'non-language of pure communication', for which read a certain English – although, disappointingly, the Englishness of *globish* is never directly confronted. (There is no entry for *globish*, presumably because it cannot yet be considered a properly philosophical term.)

In 'Subject', the translational history of philosophical words is deployed to devastating conceptual effect, to dismantle what has been the central narrative myth of modern philosophy for over two hundred years: namely, that modern philosophy is a 'philosophy of the subject' (in the sense of a self-grounding philosophy of reflexive consciousness) that begins with Descartes. Not only must this history be rewritten, with far greater importance attributed to developments both well before and after Descartes, it contends, but a second, parallel and contradictory history must be acknowledged: the history of the term 'subject' in its connotation of subjection or dependency. In the third part of 'Subject', written by Balibar, in which these issues come to the fore, we have a conspectus or skeleton of an unwritten book on the topic, which would catapult Balibar to the head of the trio of post-Althusserians now dominating the landscape of the Anglo-American reception of current French thought.

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Subject

Gr.	<i>hupokeimenon</i> (ὑποκείμενον), <i>hupostasis</i> (ὑπόστασις)
Lat.	<i>subjectum</i> , <i>suppositum</i> , <i>subjectus</i> , <i>subditus</i>
Fr.	<i>sujet</i>
Germ.	<i>Subjekt</i> , <i>Untertan</i>
Ital.	<i>soggetto</i>
Mod. Gr.	<i>hyopkeimeno</i> (ὑποκείμενο)
Span.	<i>sujeto</i> , <i>subdito</i> , <i>sugeto</i>

► SOUL, and *BEING*, *CATEGORY*, CONSCIENCE, CONSCIOUSNESS, *FREEDOM*, GEMUT, GOGO, I, MATTER OF FACT, OBJECT, PREDICABLE, PREDICATION, RES, *SOI*, SOUL, SUPPOSITION, TO TI EN EINAI

The English word *subject* (French, *sujet*) is used in a variety of senses which are, at first sight, difficult to articulate in philosophical terms. We can, however, identify three main groups of meanings, dominated by the ideas of subjectness (*subjectité* in French), subjectivity (*subjectivité*) and subjection (*sujétion*). The three notions are not completely distinct and it is clear that various combinations of them are, to a greater or lesser extent, operative in most philosophical usages of the term.

The notion of subjectness is the richest of the three (the French word *subjectité* is a translation of the neologism *Subjektivität*, which was probably coined by Heidegger) and condenses several possible usages. It derives more or less directly from Aristotle's *hupokeimenon* (ὑποκείμενον) and basically provides a link between the logical subject ('of which' there can be predicates) and the physical subject ('in which' there are accidents). It also has a much broader meaning that is bound up with the etymology of *hupokeisthai* (ὑποκεῖσθαι, 'to be laid or placed somewhere', to serve as a base or foundation, to be proposed, accepted). This sense overlaps with the network of *thing* and *pragma* (πράγμα), or *res* and *causa*, which intervenes no less frequently than the *subject* (in the sense of matter, object or theme) we find in the modern usage. In the same way, we find the sense of cause, reason or motive in the fourth part of Descartes' *Discourse on Method*. In his discussion of the existence of bodies, Descartes writes: 'nevertheless, when it is a question of metaphysical certainty, we cannot reasonably deny that there are adequate grounds for not being entirely sure of the subject. We need only observe that in sleep we may imagine in the same way that we have a different body' (*The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. 1, p. 130; trans. amended). French still uses *sujet* in that sense in everyday speech ('*quel sujet vous amène?*', 'What brings you here?'; *avoir sujet de se plaindre*, 'to have cause for complaint'). Another meaning, expressed in English by the reduplicated *subject matter*, signals membership of two categories, and merits attention. (The expression is also attested in the sixteenth century as *matter subject* and is in fact a translation of Boethius's *subjecta materia*, which itself reproduces Aristotle's *hupokeimenê hulê* [ὑποκειμένη ὕλη].) A third meaning makes *subject* synonymous with *object*, as when we evoke the 'subject' of a book or science.

The notion of subjectivity, on the other hand, makes '*subject*' the antonym of '*object*' when a more specific distinction has to be made between the sphere of the psyche or the mental, as opposed to that of objectivity (cf. the English 'thinking subject', which is well attested in the seventeenth century).

Connotations of subjection are present in any usage of *sujet* that implies the idea of dependency or subjugation, or any form of domination that subjugates, compels or obliges; the first meaning of the English noun *subject* is '*one who is under the dominion [Latin: dominium] of a sovereign*' or, in the adjectival form, '*that is under the rule of a power*' (fourteenth century). The articulation between this set and the first two remains problematic, despite the suggestions of ordinary language. Not everything that is *sous-mis* or *sub-mitted* (*subjectum*) is *subjected* (*subjectus*), and nor is everything that is submissive (*soumis*); it is even clearer that 'being placed beneath' should not be confused with 'being subjected'. Subjectivity is not the relative product of subjectness and subjection, even though a relationship of sub-position is present in both registers. The fate of the French term *supposit* (fourteenth century) and then *suppôt* (1611) provides a good illustration of these ambiguities. The term derives from the Latin *suppositum*, which is used in both grammar and logic as well as the natural sciences (physics, metaphysics and psychology, to adopt the medieval classification of the sciences) in the sense of the Greek *hupokeimenon*; in its specifically French usage, the term *supposit* was, from the late fourteenth to the late seventeenth century, used in the sense

of ‘vassal’, or ‘subject of someone’, or even in the sense of ‘subaltern’. The spatial metaphor common to the fields of *sub-jectness* and *sub-jection* must not, however, lead us to trace the genealogy of subjectivity by identifying *subjectum* with *subjectus*. What is implicit in French or English is much less clear in the German, where the ‘Aristotelean’ *Subjekt* is not synonymous with *Untertan* and its derivatives *untertänig* (humble, submissive) and *Untertänigkeit* (submission, humble obedience), even though both *Subjekt* and *Untertan* can be translated into English as *subject* and into French as *sujet*. By the same criterion, the notion of a ‘legal’ or ‘political’ subject or a subject with rights is difficult to accept in a context where *subject* is predestined to belong to the register of ‘submission’ – one has only to think of the harmonics of the term ‘Islam’, which, depending on how it is translated, can evoke either radical subjugation (‘Muslims’ = ‘those who submit’) or ‘*trusting abandonment of the self in God*’. The introduction of *subject* into philosophy is doubled with the avatars of *subjectum* and *subjectus*.

We will attempt to elucidate a set of problems that has determined the entire history of Western philosophy by alternating between two contrasting points of view. We will begin with the Latin use of *subjectum* in order to identify the medieval origins of the Moderns’ ‘self-certainty’, which is torn between the heritage of Aristotle and that of Augustine. We will then look at the contemporary critique of the unity and univocity of ‘the subject’ inaugurated by Nietzsche in order to identify the roots of the conflicting expressions to which it now gives rise in the context of the ‘internationalization’ of philosophical language. We will in both cases give a central role to the historical and hermeneutic reconstruction proposed by Heidegger, and will demonstrate both its importance and its limitations.

I. *Hupokeimon*: subject degree zero

Subject is Anglo-Latin and *sujet* is Franco-Latin. No one term in Greek simultaneously supports the threefold idea of subjectness, subjectivity (see CONSCIENCE) and subjection; there is no Greek word meaning ‘subject’, just as there is none meaning ‘object’, even though we encounter, and cannot but encounter, both terms in translations (see OBJECT).

The Latin *subjectum* was in fact originally a translation of the Greek *to hupokeimenon* (τὸ ὑποκείμενον), especially as used in the Aristotelean corpus, even though it is not only a translation of *hupokeimenon*, and even if other terms, such as *suppositum*, can capture other aspects of Aristotle’s *hupokeimenon* in certain circumstances (see ‘suppositum’/‘subjectum’ in SUPPOSITION).

To hupokeimenon is never an expression of subjectivity. Nor is it an expression of subjugation, except for the quasi-sexual connotations that link it to the idea of ‘matter’, *hule* (ύλη) as united with *eidōs* (εἶδος) or *morphé* (μορφή), that is to say, the ‘form’ it receives or to which it is subject, and with which it makes up a complete substance or *sunulon* (Compare *Metaphysics* Zeta VII 1029a – ‘Primary subject [*hupokeimenon prōton*] is in one way matter, in another shape-form, and in a third sense the composite of both of them [*to ek toutōn, τὸ ἐκ τούτων*]’ – with *De generatione animalium* I, 20. 729a 8-11: ‘What happens is what one would expect to happen. The male provides the “form” and the “principle” of the movement [*to t’eidōs kai tēn arkhēn tēs kinēseōs*]; the female provides the body and the matter [*to sōma kai tēn hulēn,*

τὸ σῶμα καὶ τὴν ὕλην]. Compare the coagulation of milk. Here, the milk is the body, and the fig juice or rennet is the principle that causes it to set.’ Sylviane Agacinski stresses that the gender hierarchy ‘is applied, by analogy, to the basic concepts of metaphysics, as when the philosopher states that ‘matter aspires to form in the same way that the female desires the male’ (*Politiques des sexes*, Seuil, 1998, p. 44).

On the other hand, the term does cover and bring together two kinds of subject whose composition proves to be a necessary part of the very idea of subjectivity: the physical subject, which is a substrate for accidents that occur through changes, and the logical subject, which is a support for the predicates in a proposition. This suture, which is onto-logical in that it allows being and ‘being said’ to coincide, as if by nature, is the mark of Aristotle’s *ousia* (οὐσία).

• see box 1

Following Bonitz (*Index s.v. hupokeisthai*), we will take as our starting point all the senses in which Aristotle uses *hupokeimenon* and *hupokeisthai* (ὑποκείσθαι). We can leave aside the local, or non-terminological, sense of ‘being there’, as well as all the current meanings that Aristotle simply established, particularly when he posits something as the basis, principle or premiss for reflection (*positum, datum*). This leaves a complex of three usages. Bonitz describes it thus:

We can identify three main genera in Aristotle’s use of the words *hupokeisthai* and *hupokeimenon* in so much as *hupokeimenon* is either matter [*hē hulē*] that is determined by form, or *ousia*, in which passions and accidents are inherent, or the logical

subject to which predicates are attributed; but as matter itself is also related to the notion of *ousia*, the first and second genera are not differentiated by limits that are universally certain, and given that *einai* [*huparkhein*, being in the sense of belonging to] and *legesthai* [*kategeisthai*, being said in the sense of being predicated of] are closely connected, the distinction between the second and third genera is little clearer.

Index Aristotelicus, p. 798, col. 1.

Hupokeimenon's plurality of meanings is not, in other words, fixed or thematized in the same way that the meanings of 'being' are fixed. (At best, we can read in *Metaphysics* Zeta, 13, 1038b: 'περὶ τοῦ ὑποκειμένου, ὅτι διχῶς ὑπόκειται, ἢ τόδε τι ὄν, ὡς περὶ τὸ ζῶον τοῖς πάθεσιν, ἢ ὡς ἡ ὕλη τῇ ἐντελεχείᾳ [There are two ways of being a subject (lit. subjected), either as a possessor of thisness (as the animal is a subject for its properties) or as matter is a subject for actuality]. It is used, rather, to describe three types of relations: (1) relations between matter and form, to the extent that they combine to make up the *sunolon*, or the individual as a whole without parts; (2) relations between the individual, substance–subject of physics and what happens to it, its affections and accidents (an animal is subject to movement, or to being 'white', 'large' or 'ill'); and (3) relations between the subject of the proposition and its predicates ('animal as 'white', 'large' or 'ill'). In the first two usages, the subject can be variously described as matter (*hulê*), as the

individual, the primary substance or essence (*tode ti* or *ousia protê*), but in the third there is no substitute for *hupokeimenon*. No other word can designate the subject of the proposition as such. The irreducible meaning is also the meaning that unifies the set (just as *kinêsis* refers both to local movements and to movement in general; it therefore refers to all types of movement, such as growth) in a radically non-dialectical conceptual structure. This is typical of Aristotle's classificatory thinking: the key species gives its name to the whole genus.

This description requires some qualification: the reason why subjectness is able to combine in the single word *ousia* both the sense of substance and that of subject is that *ousia* itself can also be a combination of the two. Just as primary essence is *malista* (μάλιστα), first of all, essence, so that which is first of all proper to essence (*malista idion tês ousias*) is, 'although it remains, notwithstanding, numerically one and the same, its ability to be the recipient of contrary qualifications [*to tauton kai hen arithmôî on tôn enantiôn einai dektikon*]' (*Categories* 6, 4a 10–11). A colour cannot be both black and white and still remain one and the same, but essence can. For example, an individual man (*ho tis anthrôpos; ô tis anthrôpos*), this singular man who remains one and the same, can sometimes be pale and sometimes black (*hote men leukos hote de melas gignetai; ôtê mên leukôs ôtê de melas gignetai*) (*Categories* 4a 19–20). This is

Box 1 The definition of *ousia protê*

Οὐσία δὲ ἐστὶν ἡ χυριώτατά τε καὶ πρώτως καὶ μάλιστα λεγομένη, ἢ μήτε καθ' ὑποκειμένου τινὸς λέγεται μήτε ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ τινὶ ἐστὶν, οἷον ὁ τις ἄνθρωπος ἢ ὁ τις ἵππος.

[Essence – when said most properly, primarily and most of all – is that which neither is said of a subject nor is in a subject, e.g. the individual man or the individual horse.]

Aristotle, *Categories* 5, 2a 11–13.

Our translation goes against received usage by having *essence* rather than *substance* for *ousia*; this is an indication that what is at stake here is the determination of that which is. 'Substance' would shift the emphasis towards the physical (substance/accidents) rather than towards the combination of the logical and the physical.

This definition, which is presented as the primary definition of essence and, at the same time, as the definition of primary essence, is quite

remarkable in stylistic terms alone. Rather than stating directly that essence is *hupokeimenon*, it juxtaposes two negatives: 'neither said of ... nor is in'; essence is a *hupokeimenon* in two senses, as it is neither a predicate (or, more accurately, something predicable; see PREDICABLE and PREDICATION) nor an accident. We are actually dealing with a crudely knit juxtaposition, operated by means of the word *hupokeimenon*, that establishes the pre-eminence of essence in both the physical and the logical sense:

Thus all the other things either are said of the primary essences as subjects [*êtoi kath' hupokeimenôn toutôn legetai; êtoi kath' hypokeimênôn toutôn legetai*] or are in them as subjects [*ê en hupokeimenais autais estin; ἢ ἐν ὑποκειμέναις αὐταῖς ἐστὶν*]. So if the primary essences did not exist it would be impossible for any of the other things to exist.

Ibid., 2b 6–6c.

not like the statement ‘he sits’, which becomes false when ‘he rises’, but ‘through a change which belongs to it in itself’ (*Categories* 4b 3). The accidents that are predicated upon *ousia* therefore arise from *ousia* itself; its subjectness *qua* material substance is one and the same as its subjectness *qua* logical subject, and it is precisely this that makes it the *hupokeimenon*.

Aristotle’s various attempts to define *ousia* reveal a constant tension between the singular and the universal; it is the *eidos* or essence and the *to ti ên einai* (τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι) or ‘what-it-was-to-be-that-thing’, which are in *Metaphysics* book Zeta (7, 1032b) referred to as *ousia prôtê* and not the *tode ti* of the *Categories* (see TO TI ÊN EINAI). Now it is the definition given in the *Categories*, where essence is primarily the concrete singular, that determines the conflagration between logical subjectness and physical subjectness. We can deduce from this that the individual, being a subject in two senses, is a necessary (but obviously not sufficient) precondition for the later developments that generate ‘subjectivity’ and ‘subjection’.

• see box 2

II. *Subjectum*: from *hupokeimenon* to self-certainty

A. From subjectness to subjectivity

Whilst the term *subjectivity* (*subjectivité*) appears to have been borrowed from the German *Subjektivität* thanks to the diffusion of the adjective *subjektiv* in the Kantian sense, the psychological meaning of the term, which is dominant in ordinary usage, is the result of a series of transformations that began in the Middle Ages. According to Martin Heidegger, the most decisive of all is the mutation that transforms Aristotle’s *hupokeimenon* into *subjectum*. According to the author of *Sein und Zeit*, the essential feature of the Cartesian initiative is the assertion that the *subjectum*, which is the *substans* of the Scholastics, in the sense of ‘that which is constant’ (subsisting) and ‘real’, is the basis of any psychology of the subject, or in other words the transition from the Latin *subjectum* to the modern sense of ‘subject’, or, if we prefer, the transition from *subjectum* to *ego*, from subjectivity to I-ness (*égoïté*). In volume 4 of his *Nietzsche*, Heidegger remarks:

Box 2 *Hypokeimeno* (ὑποκείμενο) in Modern Greek

Aristotle defines matter as ‘the first *hupokeimenon* of all the things from where they come and which belong to them not by accident’ (*Physics* 1, 9, 192a 31–4). But whilst the term ‘subject’ is an appropriate translation of *ousia* in the sense of ‘the ultimate subject of all predication’, it is an inappropriate rendering of this text. *Hupokeimenon* is therefore often translated as ‘substrate’, in keeping with the scholastic tradition, which uses ‘substratum’.

Like the English *subject* or French *sujet*, the Modern Greek ὑποκείμενο means both the grammatical and logical subject, and ‘subjectivity’. There is no adequate translation of ‘substrate’. Théodoridis notes that ‘to the extent that “subject” is, in our language, a worn-out and polysemic term, we are often obliged to resort to something like “substratum”, using the word *substructure* (*hypostrôma*)’ (Introduction, p. 229). This is why several Modern Greek translations have been suggested. In his translation of the *Physics*, Kyrgiopoulos gives the impression of remaining close to the original by translating the term as ‘the primary subject (*hupokeimenon*) in every thing’. Georgoulis suggests a periphrase: ‘that which is as lying beneath

(*hôs hypokeimeno*) all things’. In his translation of Plotinus, Tzavaras sometimes uses the Ancient Greek term, but also adopts Georgoulis’s suggestion and uses ‘that which lies below (κειμένη-απο-κάτω)’; he also extends that sense by using ‘substructure’. Whilst the Modern Greek verb does indeed mean ‘to lie under something’, and ‘to come under the authority of someone’, the noun no longer has the old meaning. The first translation simply uses the Ancient Greek; the second resorts to a verbal form and uses the past participle of ὑπόκειμαι, which does not capture the ancient noun form; ‘substructure’ forces the meaning, even though it does have the virtue of being a translation. These disagreements are an adequate demonstration of the difficulties involved in translating such an important term from Greek into Greek.

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‘Since Descartes and through Descartes, man, the human “I” has in a pre-eminent way come to be the “subject” in metaphysics... Why is the human subject transposed into the “I”, so that subjectivity here becomes coterminous with I-ness?’ (vol. 4, p. 96). Heidegger’s explanation for this phenomenon, which is based upon the structure of ‘the lying-before’ [*vor-herige*] that he finds at the heart of the Cartesian notion of representation, gives Descartes the central role: he completes the transformation of *hupokeimenon* into *subjectum* by ballasting its ‘actuality’ with the new dimension of perceptive activity:

According to the metaphysical tradition from Aristotle onwards, every true being is a *hupokeimenon*. This *hupokeimenon* is determined afterwards as *subjectum*. Descartes’ thinking distinguishes the *subjectum* which man is to the effect that the *actualitas* of this *subjectum* has its essence in the *actus* of *cogitare* (*percipere*).

Martin Heidegger, ‘Metaphysics as History of Being’, p. 31; trans. amended.

Heidegger’s thesis is debatable. He claims that Descartes initiates a displacement that occurred either long before him or long after him and which does not in any case, directly or explicitly equate *subjectum* with *ego*. What is more, Heidegger’s notion of ‘subjectivity’ is too closely associated with the Lutheran notion of the certainty of salvation, which supposedly founds the certainty characteristic of ‘modern subjectivity’, to be valid as a true genealogy of the subject.

• **see box 3**

Consideration must also be given to other experiences demonstrating that the moment when *mens humana* has an exclusive claim on the term ‘subject’, they belong to a history that predates the ‘Cartesian’ golden age of representation. Heidegger’s analysis does, however, have one merit: it demonstrates the need for a distinction between subjectness and subjectivity. Heidegger sets us a task that his own text does not complete: describing in historical terms what leads from one to the other, and that means taking the medieval contribution into account.

B. Subjectum in medieval psychology

In the Middle Ages, philosophical theories of the subject were originally inscribed within the space of subjectness. The medieval notion of the *subjectum* is still, at least in problematic terms, Aristotle’s notion of the *hupokeimenon*, or of a *subject* in the sense of a support or substrate for essential or accidental properties. In terms of the genealogy of the subject and subjectivity, however, medieval thought was for a long time characterized by a remarkable chiasmus that can be described as follows: the Middle Ages had a theory of the ego or I-ness (*égoïté*), or a theory of the *subject* in the obvious philosophical sense of the term *mens*, but that theory did not require the implementation of the notion of a *subjectum*; it also offered a complete theory of subjectivity in grammar, logic, physics and metaphysics, but was reluctant to export it into psychology in the form of a theory of *mens humana*. The theory of *mens* did not, in other words, need to import the notion of *hupokeimenon*; conversely, the theory of

Box 3 Heidegger: self-certainty and the certainty of salvation at the dawn of modernity

There is no room for the Middle Ages in the scenario Heidegger constructs in order to explain the certainty that will ‘take man to sovereignty within the real world’. Everything obviously begins with the new Lutheran conception of *Er-lösung* and the problematic of the ‘certainty’ of salvation (which is problematized from a different point of view by Max Weber in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*).

Before all [in the medieval period], God the creator, and with him the institution of the offering and management of his gifts of grace (the church), is in sole possession of the sole and eternal truth. As *actus purus*, God is pure

actuality and thus the causality of everything real, that is, the source and place of salvation which as blessedness guarantees eternal permanence. By himself, man can never become, and be, absolutely certain of this salvation. On the other hand, through faith and similarly through lack of faith, man is essentially established in the attainment of salvation’s certainty, or forced to the renunciation of this salvation and its certainty. Thus a necessity rules, hidden in its origin, that man make sure of his salvation in some fashion in the Christian or in another sense (salvation; *sôtêria*; redemption; release).

Martin Heidegger, ‘Metaphysics as History of Being’, p. 21.

the *subjectum* did not in itself claim to govern that of *mens*. And yet the two did intersect and were articulated several hundred years before the Cartesian theory of *ego cogito cogitatum*. It is impossible to reconstruct every stage in the process here. We can indicate the two poles that determine the very idea of subjectivity: on the one hand, a Trinitarian Augustinian model of the human soul based in part upon the idea of the circumincession (mutual in-dwelling) of the Persons of the Trinity, and in part upon a non-Aristotelian notion of hypostasis (*hupostasis*, ὑπόστασις); on the other, a non-Trinitarian Averroist model of subjectivity which is explicitly based on the Aristotelian notion of *hupokeimenon*. The two models are not intended to solve the same problem: the former is mainly concerned with the problem of consciousness and self-knowledge, whilst the latter is concerned with the *subject* of thought.

1. Averroism and the question of the 'subject of thought'

It is with the translation of the *Long Commentary* on Book III of the *De anima* that the notion of subjectivity really becomes part of the field of psychology. It represents an attempt to answer a specific question: what is the subject of thought? This question presupposes the validity of a model, Aristotle's analysis of sensation and the notions that make it possible: action (*energeia*, ἐνέργεια), and actuality or the actualization of potentiality (*energein*, ἐνέργειν). Aristotle's theory of sensation is not based upon the idea of a 'feeling subject' that is affected by a sense of change, but on the idea of sensation itself, defined as the joint action of a sense-object and a sense-organ (see SENS I, A, B). In Averroes, it is this structure of the joint action that governs the question of the subject of thought. Just as sensation has two subjects, so thought, referred to here as *intentio intellecta* (see INTENTION), intelligible knowledge *in actu*, also has two subjects: (1) images (*intentiones imaginatae*); (2) the so-called 'material' intellect, which is divorced from the body and not numbered by it. The subject of thought is therefore twofold; only one of these subjects – the *ego* or the I – has anything to do with man.

According to Aristotle, cognizing through the intellect is like perceiving through the senses, and perceiving through the senses is accomplished through the intermediary of two subjects. The first is the subject [*subjectum*] through which what is sensed becomes true (the sensible that exists outside the soul), and the second the subject which ensures that what is sensed is an existing form (and this

is the first perfection of the sensorial faculty). It follows that *intelligibilia in actu* must also have two subjects, one being the subject thanks to which they are true images, and the second the subject that ensures that each *intelligibilia* exists in the [real] world. This is the material intellect. Indeed, to that extent there is no difference between the senses and the intellect, except in that the subject of what is sensed, and which makes it true, is external to the soul, whereas the subject of the intellect, and which makes it true, is internal to the soul.

Averroes, *Commentary on De anima* III comm. 5 on *De anima* III 4 429a 21–4.

According to Averroes, man is not his intellect: if he has a role to play in intellection as such, it is thanks to his cognitive faculty (ar. *al-quwwat al-mufakkira* [القوة المنفكرة] lat. *vis cogitative, vis distinctiva*), which supplies images or, rather, particular 'intentions' (see box 2, 'Cogitative', in INTENTION) to the material intellect, a unique substance that is divorced from the human soul. Man is therefore not the subject of thought in the precise sense that the eye is the subject of vision. In a certain sense, his sub-jjective position is, rather, on the side of that which is seen. This is in fact the basic criticism that Aquinas makes of Averroes' noetics in the *De unitate intellectus contra averroistas*. The theory of the two subjects of intellection does not allow us to say that man – or, rather, the individual man ('that man there') – thinks, but only that its images are thought by a separate intellect.

Assuming that one numerically identical species is both a possible form of intellect and simultaneously contained in images, that type of linkage would not be enough to allow this particular man to think. It is in fact clear that as, thanks to the intelligible species, something is *thought*, and as, thanks to the intellectual power, something *thinks*, so something is felt thanks to the sensible species, just as something *feels* thanks to the sensible power. That is why the wall in which colour is found, and whose sensible species *in actu* is vision, is something that is seen, and not something that sees; what sees is the animal endowed with the faculty of vision where the sensible species is found. Now the linkage between the possible intellect and the man in whom there are images whose species exist in the possible intellect is like that between the wall, in which colour exists, and sight, in which the species of colour exist. [If that linkage existed] just as the wall does not see, even though colour is seen, it would follow that *man would not think but that his images would be thought by the possible intellect*. It is therefore impossible to defend the thesis that man thinks if we adopt the position of Averroes.

Aquinas, *De unitate intellectus contra averroistas*, ch. 3, §65.

Far from accepting Aquinas's counter-argument, some thirteenth-century Latin Averroists radicalize the thesis that the subject, which has to be described as 'thinking', as opposed to 'imagined intentions', is not the individual man. Strictly speaking, thought does not have 'man' as its subject because 'thought is not a human perfection', but the 'perfection of the intellect', and a separate material. Introducing the subject/object duality for the first time in this context, the Averroists (see Siger de Brabant, *In III De Anima*, q. 9; ed. Bazán, pp. 28, 79–82) go so far as to argue that thought does not need man in order to 'sub-ject itself to him' in the strict sense. It only needs man, or rather fantasies, or, in the last analysis, a material body as an object, and not as a subject. As an anonymous master writes: 'As thought is not a human perfection, it needs man as an object ... it needs a material body as an object, not as its subject' (cf. *Anonyme de Giele, Quaestiones de anima* II, q. 4; in M. Giele, *Trois commentaries sur le Traité de l'âme d'Aristote*, pp. 76, 91–6).

The thesis that the body is the object of the intellect enjoyed an exceptional longevity: we find it as late as the sixteenth century, when it is turned *against* Averroes in Pomponazzi's *De immortalitate animae* (1516). A follower of Alexander of Aphrodisae's 'materialism', Pomponazzi accepts the idea, which is doubly unacceptable for Averroism, that the body can be both the object *and the subject* of thought:

According to its general definition, the soul is the action of a naturally organized body. The intellectual soul is therefore the action of an organized natural body. Since the intellect is by virtue of its being the action of an organized natural organ, it therefore also depends, in all its operations, upon an organ, either as subject or as object. It is therefore never completely divorced from all organs.

P. Pomponazzi, *De immortalitate animae*, ed. Mojsisch, 'Philosophische Bibliothek' 434, Hamburg: Meiner, 1990, ch. 4, p. 18.

For the Averroists of the thirteenth century, at least, it is clear that the existence of the ego and of the 'fact of consciousness' certainly does not coincide with the assumption of man as *subjectum*. Man does not experience himself as the subject of thought; the 'I' or 'ego' does not experience itself as that which thinks or experiences thought. As the same *Anonyme de Giele* writes:

You will say: I [and no other] feel and perceive that it is I who thinks. I reply: this is false. On the contrary, it is the intellect, which is naturally united with you as the motor [principle] and regulator of your body, that feels this, *he ipse* [and no other],

in exactly the same way that the separate intellect experiences that it has within it intelligibilia. You will say (again): I, the aggregate of a body and an intellect, feel that it is I who is thinking. I say: this is false. On the contrary, it is the intellect that is in need of your body as object [*intellectus egens tuo corpore ut objecto*] that feels this and communicates it to the aggregate.

The heteronomy of the Averroist *subject* is very significantly illustrated by an episode in translation history that is worth recalling. We know that Averroes' *Long Commentary on the De Anima* is, given the current state of the corpus, fully accessible only in Latin, or in Michel Scot's tricky translation (the Arabic original having been lost). One of the most famous statements, in which Averroes appears to introduce the notion of the subject, is the passage on eternity and the corruptibility of the theoretical intellect – the ultimate human perfection. It asserts: 'Perhaps philosophy always exists in the greater part of the subject, just as the man exists thanks to man, and just as the horse exists thanks to horse.' What does the expression mean? Going against the very principles of Averroes' noetics, the Averroist Jean de Jandun understands it to mean that 'philosophy is perfect in the greater part of its subject (*sui subjecti*)', or in other words 'in most men' (*in majori parte hominum*). There are no grounds for this interpretation. We can explain it, however, if we recall that Averroes' Latin translator has confused the Arabic terms *mawdu* [موضوع] (subject or substratum in the sense of *hupokeimenon*) and *mawdi* [موضع] (place). When Averroes simply says that philosophy has always existed 'in the greater part of the place', meaning 'almost everywhere', Jean understands him as saying that it has as its subject 'the majority of men', as every man (or almost every man) contributes to a full (perfect) realization in keeping with his knowledge and aptitudes. 'Subjectivity' does slip into Averroism here, but only because of a huge misunderstanding resulting from a translator's error. It therefore contradicts Averroes.

Appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, the moment when, thanks to Averroes' theory of the 'two subjects' of thought, Aristotle's *hupokeimenon*, recycled as a *subiectum*, enters the field of psychology, has, as we can see, absolutely nothing to do with *mens humana*'s exclusive claim on the name 'subject' (*subjectum* and *ego*, or subjectivity and I-ness [*égoïte*], therefore take on exactly the same meaning). As we shall see, and by the same criterion, the attestation, in an ordinary experience, of the 'fact of consciousness' was not, according to those who argued its case,

originally bound up with the Aristotelian notion of subjectivity.

2. The discovery of self-certainty

Confronted with the Averroist theory of the two subjects of thought, several medieval doctrines argue that the ego or the I can perceive itself, experience itself and know itself, thanks, initially, to a kind of direct intuition. None of these doctrines, however, initially relates this apperception to the idea of self-apprehension as *subject*. The first thing they have in common tends to be an Augustinian denial of the specularity of the self-to-self relationship: 'The mind [does not] know itself as in a mirror' (Augustine, *De Trinitate* X, 3, 5 BA 16, p. 128). Many medieval philosophers conclude from this theorem that, despite the claims of Aristotle and the Peripatetics, the soul cannot know itself in the same way that it can know other things, namely through representation or abstraction, and that it does not know itself either as another thing or as another soul. It knows itself as self-presence, and in, through and as that self-presence. The absence of knowledge through representation is characteristic of both that which is present and that which is absent. Seeing is a more appropriate way of re-presenting that which is absent in its absence as though it were present. Self-presence is inadmissible. The soul can, Augustine goes on, therefore form an image of itself and can 'love that image', but it cannot know itself in that way. To the contrary, Pierre Jean Olieu argues (*Impugnatio quorundam articulorum*, art. 19 f. 47ra) on similar grounds that it knows itself 'through the infallible certainty of its being [*certitudo infallibilis sui esse*]: man knows from the outset 'so infallibly that he exists and lives, that he cannot cast that into doubt [*scit enim homo se esse et vivere sic infallibiliter quod de hoc dubitare non potest*]'. Even more so than the rejection of specularity, the dominant feature of the medieval Augustinian model of I-ness is the truly Trinitarian notion of circumincession. The primacy of circumincession explains why, in the Augustinian sphere, the notion of *hupokeimenon* does not have any particular role to play in the philosophical elucidation of the self-to-self relationship. The way in which the Greek *ousia* and *hupostasis* evolve in the Middle Ages is much more relevant.

The circumincession of Persons as a model for the theory of mind

The Augustinian theory of mind (*mens*) and mental actions does not depend solely upon the notions of essence and substance. It is entirely based on a notion

derived from Trinitarian theology which was elaborated in order to explain how, to use Augustine's own terminology, a substance can be at once simple and multiple. This notion is what is usually known as the circumincession of Persons or perichoresis. Perichoresis means the mutual indwelling of the Persons of the Trinity. Their mutual immanence – which has two aspects: a *manence* (expressed in scholastic Latin by the term *circuminsessio*) and a dynamic and never-ending immanence (expressed by the term *circumincessio*) – excludes from the outset any recourse to the standard conception of the subject-substantial as a support for accidents. God cannot, in any strict sense of the term, be said to subsist in the same sense that a *substantia* subsists. That which subsists in the strict sense is that which is subjected to what is said to 'be in a subject' (*ea quae in aliquo subjecto esse dicuntur*, *De Trinitate* VII 4, 10, BA 15, p. 536). That which exists *in substantia* is not substance; it is an accident, such as colour, which exists '*in subsistente atque subjecto corpore*' and which, when it ceases to exist, 'does not deprive the body of its bodily being'. The relationship between God and His attributes cannot be like this: God is not the subject of his goodness (*nefas es dicere ut subsistat et subsit Deus bonitati suae*), which does not exist in him as in a subject (*tanquam in subjecto*). It is preferable to say of God that He is himself his goodness, that He is an essence rather than a substance, and that the Trinity is in the strict sense 'a single essence' – Father, Son and Spirit are considered to be three 'hypostases' or, more accurately, three mutually indwelling Persons. The rejection of the *substantia/id quod est in subjecto* in Trinitarian theology is of crucial importance to the history of psychology. The doctrine of the Trinitarian image, which is central to Augustine's theory of the soul, in fact holds that the same structure of mutual immanence is found in the inner man. But if that is the case, the notion of *substantia*, in the sense of *subjectum*, has to be banished from the field of psychology, on pain of reducing mental acts to mere accidents that befall the mind. This is why Augustine, who was quite familiar with Aristotle's notion of *hupokeimenon*, eliminates the *subjectum* from his analysis of the triads of the inner man. The *hupokeimenon* is incompatible with the transposition of the theological notion of mutual immanence to psychology.

The application of the perichoretic model to the theory of 'mens'

What we are calling the perichoretic model of the soul (even though Augustine himself obviously never

uses the expression) is at work in the description of the two triads the author of the *De Trinitate* invokes in order to distinguish between knowledge and self-consciousness, namely (a) *mens–notitia–amor* and (b) *memoria (sui), intelligentia, voluntas*. The first analogy between the Trinity and the inner man subordinates self-consciousness to self-knowledge. The notions of *ousia* and *hupostasis* play an obvious role even at this level. Three theses articulate the perichoretic structure: the concept of *mens* necessarily implies its correlates: knowledge and the will; all three refer to substances: *mens* does so in the strict sense whilst knowledge and the will do so in a broad sense in so far as, being acts, they differ from mere accidents; these three ‘substances’, which are within one another, are simply ‘a single substance or essence’.

• see box 4

This structure allows the conceptualization of the transition from knowledge to self-consciousness: (1) the mind knows itself discursively and reflexively through the act of knowing; (2) this knowledge leads, directly and necessarily, to self-love; (3) in its self-love and self-knowledge, the mind becomes immediately self-conscious (*De Trinitate* IX, 2, 2–5, 8). In this analogy, which is still imperfect, between the inner man and the divine Trinity, *mens* represents the deity in his entirety, whilst the deity’s acts correspond to the Persons of the Son and the Spirit.

In the second analogy (*memoria [sui], intelligentia, voluntas*), in which the perichoretic model is more adequately applied, an immediate and intuitive self-consciousness precedes and founds reflexive knowl-

edge. Because the terms of the triad, which are really distinct, form a unity (because the mind is one), we can say that *mens*, which is the substance or essence of the soul, represents the deity in his entirety, whilst *memoria* corresponds to the Person of the Father, *intelligentia* to the Person of the Son, and *amor* to the Person of the Holy Spirit. When taken either separately or together, each of the three is equal to the others. Each of the three necessarily implies the other three, as all three are correlates. In the full Trinitarian structure, *mens*’s acts are described as ‘proceeding’ from the memory in the same way that, in God, the Son and the Holy Spirit ‘proceed’ from the Father (*De Trinitate* X, 11, 18).

The language of *ousia* and *hupostasis* has a specific function: to demonstrate that there is a type of unity between *mens*’s acts, which are actually distinct from one another, and *mens* itself. This intimate correlativity is irreducible to the relationship between accidents and substance. This is therefore, and by definition, a non-Aristotelian model designed to elucidate the notions of substance–subject and accidents, which are incompatible with the perichoretic structure of the soul. The invention of the ‘subjectivity’ of which Heidegger speaks therefore requires the *subjectum* to intrude into the Augustinian structure. It requires what at first sight appears to be an unnatural encounter between *certitudo infallibilis sui esse* and the Aristotelian notion of a subject. That encounter allows self-certainty to be reformulated as a ‘subjective’ certainty. That encounter presupposes in its turn a more sophisticated version of the subject/object distinction. We have two lines of investigation here.

Box 4 The psychological trinity: I am, I know, I will

In the *Confessions*, Augustine uses the perichoretic model in his outline description of what might be termed the ‘psychical life’ by invoking the triad of *esse, nosse, velle*. In this model, Trinitarian relations permit a formal description of the interacting equalities that define the incomprehensible unity of the ego:

I am, I know and I will. I am a being which knows and wills; I know both that I am and that I will ... In these three – being, knowledge and will – there is one inseparable life, one life, one mind, one essence; and therefore, although they are distinct from one another, this distinction does not separate them.

Confessions, XIII, 11, 12.

In the description of the *mens–notitia–amor* triad, the doctrine of the circumincession of the persons of the Trinity is evoked even more directly in order to conceptualize the mutual in-dwelling of *mens* and its acts:

The mind, love and knowledge ... each is a substance in itself, and all are found mutually in all, or each two in each one, consequently all are in all... These three, therefore, are in a marvellous manner inseparable from one another; and yet each of them is a substance, and all together are one substance or essence, while the terms themselves express a mutual relationship.

On the Trinity IX, 5, 8.

The encounter between the Augustinian perichoretic model and the Aristotelian 'subjectum'

The first, which seems self-evident, is the dichotomy between the subjective mode of being or presence and the objective mode of being or presence, between the *esse subjective* and the *esse objective* of an *intentio* or *conceptus*. This dichotomy does not, however, lead directly from subjectness to subjectivity. On the contrary, the idea that an intention or affect has a 'subjective' existence merely likens mental states to the qualities of the soul or the accidents that befall it, and they are characterized by the relation of inherence. It therefore violates the principle of circumincession. It can be applied to acts (as in William of Ockham) or equated with the Averroist theory of the two subjects (as in Pierre d'Auriole), and remains closer to Aristotle's subjectness than to *certitudo sui esse*. Even though the opposition between objectness/objectivity (*ob-jectitē*) and sub-jectness is essential if a sub-jective notion of the ego is to emerge, it is not enough to guarantee that it will do so. We therefore have to turn to our second line of investigation.

Although it is always dangerous to give a date for the appearance of new theories in the Middle Ages, we can advance the hypothesis that one of the first people to witness the 'subjective' mutation of sub-jectness was precisely the author of the formula *certitudo infallibilis sui esse*: Pierre Jean Olieu.

The Franciscan was reacting to a specific situation: the reformulation, which had become standard since the late thirteenth century, thanks to the notions of 'act' and 'object', of the peripatetic doctrine that the intellect knows itself (1) in the same way that it knows other things, and (2) on the basis of its knowledge of those other things. This so-called peripatetic formulation had in a sense already violated the Augustinian principle stating that the *mens* cannot be regarded as the subject of acts that can be likened to mental accidents. Man is assumed to arrive at an understanding of his mind (*mens*) and of the nature of his ability to think (*naturae potentiae intellectivae*) on the basis of his acts (*per actus ejus*) and the object of those acts (*per cognitionem objectorum*). This conjectural knowledge is the product of a process of reasoning which, taking objects as its starting point, works back to acts by postulating (a) that these acts subsist (*manant*) only because of the power that supplies their substrate (*ab aliqua potentia et substantia*), (b) that they therefore 'exist in a subject' (*sunt in aliquo subjecto*), (c) which allows us to conclude that 'we have a faculty that assures the subsistence' of those acts. Arguing against Augustine, the peripatetics posit

the existence of a '*potentia sub-jectiva*' in order to demonstrate the existence of 'a subject of knowledge acts that are oriented towards objects'. This conjecture, which looks to moderns like a decisive step towards 'subjectivity', is in reality what the Aristotelian model supplied: self-certainty. It actually says nothing about the ego or the I; it makes it possible to posit that my acts have a subject, but it does not establish that 'I am' that subject. Nothing in the peripatetic argument allows me 'to be certain that I am, that I am alive and that I am thinking'; on the contrary, it merely posits that my acts 'subsist thanks to a certain power and that they are inherent in a certain subject':

If we carefully examine this way of thinking, we will see not only that it cannot be beyond doubt, but also that no one can use it to arrive at any certainty that he is what he is, that he is living, and that he is thinking, even though he can therefore be certain that these acts subsist by virtue of a certain power and that they reside in a certain subject.

[*Si quis autem bene inspexerit istum modum, reperiet quod non solum potest in eo contingere aliqua dubietas, sed etiam quod nunquam per hanc viam possemus esse certi nos esse et nos vivere et intelligere, licet enim certi simus quod illi actus manant ab aliqua potentia, et sunt in aliquo subjecto.*]

Pierre Jean Olieu, *Impugnatio quorundam articulorum*, art 19, f.47ra.

In order to arrive at the self-certainty of the Moderns, we therefore have to take one more step: we must assume that I can intuit that I myself am the subject of my acts. We must, in a word, go back to Augustine's perichoretic conception of the soul and adapt the 'peripatetic' language of subjectivity to it. This twofold manoeuvre brings about a forced synthesis and betrays both parties. The resultant thesis is, basically, neither Augustinian nor Aristotelian. But that is precisely why it is a farewell to 'subjectness', or at least the precondition for that farewell. That is the step taken by Pierre Jean Olieu when he makes my perception of my acts depend upon 'my prior perception of myself as subject of those acts'. This leads him to formulate the theorem that 'in the perception of my acts, the perception of the subject itself (= me) comes first according to the natural order of things.' Expressions such as '*certitudo qua sumus certi de supposito omnis actus scientialis*' or '*in hac apprehensione videtur naturali ordine praeire apprehensio ipsius suppositi*' signal the encounter between certainty and subjectivity that gives rise to the modern notions of subjectivity and subjective certainty. They also introduce one more basic feature: acts are likened to attributes or predicates of the subject-ego. Olieu is very clear about

this: ‘Our acts are perceived by us only as predicates or attributes [*actus nostris non apprehenduntur a nobis nisi tamquam praedicata vel attributa*].’ The subject is perceived first because ‘according to the natural order of things, the subject is perceived before the predicate is attributed to it as such.’ The ‘subjectivation’ of the soul is now complete in every dimension, including the assumption of the linguistic or logical form of predication, which is reduplicated when Olieu introduces the word *ego* into linguistic communication. Although the term is unnecessary in Latin, Olieu in fact stresses that, when we wish to signal the existence within us of some mental state, ‘we put the subject first by saying ‘I think that or I see that [*quando volumus hoc aliis annunciare praemittimus ipsum suppositum dicentes: ego hoc cogito, vel ego hoc video*].’ We could therefore describe this first medieval theorization of subjectivity as both ‘substantialist’ and ‘attributivist’. It entails the idea of self-intuition as ‘substance’, or as subject and principle (*subjectum et principium*), as the ‘experiential and almost tactile sensation’ (*sensus experimentalis et quasi tactualis*) that I am a permanent subject. We can further intuit, thanks to the same ‘inner sense’, that my acts are so many ‘attributes’ that are distinct from my substance. They subsist thanks to it and exist within a ‘becoming’ mode:

When we apprehend certain of our acts through an inner sensation, we make an almost experiential distinction between the substance whence they derive their subsistence and in which they exist,

and the senses, or sensations themselves. This means that we perceive through our senses that they subsist prior to that substance and not by virtue of our senses, and that substance is substance, and that it alone is something stable that subsists in itself, whilst its acts are in a permanent state of becoming.

[*Quando apprehendimus nostros actus quosdam interno sensu et quasi experimentaliter distinguimus inter substantiam a qua manant et in qua existunt et inter ipsos sensus, unde et sensibiliter percipimus quod ipsi manant et dependent ab ea, non ipsa ab eis, et quod ipsa esse quiddam fixum et in se manens, ipsi vero actus in quodam continuo fierii.*]

When Kant describes the soul in terms of a rational psychology, he is in fact deploying a theory outlined in the Middle Ages thanks to a violent synthesis of two models that went on arguing over the theory of the soul until the fourteenth century: the Aristotelian model of sub-jectness, to which Heidegger restricts his analysis, and the Augustinian model of the circum-incession of Persons (or hypostases), which, in this context, has been overlooked by almost all historians of the *subject*.

• see box 5

III. Subject: subjectivity and subjection

A. An untranslatable passage in Nietzsche

At the heart of the problems that are now raised by the use of the ‘subject’ category – which has never been more central to philosophy, even though the

Box 5 Subject, thing, person

Everyday language tends to assimilate the notion of ‘subject’ to that of ‘person’, and this appears to contradict interpretations of subjectness (*subjectité*) in terms of subjection or domination. Livy (*History of Rome*, VII, 2) traces *persona* back to the fourth century BC, and the term is basically political, referring to a ‘representation’ that is assigned through a role. Thanks to this double metonymy, which moves from the mask worn by an actor to the role he is interpreting, and then to Cicero’s definition of the magistrate as ‘spokesman’ (*per-sona*) of the *civitas*, or one who ‘assumes the role’ of the city (*est proprium munus magistratus intelligere se gerere personam civitas* [It is ... the particular function of a magistrate to realize that he assumes the role of the city], *On Duties*, I, 34). This makes the magistrate nothing more than the voice of the

law (conversely, the law is a ‘silent magistrate’, *De Legibus*, III, 2). The *persona* is basically juridical; the first to hold it is the assembled Roman people, which, to the extent that it has a literal right to speak, is a *de facto* and *de jure* ‘person’. Given that ‘*nul n’étant censé ignorer la loi* [ignorance of the law is no excuse]’ a Roman citizen is a *persona*. The city is the supreme citizen or ‘supremely a *persona*’ (*persona civitas*), and the magistrate is the *persona* of a person (*persona personae*). There therefore appears to be a hidden link between ‘person’ and the dimension of subjection that is present in the notion of ‘subject’. *Persona*, that is, provides the backdrop for the distinction between the free man (*caput*) and the slave (*servus*); it allows the distinction between autonomy and juridical heteronomy. As the jurisconsult Gaius writes (c. 135) ‘*Quaedam*

personae sui juris sunt, quedam alieno juris subjectae sunt [some persons are *sui juris* (independent) and others are *alieni juris* (dependent on others)]’ (*Institutes* I 48). The history of ‘persona’ is, in etymological terms, bound up with that of ‘role’ (a political, juridical, social or even ethical role) and with the emergence of ‘subjectivity’–subjection. In philosophical terms, however, ‘persona’ is closely bound up with the phenomena of the translations and transpositions associated with the mutation of Aristotle’s *hupokeimenon* into *subjectum*.

Philosophical definitions of ‘person’ first appear in the context of the controversies over Trinitarian theology that occurred in late antiquity. In Chapter 3 of the *Contra Eutychen et Nestorium*, Boethius (pp. 84, 4–5) defines ‘person’ as ‘an individual substratum endowed with a rational nature [*natura rationabilis individua substantia*]’. This definition provides the backdrop for the philosophical encounter between subjectness and personality. Yet Boethius uses not *hupokeimenon*, but *hupostasis*, a term which is even more ambiguous and difficult to elucidate. In order to make the strange Trinitarian notion of ‘person’ comprehensible to *Latini*, Aristotle’s Latin translator assumes that he first has to explain what the Greeks call *hupostasis*. The Latin word *persona* – which he regards as equivalent to the Greek *prosōpon* (πρόσωπον), even though the term refers to an optical model, to a visible representation such as the face of the law or the polis, rather than to a voice or to speech – does not, in his view, express what is at stake in the notion he is trying to construct. And how indeed could a Latin-speaker living in the 520s understand something of the Trinitarian mystery by using a term that evokes someone appearing on stage in a mask, the role that intervenes in the ethical formulation of ‘life choices’ (in the sense in which Cicero writes: ‘*Ipsi autem gerere quam personam velimus a nostra voluntate profiscitur* [It is through a voluntary decision that we adopt the *role* we claim to be playing]’), or the death mask that wards off demons? The Greeks have the ‘much more expressive’ (*longe signatus*) term *hupostasis*, which allows them to express the fundamental feature: the ‘individual subsistence of a nature [*naturae individuum subsistentiam*]’ (Boethius, pp. 86, 24–5).

Because of the initial hesitation over ‘substance’ or ‘subsistence’, Boethius’ definition of ‘person’ reveals the constituent features of the various medi-

eval networks that use different combinations of ‘subject’, ‘*suppôt*’, ‘thing’ and ‘person’.

The important thing here is the clarification of the distinction between subsistence and substance. Given that Boethius translates *ousia* as *essentia*, *ousiōsis* as *subsistentia* and *hupostasis* as *substantia*, the first step is to make a systematic distinction between the three terms. This can be done by showing that an entity such as man has *ousia* or essence because he is; has *ousiōsis* or ‘subsistence’, because he is ‘in’ no subject (is not, that is to say, an accident), and has *hupostasis* or ‘substance’ because he is ‘subjected to others’ who are not subsistences (who are, that is, ‘accidents’). The second step is to demonstrate that that which is not an accident, but which is a substrate for accidents, or in other words that which is a subsistence, ‘is’ at the level of the universal, but ‘acquires substance’, or in other words functions as a substance (as a substrate for accidents) in particulars (*‘ipsae subsistentiae in universalibus quidem sint, in particularibus vero capiunt substantiam’*). According to the Greeks, ‘substances subsisting in particulars’ deserve to be called ‘substances’ in the strict sense (*‘jure subsistentias particulariter substantes ὑπόστασις ἀπὸκαλεῖται’*, *ibid.*, pp. 86, 35–8, 39). What Boethius calls a ‘hypostasis’ or substance is therefore that which found the particular existence of a nature, or which makes possible for its particularization and its existence, which are inseparable.

Quite apart from the way Aristotle’s *hupokeimenon* mutates into *subjectum*, we must also make allowance for the way *hupostasis* mutates into *substantia*, if we are to understand the emergence of the personal dimension of subjectivity within the domain of Trinitarian theology. The history of the Latin reception of the Greek formula – ‘one essence in three hypostases’ – provides the framework for a series of developments that are of great importance to the subjectness/subjectivity system. The replacement of the obscure term *substantia* by the word *res* or ‘thing’ in the eleventh century is one of the hidden reasons for the philosophical debate between the realists and the nominalists. This also provided the framework for the first medieval reflections on the notion of *suppositum*, which affected grammar, logic and theology alike. If we also recall that the formula ‘have *hupostasis* (in)’, which Boethius translates into Latin as *habere substantiam (in)* was the prescholastic way of expressing existence,

we can see that this is also the theme that introduces ontology (the difference between essence and existence), which was initially part of Trinitarian theology's conceptual network.

From this perspective, 'subjective' is not the opposite of 'objective' in the same way that 'perceiving' is the opposite of 'perceived', or that 'inner world' is the opposite of 'outside world'. When we encounter the terms *subjectum* or *subjectivum* in medieval texts on psychology, we therefore have to take care not to interpret them in the sense of 'subjective subject' or 'egoness'. Medieval philosophers were concerned with something very different, namely the substrate, *sub-jectum* or *suppôt* of thought. The way *subjectum* is used in the sphere of subjectness explains why authors such as Averroes gives human thought two subjects. To ask what is the subject of thought is to raise questions about what it is that founds the *intentio intellecta* as

an act *commun*. Averroes' answer – the imagination, which is a faculty situated in the body and numbered by it, and the 'material' intellect, which is separate from the body and not numbered by it – is inscribed within what we would now call a 'modular' psychology, and therefore does not assimilate the *subjectum* to the *ego*.

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twentieth century gave it a completely new orientation – there is a 'pun' (intentional or otherwise) on two Latin etymologies: that of the neuter *subjectum* (which, like *suppositum*, has, ever since the scholastics, been regarded by philosophers as a translation of the Greek *hupokeimenon*), and that of the masculine *subjectus* (equated with *subditus* in the Middle Ages). One gives rise to a lineage of logico-grammatical and ontological-transcendental meanings, and the other to a lineage of juridical, political and theological meanings. Far from remaining independent of one another, they have constantly overdetermined one another, because, following Kant, the problematic articulation of 'subjectivity' and 'subjection' came to be defined as a theory of the constituent subject. That overdetermination can be overt, latent or even repressed depending on whether or not the language in question reveals its workings.

The best way to introduce these problems of modern philosophy is, perhaps, to read an astonishing passage from Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*. I cite the most authoritative French translation and include the German terms in parentheses.

Les philosophes ont coutume de parler de la volonté comme si c'était la chose la mieux connue au monde [...] Un homme qui *veut* commande en lui-même à quelque chose qui obéit ou dont il se croit obéi [*befiehlt einem Etwas in sich, das gehorcht oder von dem er glaubt, dass es gehorcht*]. Mais considérons maintenant l'aspect le plus singulier de

la volonté, de cette chose si complexe [*vielfachen Dinge*] pour laquelle le peuple n'a qu'un mot: si, dans le cas envisagé, nous sommes à la fois celui qui commande *et* celui qui obéit [*zugleich die Befehlenden und Gehorchenden*], et si nous connaissons, en tant que sujet obéissant [*als Gehorchenden*], la contrainte, l'oppression, la résistance, le trouble, sentiments qui accompagnent immédiatement l'acte de volonté; si, d'autre part, nous avons l'habitude de nous duper nous-mêmes en escamotant cette dualité grâce au concept synthétique de 'moi' [*uns über diese Zweiheit vermöge des synthetischen Begriffs 'ich' hinwegzusetzen, hinwegzutäuschen*], on voit que toute une chaîne de conclusions erronées, et donc de jugements faux sur la volonté elle-même, viendrait encore s'agréger au vouloir [...] Comme dans la très grande majorité des cas, la volonté n'entre en jeu que là où elle s'*attend* à être obéi, donc à susciter un acte, on en est venu à croire, *fallacieusement*, qu'une telle conséquence était *nécessaire* [*so hat sich der Anschein in das Gefühl übersetzt, als ob es da eine Notwendigkeit von Wirkung gäbe*]. Bref, celui qui veut est passablement convaincu que la volonté et l'acte ne sont qu'un en quelque manière [*dass Wille und Aktion irgendwie Eins seien*] [...] 'Libre arbitre', tel est le mot qui désigne ce complexe état d'euphorie du sujet voulant, qui commande et qui s'identifie à la fois avec l'exécuteur de l'action [*das Wort für jenen vielfachen Lust-Zustand des Wollenden, der befiehlt und sich zugleich mit dem Ausführenden als Eins setzt*], qui goûte au plaisir de triompher des résistances, tout en estimant que c'est sa volonté qui les surmonte. À son plaisir d'individu qui ordonne,

le sujet voulant ajoute ainsi les sentiments de plaisir issus des instruments d'exécution [*Der Wollende nimmt dergestalt dies Lustgefühle der ausführenden, erfolgreichern Werkzeuge*] qui sont les diligentes 'sous-volontés' ou sous-âmes [*'Unterwillen' oder Unterseelen*] car notre corps n'est pas autre chose qu'un édifice d'âmes multiples [*ein Gesellschafsbau vieler Seelen*]. *L'effet, c'est moi* [in French in Nietzsche's text]: ce qui ce produit ici ne diffère pas de ce qui se passe dans toute collectivité heureuse et bien organisée: la classe dirigeante s'identifie au succès de la collectivité [*dass die regierende Klasse sich mit den Erfolgen des Gemeinwesens identifiziert*] [...]

F. Nietzsche, *Œuvres philosophiques complètes*, vol. 7, *Par-delà bien et mal*, §19.

In Hollingdale's English translation:

Philosophers are given to speaking of the will as if it were the best-known thing in the world [...] A man who *wills* – commands something in himself which obeys or which he believes obeys. But now observe the strangest thing of all about the will – about this so complex thing for which people have only *one* word: inasmuch as in the given circumstance we at the same time command *and* obey, and the side which obeys know the sensations of constraint, compulsion, pressure, resistance, motions which usually begin immediately after the act of will; inasmuch as, on the other hand, we are in the habit of disregarding and deceiving ourselves over this duality by means of the synthetic concept 'I'; so a whole chain of erroneous conclusions and consequently of false evaluations of the will itself has become attached to the will as such. Because in the great majority of cases willing takes place only where the effect of the command, that is to say obedience, was to be *expected*, the *appearance* has translated itself into the sensation, as if it were here a *necessity of effect*. Enough: he who wills believes with a tolerable degree of certainty that will and action are somehow one [...] 'Freedom of will' – is the expression for that complex condition of pleasure of the person who wills, who commands and at the same time identifies himself with the executor of the command – who as such also enjoys the triumph over resistance involved but who thinks it was his will itself which overcame these resistances. He who wills adds in this way the sensations of pleasure of the successful executive agents, the serviceable 'under-wills' or under-souls – 'for our body is only a social structure composed of many souls' – to his sensations of pleasure as commander. *L'effet, c'est moi*: what happens here is what happens in every well-constructed and happy commonwealth: the ruling class identifies itself with the successes of the commonwealth [...]

My purpose here is not to challenge the choices made by the French translator (which would imply

that I intended to propose alternatives) but to point out the problems they raise. I attach particular importance to the fact that Nietzsche's text itself contains some thoughts about 'translation' inasmuch as it is a process of misrepresentation (*travestissement*) that has to be given a basic anthropological meaning. No less remarkable is the fact that, given the illusions of unity that are inherent in willing, the invocation of the political metaphor (if that is what it is...) goes hand in hand with the construction of a 'French' phrase (which cannot be translated into French) which is a parodic version of the famous allegory of absolute monarchy attributed to Louis XIV (*'L'État, c'est moi'*).

Two striking features of the French translation are to be noted. It systematically introduces the word *sujet* (*'sujet obéissant'*, *'sujet voulant'*) because it makes the metaphysical assumption that an *Etwas* remains the same throughout the actions of commanding and the effects of obeying, and thus gets around the critique that Nietzsche's text is making, at this very moment, of the illusion of the I (*Ich*). It also plays on one of the French *sujet's* connotations, which is not present in the closest German philosophical equivalent (*das Subjekt*), and therefore uses a generic term to express the ambivalence of the real or imagined relations of subordination (*arkhein* [ἄρχειν] and *arkhesthai* [ἀρχεσθαι]) that exist between the parts of the soul; in Nietzsche's view, they constitute the essence of the phenomenon of 'will': *sujet obéissant* looks like a tautology, and *sujet voulant* almost like a contradiction. Or is it the other way around?

Far from being a mere curiosity, such a text brings us to the very heart of the linguistic tensions characteristic of the construction and use of the notion of *sujet*. Their essential characteristic derives from the Greek and Latin notions, which tend to produce two different paradigms for the interpretation of 'subject', one specific to the neo-Latin languages (and especially French) and one specific to German. In one case, the simultaneously logical-ontological and juridico-political connotations of *sujet* are – thanks to a sort of 'historiological' word play on the meanings of *subiectum* and *subjectus* – exploited in a systematic investigation into the modalities of the *'assujettissement du sujet'* ('subjugation of the subject'). In the other, the relationship between the subject's mode of being and the register of law or power can be found exclusively in an ontology of freedom which contrasts it with nature, because the political dimension is immediately concealed by language or is, rather, relegated to the latent system. The two paradigms do not, of course, develop independently of one another, as they share

the same classical references and because the more or less simultaneous translation of the works of European metaphysics is one of the main determinants of their history. In that respect, it is striking that it should be the divergent readings of Nietzsche's work that bring this out.

B. Sovereignty of the subject: Bataille or Heidegger?

The first paradigm is exemplified by Georges Bataille, who was probably one of the first contemporary authors working in the French language consciously to exploit the possibility of inscribing a dialectical (or mystical) antinomy at the heart of anthropology by defining the subject in terms of its 'sovereignty', or in other words its non-subjection. According to Bataille this is just a bad pun – even though his construct obviously relies upon it:

If I have spoken of objective sovereignty, I have never lost sight of the fact that sovereignty is never truly objective, that it refers rather to deep subjectivity [...] [in the world of things and their interdependencies] we perceive relations of force and doubtless the isolated element undergoes the influence by the mass [*la masse*], but the mass cannot *subordinate* [*subordonner*] it. Subordination presupposes another relation, that of object to subject. [Footnote: The custom of sovereigns saying 'my subjects' introduces an unavoidable ambiguity: in my view the *subject* is the *sovereign*. The subject I am talking about is in no sense *subjected* [*assujetti*].] The subject is the being *as he appears to himself from within* [...] *The sovereign different from the others differs from them as the subject differs from the objective action of labour*. This unavoidable pun is unwelcome. I mean that the mass individual, who spends part of his time working for the benefit of the sovereign, *recognises* him; I mean that he *recognises himself* in him. The mass individual no longer sees in the sovereign the object that he must first of all be in his eyes, but rather the *subject* [...] the sovereign, epitomizing the *subject*, is the one by whom and for whom the instant, the *miraculous* instant, is the ocean into which the streams of labour disappear.

Georges Bataille, *La Part maudite* III, La Souveraineté, I, 4, in *Œuvres complètes* VIII, pp. 283–6; *The Accursed Share*, vol. 3, *Sovereignty*, Pt 1, ch. 4, pp. 237–41, trans. amended.

The obstacle Bataille comes up against here may have influenced his decision to abandon his book. But it also provides Lacan, Althusser and Foucault with their starting point when they transform the impasse into an opening.

The second paradigm is exemplified by Heidegger's suggestion that Nietzsche's doctrine of the 'will to

power' should be seen as part of the 'history of being' characteristic of Western metaphysics. Nietzsche characterises the subject that designates itself 'I' (*Ich*) or 'ego' as a grammatical fiction (see in particular the fragments from 1887–89 published under the title *The Will to Power*). Heidegger, however, is trying to demonstrate that it 'is grounded in the metaphysics established by Descartes', to the extent that, although he makes body rather than 'soul' and 'conscience' the substance of thought, he identifies the latter more closely than ever with subjectivity and makes the criterion of truth the definition of man as subject (Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. IV, ch. 19, pp. 123 ff.). Heidegger's problem is how to determine, through a genealogical investigation into 'metaphysics as the history of being', the preconditions for the moment of ontological conversion (which is closely linked to the mutation in the idea of truth itself) that made *subjectum*, which Latin philosophers regarded as a 'translation' of Aristotle's *hupokeimenon*, not just the simple presupposition of the realization of an individual substance in a particular form, but 'the' very power to think, from which all representations stem, and which reflects upon itself in the first person (*cogito me cogitare* is the key phrase attributed to Descartes by Heidegger). The 'sovereignty of the subject' (*Herrschaft des Subjekts*), on which we are still dependent, is basically a creation of the Descartes of the *Meditations* and the *Principles of Philosophy*.

To begin to undo this tangle (and, in doing so, to elucidate at least part of the unsaid [*non-dit*] of late-twentieth-century debates about the 'philosophy of the subject' and the various critiques therefore), we must first reduce Heidegger's construction of the history of Being as the history of successive generalizations of 'subjectness' (*Subjektivität*, 'I think') to the self-referentiality (or autonomy) of the transcendental subject and its retrospective attribution to Descartes, and make it the starting point for the specifically modern attitude in philosophy. Despite Bataille's embarrassment about what he calls a pun, we must then reconstruct a *longue durée* semantics whose effects become ever-more specific and conscious in the hands of his successors, whom it helps to unite, regardless of the obvious doctrinal disagreements. Let us begin with the first point.

C. The 'Cartesian' subject: a Kantian invention

The expressions 'Cartesian subject' and 'Cartesian subjectivity' are so widely used and so often used to situate Cartesianism in a historical or comparative

series (either in a French discourse, or between French and other philosophical idioms) that it is worthwhile expounding in detail the prehistory of this construct, which is also a translation error. That error reveals the extraordinary conceptual work performed by the language itself (because of the syntactic differences between Latin, French and German). Language is sufficiently powerful and suggestive to induce a retrospective understanding of Descartes' text and the issues at stake in his philosophy, and we can no longer ignore the issue. Thanks to Kant's reading of Descartes, we can see it as an early instance of resistance to the transcendental problematic but cannot divorce it from the language of 'subjectivity'. From that point of view, we cannot undo what Kant has done.

As J. Ritter judiciously reminds us, *Subjektivität* is already an important term in Baumgarten's *Aesthetics*. It refers to the field and quality of phenomena which, in the thinking, perceiving and sentient being, are the effect not of the external objects that affect it, but of its own dispositions (they are what Locke or Malebranche would call 'secondary qualities'). Ritter's suggestion to the contrary notwithstanding, the use of *subjectum*, or rather *Subjekt*, in German does not, however, precede this abstract conceptual formation; it comes later. It is in fact only with the *Critique of Pure Reason* that *das Subjekt* (variously described as the logical subject, the empirical subject, the rational subject, the transcendental subject or the moral subject) becomes the key concept in a philosophy of subjectivity. Kant's philosophy therefore simultaneously 'invents' the problematic of a thought whose conditions of access to both the objectivity of the laws of nature and the universality of ethical and aesthetic values lie in its own constitution (the so-called 'Copernican revolution'), and gives the name 'subject' (i.e. the opposite of 'object') to the generic individuality inherent in the interplay between the faculties of knowledge; for all finite minds, that interplay constitutes 'the world' and gives a meaning to the fact of acting in the world. Even if we take into account its remarkable forerunners (such as that identified by A. de Libera in the work of the 'brilliant' twelfth-century Franciscan, Pierre Jean Olieu; see above), which were in all probability not known to Kant, the only intrinsic connection between the *Subjekt* created by Kant and the scholastic notion of the *subjectum* or *suppositum* is that implied by the idea of the Copernican revolution: the categories, or in other words the most general modalities that the activity of judgement uses to attribute predicates to things, are no longer genera of being, but categories of the subject, constitutive of

the object (and, in that sense, of experience in general: 'transcendentals').

Why, in these conditions, did Kant retrospectively project this discovery on to a 'precursor', namely Descartes? For over two hundred years, he has lent credence to the idea that the subject is a Cartesian invention, and has thus encouraged even the greatest thinkers to look for traces of a semantic mutation in terms that are almost never used by the philosopher of the *Meditations*. The answer lies, as so often, in the letter of the text itself. We will compare three passages from the *Critique of Pure Reason* ('Transcendental Deduction' and 'Paralogisms of Pure Reason'). It has to be said that they are still not easy to translate.

1. *Das: Ich denke, muss alle meine Vorstellungen begleiten können; denn sonst würde etwas in mir vorgestellt werden, was gar nicht gedacht werden könnte [...]. Also hat alles Mannigfaltige der Anschauung eine notwendige Beziehung auf das: Ich denke, in demselben Subjekt, darin dieses Mannigfaltige angetroffen wird. Diese Vorstellung aber ist ein Aktus der Spontaneität, sie kann nicht als zur Sinnlichkeit gehörig angesehen werden. Ich nenne sie die reine Apperzeption [...] weil sie dasjenige Selbstbewusstsein ist, was, indem es die Vorstellung Ich denke hervorbringt, die alle anderen muss begleiten können, und in allem Bewusstsein ein und dasselbe ist, von keiner weiter begleitet werden kann.*

[The *I think* must be able to accompany all my representations; for otherwise something would be represented in me which could not be thought at all [...] Thus all manifold of intuition has a necessary relation to the *I think* in the same subject in which this manifold is to be encountered. But this representation is an act of *spontaneity*; i.e. it cannot be regarded as belonging to sensibility. I call it the *pure apperception* [...] since it is that self-consciousness which, because it produces the representation *I think*, which must be able to accompany all others and in which all consciousness is one and the same, cannot be accompanied by any further representation.]

Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Transcendental Logic, §12, B 132.

2. *Ich, als denkend, bin ein Gegenstand der inneren Sinnes, und heisse Seele [...]. Demnach bedeutet der Ausdruck: Ich, als ein denkend Wesen, schon den Gegenstand der Psychologie [...] Ich denke, ist also der alleinige Text der rationalen Psychologie, aus welchem sie ihre ganze Weisheit auswickeln soll. Man sieht leicht, dass dieser Gedanke, wenn er auf einen Gegenstand (mir selbst) bezogen werden soll, nichts anderes, als transzendente Prädikate desselben, enthalten könne [...] Zum Grunde derselben können wir aber nichts anderes legen, als die*

einfache und für sich selbst an Inhalt gänzlich leere Vorstellung: Ich, von der man nicht einmal sagen kann, dass sie ein Begriff sei, sondern ein blosses Bewusstsein, dass alle Begriffe begleitet. Durch dieses, Ich, oder Er, oder Es (das Ding), welches denkt, wird nun nichts weiter, als ein transzendentes Subjekt der Gedanken vorgestellt = x, welches nur durch die Gedanken, die seine Prädikate sind, erkannt wird [...]

[I, as thinking, am an object of inner sense, and am called ‘soul’. Accordingly, the expression ‘I’, as a thinking being, already signifies the object of a psychology ... I think is thus the sole text of a rational psychology, from which it is to develop its entire wisdom. One can easily see that this thought, if it is to be related to object (myself), can contain nothing other than its transcendental predicates ... At the ground of this doctrine we can place nothing but the simple and in content for itself wholly empty representation I, of which one cannot even say that it is a content, but a mere consciousness that accompanies every concept. Through this I, or He, or It (the thing), which thinks, nothing further is represented than a transcendental subject of thought = x, which is recognized through the thoughts that are its predicates...]

Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, The Paralogisms of Pure Reason, A 342–3, 345–6.

3. *Der Satz: Ich denke, wird aber hierbei nur problematisch genommen; nich sofern er eine Wahrnehmung von einem Dasein enthalten mag (das kartesianische cogito ergo sum), sondern seiner blossen Möglichkeit nach, um zu sehen, welche Eigenschaften aus diesem so einfachen Satze auf das Subjekt desselben (es mag dergleichen nun existieren oder nicht) fließen mögen.*

Läge unserer reinen Vernunftserkenntnis von denkenden Weser überhaupt mehr, als das Cogito zum Grunde [...] so würde eine empirische Psychologie entspringen [...]

[The proposition ‘I think’ is, however, taken here only problematically; not in so far as it may contain a perception of an existence (the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum*), but only in its mere possibility, in order to see which properties might flow from so simple a proposition as this for its subject (whether or not such a thing might now exist).

If more than the cogito were the ground of our pure rational cognition of things in general ... then an empirical psychology would arise ...]

Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, The Paralogisms of Pure Reason, A 347.

Leaving aside the remarkable alternation between the pronouns (*Ich, Er, Es*; see I), we can see that Kant is doing one thing whilst claiming to do another. He attributes to Descartes a nominalization of the statement *cogito*, or ‘I think’, so as to make it the name

of a self-referential operation whereby thought takes itself as its own object; the full formula should be ‘I am thinking that I am thinking that I am thinking’. It therefore designates the ‘something’ or the ‘being’ that both intends and is intended by thought as a *subject* (*subjectum*, which Kant transcribes as *Subjekt*) in the sense that classical metaphysics defines a subject as a pole or support for the attribution of predicates. Kant thereby suggests to his successors (Fichte, Hegel) that the only conceivable subject (*hupokeimenon*) is a subject that thinks itself, and whose predicates are its thoughts. From the Cartesian point of view, these two operations are contradictory, as we can see if we go back to the text of the *Meditations*. Strictly speaking, there is no nominalization of the simple phrase *cogito/je pense* in Descartes (it first appears in Arnauld’s *Des vraies et des fausses idées*), even though the way it reflects upon the properties of its own proper enunciation anticipates it. The transition to the metaphysical subject is, on the other hand, incompatible with the cogito in the strict sense (in the *Meditations* it is reduced to the existential proposition ‘*je suis, j’existe*’). The *cogito* is in fact inseparable from a first-person statement (*ego*), which Descartes contrasts with the he/it (*il/elle*) of God and the ‘this’ (*hoc*) of his own body (in a problematic of identity or ego: ‘*Ce moi, c’est-à-dire mon âme, par laquelle je suis ce que je suis*’ – ‘That I, thanks to which I am what I am’, *Discourse on Method*, Part 6). ‘I think’ is equivalent to ‘I am’, which is then developed into ‘I am who I am’, or in other words my soul (*mens*) and not Him (God) or that (my body). We have here a misunderstanding – which has very serious implications as, reading thought Kantian spectacles, the whole of transcendental philosophy, right down to Husserl and Heidegger, constantly criticizes Descartes for having ‘substantialized the subject’ in the very moment of its discovery. As we now know, transcendental philosophy reads Descartes as though he were a medieval thinker (Olieu), but has nothing to say about the philosophy of the Middle Ages ...

The misunderstanding arises, basically, because Kant finds it difficult to situate in historical terms an idea that is revolutionary in philosophical terms and that is a concentrate of all the originality of his own ‘transcendental dialectic’ and which differs from both the ‘subjectivity’ of Aristotelian metaphysics (*tode ti, hupokeimenon, ousia*) and the ‘ipseity’ of the Cartesian ‘thing that thinks’ (*ego ipse a me percipior*): that of the truth of the perceptive appearance inherent in thought. According to Kant, we cannot think (form concepts, subsume intuitions, etc.) without our inner sense being

affected and without, therefore, giving rise to the illusion that there is an ‘inner reality’ which is itself the object of thought: the thinking ‘self’ recognized itself in its logical function (unifying experience) to the extent that it constantly misrecognizes itself because it believes it can be known (as a phenomenon, literally a ‘that which appears’ in the scene of representation: *erscheint*) (see *ERSCHEINUNG*). Now, in Kant, ‘substance’ is no longer of the order of being or of the Thing ‘in itself’. Substance is no more than the concept of that which remains permanent in phenomena. Kant therefore explains to us that the *subject*, which in itself (*qua* potentiality or logical faculty) is nothing substantial because it is in no sense phenomenal, constantly *appears to itself* in the modality of a substance as it thinks (itself) and because it thinks (itself). In the *Transcendental Deduction*, Kant writes: ‘I am conscious of myself not as I appear to myself, nor as I am in myself, but only that I am’ (B 155). The ‘I’, which is given only in a form that is inseparable from an ‘I think’ statement, which also functions as its ‘proper’, or in other words generic, name, can be apprehended (*en s’affectant lui-même*) only in an illusory mode. But this illusion or transcendental appearance (*Schein*) is the only thing that can deliver a primal truth, and the only possible form of ground. In one sense, it is the truth itself. *Subject* is the word that now denotes this astonishing unity of opposites. And Kant attributes to Descartes the metaphysical illusion he himself claims to have escaped. Descartes’ ‘error’ is testimony to the fact that the false lies at the heart of the true.

It does seem that we are dealing here exclusively with epistemological propositions and the experience of thought – and it should be noted that the enunciation’s syntactic forms and the translations or transpositions play a determinant role. There is nothing to evoke openly a ‘practical’ and, a fortiori, ‘political’ dimension of the subject. This is not, however, certain when we look at two characteristics of the arguments we have just described. The first is that Kant’s *subject* (the *Ich* or, to be more accurate, the *Ich denke*) is basically caught up in a relationship of ascription. The reflexivity ascribes to it, or it ascribes to itself, a representation that is both truth and error, recognition and misrecognition. The second is that this circle of apperception results in an injunction. It is not only tempting, but necessary, to compare this injunction with the very form of the categorical imperative: we are enjoined to free our own representation from phenomenalism (or, which comes down to the same thing, substantialism) in order to relate it to the idea of ‘pure’ intellectual activity. Now as such an idea is meaningless in terms

of nature, and it is only as a correlate of freedom that it can acquire a meaning. This is the way the study of the ‘Paralogisms of Pure Reason’ ends: the transcendental *subject* (the reflexive identity of the self or *Selbst*) is identified with the moral ‘personality’ (*Persönlichkeit*): ‘a possible subject of a better world, which he has in its idea’ (B 426).

In historical terms, one would like to be able to relate this substratum of Kant’s thought to the ‘becoming a subject’ of the revolutionary and post-revolutionary citizen, and especially to the establishment of the category of a ‘subject of law’ (*Rechtssubjekt*) of which we do not, as yet, have a sufficiently clear idea. In a recent study, Yves-Charles Zarka notes in Leibniz, in contrast, a problematic of justice and equity that requires everyone to ‘put himself in the place of all’, the emergence of the expression *subjectum juris*, in the sense of a ‘moral quality’ that universalizes its bearer. But we also know that, even when he seems to come closest to defining the idea of it (as in the *Doctrine of Right* of 1795, where the divisions of right are deduced from the subjective relationship between the obligors and the obligees), Kant (and Hegel after him) never uses the expression *Rechtssubjekt*, which seems to appear only with the *Historical School of Law* (Savigny, Hugo, Puchta). These subjects (*Subjekte*), in ‘relation to whom’ obligations can be conceptualized (and who ‘relate’ those obligations to themselves) have strictly nothing to do with political *subjects* (*Untertan*, which Kant equates with the Latin *subditus*) who obey a sovereign (which may be the people, as constituted into a state). The encounter with the thematic of sovereignty and the law implicit in the idea of a liberation of the subject, and of the subject as one ‘he who frees himself’, therefore remains repressed.

• see box 6

D. Subjectivity à la française

It is, in contrast, possible to interpret the way in which contemporary philosophy – and especially contemporary French philosophy – understands the question of subjectivity: not as a question of essence, or as relating being to truth and appearance or in the metaphysical opposition between nature and liberty, but as a political issue, a becoming or a relationship between forces that are ‘internal’ to their conflict.

From the point of view of the history of ideas and words, we should obviously establish a certain number of intermediary links, but we can do no more than evoke them here. First and foremost, there is Rousseau. The two sides of his work and the corresponding turns of phrase leave traces everywhere. Think of

Box 6 *Subjectus/subjectum*: the historial pun

► RIGHT, OIKONOMIA, POLIS, POWER

The English *subject*, the French *sujet*, the Spanish *sujeto*, and the Italian *soggetto* immediately reveal what the German *Subjekt* cannot evoke because of the differences between it and *Untertan*. They have a twofold etymology: *subjectum*, which is a support for individual properties, and *subjectus*, meaning ‘subject to’ a law or power. ‘Subject’ implies both presupposition and subjection, the answer to the question ‘what?’ and the answer to the question ‘who?’ It is my considered view that this linguistic fact has played a determining role in the development of Western philosophy, and I have, parodying certain French translations of Heidegger, spoken of a historial (*historial*) pun whose effects can be traced from Hobbes to Foucault, via Rousseau, Hegel, Nietzsche and Bataille.

Subject was not originally one of the words with ‘antithetical’ meanings’ that so fascinated Freud. But it has become one, and the result is that freedom and constraint now look like two sides of the same coin. The origins of this overdetermination are, inevitably, Greek, even though the structural analogy between the terms *hupokeimenon* (substrate or support) and *hupostasis* (meaning ground or substance until it became the Greek Fathers’ technical term for the ‘persons’ of the Trinity [*hupokos*: ‘he who obeys the word’, the servant, the disciple or the vassal who pays tribute]) can have a retrospective effect on our imaginations. They have never been theoretical ‘neighbours’. We have to turn to Latin, or in other words to imperial and Christian Rome, and then to the history of the theologico-political and of a moral anthropology centred on obedience as path to salvation.

The *subjectus* is a juridical figure with a history lasting seventeen hundred years, from Roman law to absolute monarchy. This raises the question of how we can go from an enumeration of the individuals who are subject to the power of an other, to a representation of the human race as a set of *subjects*. The distinction between independent and dependent persons was basic to Roman law. A text from Gaius is sufficient reminder of that:

Next comes another division in the law of persons. For some persons are *sui iuris* (independent) and others are *alieni iuris* (dependent on others). Again, of those *alieni iuris* some are

in potestas, others *in manu*, and others *in mancipium*. Let us consider first persons *alieni iuris*, for, knowing them, we shall at the same time know who are *sui iuris*.

Institutes I, 48–50.

It is the dialectical division of forms of subjection that gives us, *a contrario*, a definition of free men or masters. But the notions of *potestas*, *manus* and *mancipium* are not enough for that division to create a link *between* subjects. What is needed is an *imperium*. The idea of a universal subjection therefore emerges with the Empire (and in relation to the person of the Emperor to whom citizens, and many non-citizens, owe *officium* or ‘service’). But that is still not a sufficient precondition: Romans must (if they have not already done so) submit to the *imperium* in the same way that conquered peoples ‘submit to the people of Rome’ (the incipient confusion emerges in contradictory fashion when the personal status of ‘Roman citizen’ extends to the entire Empire). And, above all, the *imperium* must be theologically founded as a Christian *imperium*, as a spiritual power derived from and preserved by God, and reigning not over bodies but over (and in) souls.

Understood in this sense, the subject (the subject of law) is the absolute opposite of what will later be termed the *Rechtssubjekt* (a subject by right or with rights, *sujet de droit*). The *sujet de droit* has two main characteristics: he is a *subditus* but not a *servus*. To describe the subject as *subditus* is to say that he enters into a relation of obedience. Obedience is not only something that applies between a leader who has the power to coerce and those who are under his power; it also describes the relationship between a *sublimis* who is elected as commander and the *subditi* or *subjecti* who turn to him to hear what the law states. The ability or power (*pouvoir*) to coerce is distributed throughout a hierarchy of powers (*puissances*). Obedience is the principle which ensures that all who obey are members of the same body. Although it is concentrated at the top in the figure of a *principium/princeps*, it basically comes from below; in so far as they are *subditi*, subjects ‘will’ their own obedience, which is inscribed within the economy of creation and salvation. The ‘loyal subject’ (*fidèle sujet*) is of necessity a ‘faithful

subject' or 'believer' (*sujet fidèle*) who knows that all power comes from God.

Such obedience, in its theoretical unity and its innumerable forms, therefore implies the notion of a commandant (*arkhôn*), but being commanded (*arkhomenos*) then implies – at least in a democratic *politeia* – the possibility of becoming a commander (this is Aristotle's definition of the citizen); alternatively, it is a domestic-style natural dependence. In that perspective, the very idea of 'free obedience' is a contradiction in terms. That a slave can 'also' be free is a late (Stoic) idea which has to be understood as meaning that he who is a slave in this world can also be a master (of himself and his passions) in another world (a 'cosmic' city of spirits); he can also be a citizen who is bound to others by reciprocal ties (*philia*: see LOVE). There is nothing here to suggest the idea of a freedom that resides in obedience, or that results from obedience. For that to be conceivable, obedience must cease to pertain to the soul and must cease to be considered natural; it must be the supernatural part of an individual who understands the divine nature of order.

A constant distinction was made between the *subditus* and the *subjectus*, just as a distinction was made between the sovereignty of the prince or *sublimis* and that of a despotism (literally, the authority of a slave-master). But that basic distinction took several forms. Within the theological framework, the subject is a believer, a Christian. This can also mean that because, in the last instance, he obeys his soul, he cannot be the sovereign's 'thing' (to be used or abused as he wishes); the counterpart of his obedience is the prince's responsibility (duty) towards him. This way of conceptualizing the freedom of the subject is, in practice, extraordinarily ambivalent: it can be understood as meaning that his will to obey is assertive and active (just as the Christian can, through his works, 'cooperate in salvation'), or that his will has been extinguished (which is why mystics seek to annihilate themselves in the contemplation of God, who is the only absolute sovereign). Autonomy is close to nothingness, and 'property' to 'expropriation'.

It is understandable that when the 'citizen' reappeared in the towns of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, he was no longer reducible to the *zôon politikon* (ζῷον πολιτικόν); Aquinas (who translates the expression as 'social animal') makes a distinction between man's (supernatural) *christianitas* and (natural) *humanitas*, between the

believer and the citizen. So what becomes of the 'subject'? In one sense, the subject becomes more autonomous (his subjection is an effect of a political order that integrates 'civility' and 'polity', and is therefore part of nature). But it becomes increasingly difficult to see the subject as a *subditus*, as the concept of his essential obedience comes under threat. The contradiction explodes in the absolute monarchy, which stretches to breaking point the mystical unity of the 'two bodies' of the temporal-spiritual sovereign. The same applies to the freedom of the subject. All that remains is a prince whose will is law, a 'father of his subjects' who has absolute authority over them. '*L'État, c'est moi*,' as Louis XIV is supposed to have said. But an absolute monarchy is state power, or in other words a power that is established and exercised through the law and an administration: its subjects are, if not 'subjects by right' (*sujets de droit*), at least *de jure* subjects (*sujets en droit*) and members of a 'republic' (or Commonwealth, as Hobbes would say). All the theorists of absolute monarchy explain that 'subjects are citizens' (or, like Bodin [*La République* I, 6] that 'all citizens are subjects, some of their freedom being diminished by the majesty of the man to whom they owe obedience; but not all subjects are citizens, as we have said of slaves'). Boethius inverts the terms of the argument and answers them by defining the power of the One as a 'voluntary servitude'. At the same time, *raison d'état* means that freedom no longer has any supernatural meaning. The controversy over the difference (or non-difference) between absolutism and despotism went on throughout the history of the absolute monarchies. And the subject's condition is retrospectively identified with that of the slave. And from the viewpoint of the new citizen and his Revolution (which is also an essential factor in his idealization), subjection is identified with slavery.

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the way *The Social Contract* establishes a strict correlation between the figures of the ‘citizen’ who is a member of the sovereign (or, in other words, the author of the law) and the *subject* who finds freedom in absolute obedience to that same law thanks to the ‘total alienation’ of individual wills that gives rise to a general will. That will founds a ‘collective ego’ that is reflected in every individual consciousness (in *The Phenomenology of Mind*, Hegel makes explicit reference to Rousseau when he speaks of ‘*Ich, das Wir, und Wir, das Ich ist*’; see I). Think too of the way in which Rousseau’s autobiographical works associate the theme of the authenticity of the ego with that of subjection (*l’assujettissement*):

There is not a day when I do not recall with joy and emotion that unique and brief time in my life when I was completely me, when nothing prevented me from being truly myself and when I could say that I was alive ... I could not bear subjection [*assujettissement*], I was completely free, and more than free because I was subject [*assujetti*] only to my affections, and I did only what I wanted to do.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, tenth walk.

We then have to take into account the revolutionary caesura, which not only has the effect of allowing the citizen (who is entitled to have political rights) to ‘take over’ from the subject (*subjectus, subditus*), but also of allowing the subject (*subjectum*) to evolve into a citizen in the sense that his humanity is naturalized. This inscribes all anthropological differences (age, gender, culture, health, abilities, morality, etc.) in an ‘individual character’, which determines the subject’s social recognition, with which the subject identifies (to a greater or lesser extent) in the course of his education. Together with the Rousseauist theorem and the Hegelian or Nietzschean critiques that have been made of it, it is the historical and political precondition for Bataille’s subversion of the relationship between sovereignty and subjectivity. Such (at least according to my hypothesis) is the genealogy of the identification of the *problem of subjectivity* with the *problem of subjection*, which will give a completely new meaning to the philosophical question of the subject (and at the same time our perception of its history).

Gilles Deleuze refers to this issue in his *Empiricism and Subjectivity*:

It is the same difference [between the origin and the qualification of ideas] that Hume encounters under the form of an antinomy of knowledge: it defines the problem of the self [*un Moi*]. The mind is not subject; it is subjected. When the subject is

constituted in the mind under the effect of principles the mind apprehends itself as a self [*moi*], for it has been qualified. But the problem is this: if the subject is constituted only inside the collection of ideas, how can the collection of ideas be apprehended as a self, how can it say ‘I’ [*moi*] under the influence of those same principles?

Gilles Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, p. 31, trans. amended.

Later (with Guattari), he carefully works upon the paradigms of servitude or slavery (*asservissement, servus*) and subjection or subjugation (*subjectus, subditus*) in order to explain the characteristic modernity of the capitalist subject:

We distinguish *machinic enslavement* and *social subjection* as two separate concepts. There is enslavement when human beings themselves are constituent pieces of a machine [...] under the control and direction of a higher unity. But there is subjection when the higher unity constitutes the human being as a subject linked to a now exterior object [...] It would appear, then, that the modern State, through technological development, has substituted an increasingly powerful social subjection for machinic enslavement [...] In effect, capital acts as the point of subjectification that constitutes human beings as subjects; but some, the ‘capitalists’, are subjects of enunciation that form the private subjectivity of capital, while the others, the ‘proletarians’, are subjects of the statement, subjected to the technical machines in which constant capital is effectuated.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 456–7.

Jacques Derrida discovers this constituent amphibology from Rousseau onwards:

From then on, writing has the function of reaching *subjects* who are not only distant but outside of the entire field of vision and beyond earshot.

Why *subjects*? Why should writing be another name for the constitution of *subjects* and, so to speak, of *constitution* itself? of a subject, that is to say an individual held responsible (for) himself in front of a law and by the same token subject to that law?

Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 281.

He also finds it in connection with Levinas:

The subordination of freedom indicates a subjection of the *subjectum*, certainly, but a subjecting that, rather than depriving the subject of its birth and its freedom, actually gives [*donne*] it its birth, along with the freedom that is thereby ordained [*ordonnée*]. It is still a of subjectivation, but not in the sense of interiorization; rather, the subject comes to itself

in the movement whereby it welcomes the Whole Other as the Most High. This subordination ordains [*ordonne*] and gives [*donne*] the subjectivity of the subject.

Jacques Derrida, *Adieu: To Emmanuel Levinas*, p. 54.

But he also tries to force it to the point of implosion and, to adopt Artaud's neologism, to: 'derange the subjectile [*forcener le sujetile*]'.
Writing at the same time as Bataille, Louis Althusser also emphasizes the paradox of sovereignty:

This God is a King-Subject, or in other words a King-Slave. Hegelian freedom frees the subject from his subjection and converts his servitude into a kingdom. The concept is the kingdom of subjectivity, or in other words the subject who has become a King [...] Such is the circularity of freedom in the concept: it is the conversion of servitude, the conversion of the subject into its kingdom.

Louis Althusser, 'On Content in the Thought of G.W.F. Hegel,' p. 90, trans. amended.

He sees this as the general mechanism whereby ideology 'interpellates' individuals as subjects. The prototype is supplied by religious consciousness:

It then emerges that the interpellation of individuals as subjects presupposes the 'existence' of a Unique and central Other Subject, in whose Name the religious ideology interpellates all individuals as subjects. [...]

God thus defines himself as the Subject *par excellence*, he who is through himself and for himself ('I am that I am'), and he who interpellates his subject, the individual subjected to him by his very interpellation, i.e. the individual named Moses. And Moses, interpellated—called by his Name, having recognized that it 'really' was he who was called by God, recognizes that he is a subject, a subject of God, a subject subjected to God, *a subject through the Subject and subjected to the subject*. The proof: he obeys him, and makes his people obey. [...]

Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', p. 167.

It is Lacan and Foucault who deploy the spectre of subjectivity as a process of subjugation most systematically. But they do so in diametrically opposed ways.

Lacan draws upon the old heritage of two French phrases that are at once paradoxical but absolutely idiomatic: 'the ego is hateful' (Pascal) and 'I is an other' (Rimbaud). What is the subject, according to Lacan? Nothing more than the sequential effects of the living individual's alienation by the 'law of the signifier'. Whilst it has to be regarded as irreducible, the subject is never originary, but always-already dependent. The subject exists only as an effect of the speech (*parole*)

that constitutes it (and names it, to begin with) in a symbolic world of discourses and institutions that it cannot, by definition, master. This is how Lacan interprets the 'misrecognition' that constitutes the unconscious. Because it is 'subject [*soumis*] to the signifier' that irremediably cut it off from itself, the subject must for ever oscillate between the illusion of identity – the narcissistic beliefs of a 'imaginary capture' are resumed in the figure of the *ego* – and the unknown element in the conflict: the recognition of a question from the other (beginning with the other sex) as to what is most characteristic about it.

If desire is an effect in the subject of the condition – which is imposed on him by the existence of discourse – that his need pass through the defiles of the signifier [...] the subject [must] find the constitutive structure of his desire in the same gap opened up by the effect of signifiers in those who come to represent the Other for him, in so far as his demand is subjected to them.

Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, p. 525.

At best, analysis inverts the trajectory of the constitution of desire, which leads the subject to enunciate his own 'lack of being' ('Desire merely subjugates what analysis subjectifies', p. 520).

Foucault, for his part, found in the methods used to obtain admissions and confessions (which migrate from religion and the Inquisition to psychology and psychiatry) a model for the relationship between subjectivity, appearance and truth (*Madness and Civilization, History of Sexuality*). In Bentham's panopticism he finds an ideal diagram of all the 'fictive relations' (which are materialized in the working of institutions of social normalization) in which 'a real subjection is born mechanically' (*Discipline and Punish*, p. 202). On this basis, he drew up a programme for an investigation into the 'modes of objectification that transform human beings into subjects' and especially relations of power' ('The Subject and Power', p. 326). But there is no power, either over the 'self' or over 'others', that does not involve the constitution of a knowledge (*un savoir*), and knowledge itself is not a purely theoretical activity: it is a social practice that produces objectivity. The question of the subject and that of the object, brought back to a twofold process of subjectivation and objectivation, of the subordination (*assujettissement*) of the individual to rules and the construction of a self-to-self relationship that takes various practical modalities, are therefore not opposed to each other. They are two aspects of a single reality:

Foucault has now undertaken, still within the same general project, to study the constitution of the

subject as an object for himself: the formation of procedures by which the subject is led to observe himself, analyse himself, recognize himself as a domain of possible knowledge. In short, this concerns the history of 'subjectivity', if what is meant by that term is the way in which the subject experiences himself in a game of truth where he relates to himself.

Michel Foucault, 'Foucault', p. 461.

These are the very words that were used in the *Transcendental Dialectic*, but their original meaning has been inverted. We can see that there is a circle of presuppositions; the *subject* is the set of subjecting or subjectifying structures (*dispositifs d'assujettissement ou de subjectivation*) that act objectively on the 'subjectivity' of the individual. They presuppose, that is, the subject's 'freedom', or ability to resist, and turn it against him. We are in other words talking about a power differential. It results in both a politics (trying to free the individual from certain disciplines and certain types of individualism) and an ethics (inventing 'practices of freedom', 'new power relations', and modes of *askesis* rather than of self-consciousness). Precisely because they are dispersed and conflicting, these propositions transform our reading of Europe's philosophical past. Because they reveal the associations and metaphors that underlie Nietzsche's text, they allow us to make different use of the subjectivity defined in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Had an internal relationship been established between the subject (*subjectum*, *Subjekt*) and personal subjection, and therefore with the political, juridical and theological power of which it is an effect and inverted image, we would not be able to recognize in the paradoxical combination of truth and transcendental appearance described in the 'Paralogisms of Pure Reason' the sign of an originary difference (or *différance*) that concerns the ethics of internal obedience and *askesis* as much as the metaphysics of the mind and self-consciousness; if not more so. To conclude, they reopen the question of the active finitude specific to the Cartesian subject (or non-subject), which is, perhaps, not so much a 'nature' or thinking 'substance', or in other words a representation, as a 'demand' (as Canguilhem puts it) for the right to say 'I', 'between infinity and nothingness', or between God and the body.

E. How should we translate French philosophers?

To conclude what is not so much a history of translations as that of the *split* that has occurred in philosophical language as each idiom works on the basis of its own relationship with the juridical, theological and

metaphysical heritage of European culture, we can ask two questions. First, can what we have termed a new 'idiomatic French' grounding of the problematic of the subject in French be translated into other idioms? Second, does the philosophy which, in the twentieth century, provided the framework for its invention, have any choice but to go on repeating its terms ad infinitum, or can it purely and simply break with it by adopting other paradigms (such as that of analytic individuality) and more or less adequately 'Gallicizing' their discourse?

A few summary remarks must suffice here. The *sujétion–subjectivation* paradigm can obviously be translated into the other Romance languages, give or take a few minor differences in the current usage of *soggetto* and *suddito*, *sujeto* or *sugeto* and *subdeto*, as both Italian and Spanish have retained the doublet (even though the Spanish introduces a significantly variant spelling).

• see box 7

Modern Greek, which has retained *hupokeimeno* for *subject*, has forged *hypokeimenotêta* for 'subjectivité', can translate *sujétion* and *assujettissement* by expressions such as *hypotagê* and *hypodoulôsê*, though there could be some confusion with servitude or slavery.

Strictly speaking, this discourse cannot be translated into German. The only possible translation of *sujétion* is *Unterwerfung* ('soumission'; *submission*), whereas 'subjectivation' translates as *Subjektivierung*. A revelatory example is supplied by Habermas in his *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne* (1996), which is a collection of twelve lectures devoted mainly to contemporary French philosophy (Bataille, Derrida and Foucault). Here are two samples:

Für Bataille öffnet sich mit dieser Idee der Entgrenzung eine ganz andere Perspektive als für Heidegger: die sich selbst überschreitende Subjektivität wird nicht zugunsten eines superfundamentalistischen Seinsgeschicks entthront und entmachtet, sondern der Spontaneität ihrer verfemten Antriebe zurückgegeben. Die Öffnung zum sakralen Bereich bedeutet nicht Unterwerfung unter die Autorität eines unbestimmten, in seiner Aura nur angedeuteten Schicksals; die Grenzüberschreitung zum Sakralen bedeutet nicht die demütige Selbstaufgabe der Subjektivität, sondern ihre Befreiung zur wahren Subjektivität.

Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne, p. 251.

[For Bataille, a completely different perspective from Heidegger's is opened up with this idea of unbounding: The self-transcendent subject is not dethroned and disempowered in favour of a superfundamentalist destiny of Being; rather spontaneity is

Box 7 *Sujeto, subdito, sugeto*. The body of the subject: Montaigne and St Teresa

When we examine the process of the formation of the language of corporality and intimacy in Spanish, we should note the importance of the word *subjecto* or *sujeto*, which is very close to certain contemporary philosophical usages (Merleau-Ponty, Zubiri, Lacan), but also to the Montaigne of the *Journal de voyage en Italie*. The Spanish translation may help to bring this out. In this sense, *sujeto* is closely related to the recognition of intimacy, to the experience of pain and, more generally, of the passions of one's own body. It applies to both the register of politics and the register of mysticism.

Sujeto enters the Spanish lexicon at some point in the mid-sixteenth century (see J. Corominas, *Diccionario critico*). The Spanish *sujeto*, which derives from the Latin *subjicere*, has two meanings, and refers both to 'that thing underneath' and 'one who is subject to an authority'. But the difference between the two languages becomes apparent as Spanish prefers to derive the word from the radical *subdere* – which gives *subdito* – whilst *sujeto* is related to *suppositum*, or in other words the materiality of the person and, ultimately, the body, with all its force or potentialities. The decisive moment for Castilian thought comes, however, when the terms begin to overlap.

Montaigne, writing in French, provides the essential contemporary account of the transition from the political to the intimate:

Nous y passasmes un chasteau de l'Archiduc qui couvre le chemin, comme nous avons trouvé ailleurs pareilles clostures qui tiennent les chemins subjects et fermés.

Journal du voyage en Italie, p. 59.

[We passed a castle belonging to the Archduke that overlooks the path, just as we found elsewhere similar fences that keep the roads subject and closed.]

This quotation exemplifies the transitive use of *sujeto*, which is a past participle designed to describe the act of squeezing or containing something from outside a passage or a pathway so as to prevent it from spilling out into the countryside. Leaving aside this technical sense, Montaigne describes other situations in which the first meaning of 'subject' – the political subject – comes to the fore. But he also supposes (*suppositum* is the subject's other name) that it is possible to know an internal realm that is

not divorced from the surrounding world and that finds in it the metaphors and signifiers that allow it to express itself. Travel is the path to intimacy. In his *Journal*, Montaigne tries to appropriate certain words whose meaning has been altered in order to justify a new distribution of powers. '*Cuius regio eius religio*' is from now on the rule governing a process that Montaigne examines with an attention that is barely concealed by his air of nonchalance. *Subject* is an old word for a modern practice, for a strange practice which, for the first time, modifies what seemed to be part of human nature or the unchangeable order of things. *Subject* is Montaigne's greatest discovery in Florence, and it seems to him to be as strange as the exotic animals (sables or black foxes) the Muscovite presented to the Pope. In his commentary on the Duke of Florence's policy towards his '*subjects (of whom he must be wary)*' Montaigne shows us the effort that was being made to naturalize a situation of conflict. And in Lucca, subjects are counted as 'souls'. '*Les seigneurs ont quelques chastelets, mais nulle ville en leur sujection* (ibid., p. 134) [The lords have several castles, but no city is subject to them].'

The specificity of Spanish allows *sugeto* to be displaced in the direction of a meaning that is directly linked to the disposition of both the body and the spirit. Cervantes provides an example: '*Es menester que me advirtáis si estais con sugeto de escucharme* [You must let me know if you are disposed to listen to me]', *Persiles* III 17. This semantic field includes a direct reference to the corporeal dimension of human beings, especially when they suffer some loss or are ill.

Autoridades Dictionary (1726) gives this definition: '*se usa tambien por la actividad, vigor y fuerzas de la persona: y asi seulen decir del enfermo muy extenuado: No hai sugeto* [it is also used to refer to a person's activity, vigour and strength, which is why it is said of someone who is ill and quite exhausted that there is no subject]'. The last sense was in common use from the end of the sixteenth century onwards; the main evidence is supplied by quotations from so-called mystical or 'spiritual' writers.

The Life of Saint Teresa gives twenty or so examples of the transitive *sujetarse* (to subject oneself, to restrict the discussion to a transliteration

that has yet to acquire other cultural or psycho-analytic meanings). The beautiful thing about the text is that it gives a clear idea of a subject that is a product of work, of a 'becoming-subject'. Just as Montaigne saw paths that were 'subject to' the walls of castles, the founder of the Avila convent was aware of the effort it took to become a subject – a subject of the law or, rather, of a novel and unwritten form of speech. This is why mysticism, which can be an experiment in writing that uses popular metrics, is of interest to the translator: St Teresa is trying not so much to say what cannot be said as to stay within the limits of what can be said. Theresa, an educated woman disguised (as she puts it) as an illiterate woman, exemplifies a very particular relationship with language. It is close to what Roland Barthes calls 'logothesis', or the simultaneous invention of speech and a vital space. Its invention juxtaposes the two meanings of 'subject': the political sense (henceforth, *subdito*) and the bodily sense (*sugeto*). Hence the surprising use of both *sugeto* and *yo*:

Padeciendo tan grandismo tormento en las curas que me hicieron tan recias, que yo no sé cómo las pude sufrir; y en fin, aunque las sufrí no las pudo sufrir mi sugeto.

[I ... suffered the greatest tortures from the remedies they applied to me, which were so drastic that I do not know how I endured them. In fact, though I did endure them, my subject (that is to say my body) was not able to do it.]

The Life of Saint Teresa, p. 35.

The same duality appears in the language of asceticism, as when Ignatius speaks of his penitence:

No es penitencia quitar lo superfluo de cosas delicadas o moles, ma es penitencia quando en el modo se quita de lo conveniente, y quanto más y más mejor, sólo que non se corrompa el subiecto, ni se siga enfermedad notable.

[Taking what is superfluous away from delicate and sweet things is not penitence. Taking away what is appropriate from our habit is penitence. In that case, the more we take away, the better, provided that we neither injure the subject (body) nor risk serious illness.]

Ejercicios spirtuales, p. 216.

This subject who scarcely suffers from illness, and this subject who can also be corrupted, are two examples of a new subject. What kind of subject is this, who signals its own existence without realizing it, or sends out signs pertaining to a different type of knowledge – the knowledge of the mystics to which Lacan refers: 'This wisdom without wisdom passing all knowledge' (St John of the Cross).

José Miguel Marinas

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Tools

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given back its outlawed drives. Opening towards the sacral domain does not mean subjugation to the authority of an indeterminate fate only hinted at in its aura; transgressing boundaries toward the sacral does not imply the humble self-surrender of subjectivity, but liberation to true subjectivity.]

The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, p. 214, trans. corrected.

And later:

In seinen späteren Untersuchungen wird Foucault diesen abstrakten Machtbegriff anschaulich ausgestalten; er wird Macht als die Interaktion kriegführender Parteien [...] schliesslich als die productive Durchdringung und subjektivierende Unterwerfung eines leibhaften Gegenübers verstehen.

Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne, p. 300.

[In his later studies, Foucault will fill out this abstract concept of power in a more tangible way; he will comprehend power as the interaction of warring parties ... and ultimately as the productive penetration and subjectivizing subjugation of a bodily opponent.]

The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, p. 255.

As one can imagine, this linguistic obstacle is not without its effects on the reasons why Habermas finds the object, internal divisions and aporias or limitations of the 'French' philosophy of the subject to be both incomprehensible and unacceptable.

In English, finally, the situation is quite specific. The 'pun' is fully present (*Subject/subject*). The *sujétion/subjectivation* paradigm can therefore be legitimately

transposed and assimilated. It can be further developed in English. A single sentence from Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition* proves the point:

Somebody began it [= his own life story] and is its subject in the twofold sense of the word, namely its actor and its sufferer, but nobody is its author.

Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 184.

What does create a problem is, rather, the fact that philosophical anthropology has, since the classical age, been organized around notions such as *person*, *self* and *agent* (see I and AGENT), and not *subject*. *Subject*'s first meaning is political and institutional. ('The idea of the servant makes us think of the master; that of the subject carries our view to the prince' [Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* II, 2, 2]; John Stuart Mill's famous work on the civil and political inequality of the sexes, which was published in 1869, is entitled *The Subjection of Women*.) The naturalization of 'French ideas' is, however, changing this situation (and raising the tension). The work of Judith Butler, which is inspired by Freud, Derrida, Althusser and Foucault, provides a remarkable example. At the beginning of her *Psychic Life of Power* (1997), which is subtitled *Theories in Subjection* (the syntax is perfectly idiomatic but probably also contains an allusion to John Stuart Mill's famous essay), she cites the *Oxford English Dictionary*'s entry on *subjection*:

The act or fact of being subjected, as under a monarch or other sovereign or superior power; the state of being subject to, or under the dominion of another [...] The condition of being subject, exposed, or liable to [...] The act of supplying a subject to a predicate.

OED, cited in *The Psychic Life of Power*, p. 1.

She later discusses the correspondences between the terms, but sometimes inverts the values to which we are accustomed:

No individual becomes a subject without first becoming subjected or undergoing 'subjectivation' (a translation of the French *assujettissement*) [...] The term 'subjectivation' carries the paradox in itself: *assujettissement* denotes both the becoming of the subject and the process of subjection – one inhabits the figure of autonomy only by becoming subjected to a power, a subjection which implies a radical dependency.

Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*, pp. 11, 83.

This is, however, part of her own development of the question: *subjection* becomes the general (tropological) concept of power 'turning back upon oneself, or even turning on oneself'.

As for the reciprocal question – how can French get away from being French (in philosophical terms, of course) – we can state that it cannot be answered by means of injunctions, either hermeneutic or analytic. This is not to say that it cannot be answered by remaining inside the French frontier. In his *Mythe de l'intériorité*, Jacques Bouveresse basically suggests (see, in particular, pp. 356 f., and 656 f.) that we have to make a detour via Wittgenstein, or in other words invert Nietzsche's critique of the 'grammatical privilege' conferred upon the subject, so as to turn it into an instrument for analysing the ways in which, in every language game, a speaker – a philosopher, perhaps – articulates statements containing expressions of self-referentiality with public acts of enunciation in such a way as to be recognized as the author of certain meanings or thoughts. The suggestion deserves consideration.

**Étienne Balibar,
Barbara Cassin,
Alain de Libera**

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