

Kojève's letter to Stalin

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The philosophical œuvre of Alexandre Kojève is often considered to consist of an eclectic and distorted Marxist–Heideggerian interpretation of Hegel. More recent biographical studies claim that his attempt to write a book that would define his ‘system of knowledge’ (interrupted by his sudden death in 1968) was an impossible undertaking.¹ Arguing against such readings, this article introduces the entirely unknown and still uncharted architectonic of Kojève's philosophical system. It focuses on the historical origins of the concepts of *legitimacy*, *legality* and *power* in his political philosophy, and concludes with some general remarks on his theory of revolutionary action.

The lost manuscript thesis

Walter Benjamin came to Paris in 1933 when Lacan's master, a Russian émigré, started his lectures on ‘the religious philosophy of Hegel’ and on ‘the philosophical dictionary of Pierre Bayle’.² By 1937, Kojève was finally naturalized as a French citizen, was interpreting Hegel's thesis on the evolution of the ‘Christian world’ until its final conclusion in Napoleon's first modern version of the universal and homogenous state, and telling the congregation at Bataille's College of Sociology that they were ‘conjurors expecting their tricks to make them believe in magic’.³ Soon after, Walter Benjamin, who was one of the College's new recruits, would discover that his application for French citizenship had been rejected.

On the eve of World War II, Kojève outlined the comprehensive metaphysical structure of time and the concept in relation to eternity. Since Hegel ‘had got his century wrong, the man who marked the end of history was not Napoleon, but Stalin’, and the *logical* conclusions of Western philosophy were seen to have been realized in Hegel–Marx–Heidegger.⁴ Contemporary thought was thus tasked with ‘justifying’ the totality of *realized* philosophical self-consciousness in the unfolding of future manifestations of partially revealed historical consciousness. In the last year of the lectures, Jesuit fathers crossed paths with André

Breton; as did one future casualty of the Nazi concentration camps, Yvonne Picard; and one of the future technocrats of Europe's common market, Robert Marjolin. In the course of that same academic year, Walter Benjamin was among a crowd of *sans-papiers* about to be incarcerated in prison camps for enemy aliens.

Two months after Benjamin was found dead in Portbou, Kojève began work on his letter to Stalin. The Vincennes Palace library of war, where he had been appointed apprentice librarian, was shut down earlier that year. He was drafted into the French army's last reserve of mobilized citizens, and occasionally stationed at the Reuil barracks without having to take part in combat operations. When Hitler's troops began their triumphant march on Paris, he mysteriously failed to join his regiment. By the first week of March 1941, he had completed several versions of his letter to Stalin, one of which he took in person to the Soviet vice consul, who promised to send the letter with the next diplomatic bag to Moscow. Less than three months later, the embassy and its contents would be put to the torch by Nazi troops.

The Komintern Archives show that the Kremlin received regular information and diplomatic reports from France between 1940 and 1943. There was, for instance, a bulky dossier on de Gaulle and other key figures of the Résistance. The Komintern's diplomatic bags were delivered by hand via a complex network of couriers.⁵ Is it possible that the letter from Lacan's master to Stalin never reached its destination? The recent discovery of a Russian manuscript in the French Library offers a tantalizing glimpse of the mysterious letter's content. As he was leaving Paris for Marseilles, and entertaining the possibility of a future passage to the United States, Kojève consigned an envelope that contained more than 900 pages in Russian to College of Sociology member Georges Bataille, who locked it up in his office drawer, alongside Benjamin's papers, which had been entrusted to him before Benjamin left Paris. (The envelopes

containing Benjamin's working notes remained in Richelieu's Palace until 1947, when Theodor Adorno received some of their contents, and started editing his friend's posthumous œuvre. Years later, Pierre Klossowski would introduce Giorgio Agamben to Bataille's widow, allowing him to come into the possession of other fragments of Benjamin's unwilling bequest.)

The story of this strange encounter of Kojève and Benjamin's writings is as fascinating as the uncanny synchronization of the former's seminar on Hegel with the latter's exile in Paris. That Georges Bataille is the third term in this dramatic narrative is another detail worth pondering, which I shall come back to in the conclusion of this article.

Stories of manuscripts or artistic masterpieces that go missing in mysterious circumstances, even those destroyed by their authors, are undoubtedly both fascinating and tragic. Attempts to find the Holy Grail or the Lost Atlantis of any given œuvre are, however, vacuous pursuits, often founded on erroneous premisses. In the restricted economy of the complete works, legatees of a literary estate, editors, publishers, researchers, archivists and various other players contribute to a collective project of accumulation where quantity takes precedence over quality; not to mention the common attitude of intellectual sectarianism often associated with the authority of guardians or early pioneers of a complete works project.

The essence or the systematic elements of any given œuvre depend on what it says rather than on how much of it we possess or see. One needs to determine at which point a set of writings, terminable or interminable, starts to say something that anticipates the totality of the œuvre, including, in some cases, its missing fragments. Stories of lost manuscripts do make pleasurable reading, but they are in no way conducive to the less enjoyable work of critique. What is at stake is, therefore, the articulation of a precise method in approaching a given body of works, and the outline of a critical position that anticipates the end of critique. The work of assemblage and interpretation must stop, and a consensus around a definitive reading must be reached. Only then can the more pressing work of conversing with, responding to, and looking beyond a line of thought begin. This is partly the purpose of this article. Fragments and outlines are interpreted as superposed probabilities on the actual content of Kojève's lost letter to Stalin, in order to reject the lost manuscript thesis used in misguided readings of his work.

The tyrant's desire: first interpretation of the 1941 Russian manuscript

The belated short memoirs of photographer Eugene Rubin (Evgenij Rejs) provide the most vivid and reliable account on the months during which Kojève worked on what, at first, was believed to be a Russian translation of the lectures.⁶ Rubin reports that at the end of one of their evening discussions, in the flat they shared in Paris, Kojève claimed that 'this is exactly what I am trying to tell Stalin in my letter.' When asked to explain himself, he told Rubin that he was 'putting together a few notes, some predictions and some advice to the father of the nation.' What remains of Kojève's letter to Stalin consists of an unfinished handwritten manuscript and several drafts of content pages. Assuming that the pagination of sequences listed in the outlines of content is not just a set of imaginary numbers whose real part is equal to zero, it is possible to reconstruct the content and purpose of the lost letter from the original working plan dated 11 November 1940.

Kojève's letter to Stalin is a 'dialectical introduction to philosophy', drawing on the 'structure of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*' as Kojève himself reorganized it 'in light of Marxism–Leninism–Stalinism'.⁷ The outlines that Kojève used to structure this seemingly ambitious project resemble the ones reproduced in the third appendix of Raymond Queneau's edition of the *Lectures*.⁸ Kojève designed a very peculiar method of reading the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and then translated it into practical philosophy to 'justify' Stalin's action. As he tried to explain to Vietnamese-French phenomenologist Tran Duc Thao in October 1948, Kojève was never interested in what Hegel wanted to say. His Lectures were 'a work of propaganda destined to strike people's minds'.⁹ Later in 1956, in the introduction to his ontology, Kojève confessed that his philosophical reflections after Hegel were an ongoing philosophical struggle to provide a 'discursive "justification" to events which began to unfold in Moscow in 1917'.¹⁰

'The task of philosophy is to resolve the fundamental question regarding "human nature";¹¹ that is to say, to define anthropogenic discourse and action in relation to the *natural* given. Kojève explains to Stalin that this is also the task of political action in relation to the *social* given. The grounding premisses of his philosophical anthropology are exactly the same as the ones he uses to explain the foundations of his 'political anthropology'. Philosophical anthropology is not founded on the 'monist error' of 'innate nature'.

The starting and end points of human existence are not the natural given or identity, but rather negation of the natural given. Animal existence in conformity with its innate or given nature is neither good nor evil; it can only be 'healthy or sick; wild or trained'. Kojève, therefore, concludes that the logic of 'classic anthropology' is a philosophy of nature, and can only lead to 'mass-training and eugenics'. Similarly, 'modern anthropology can lead to moral anarchy and tasteless "existentialism"' only if it develops into a system of ethics predicated on an immutable social given determined by a mundane master or a transcendent one.¹²

The 'cognitive-theoretical' progress of philosophy towards the universal and homogenous discourse of wisdom follows a circular rather than a linear trajectory from the negation of the natural given to a world transformed by work. The equivalent of this very same movement in the sphere of political action is the historical progression of all 'practical' existential attitudes from the negation of the social given to a world transformed by struggle. The parallel progression of the cognitive and the practical, of the philosophical and the political, is grounded in negative ontologies of becoming to which they both return as atheistic materialism. This double movement reached its final cognitive and practical development in Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism.

The practical implementation of atheistic materialism as post-revolutionary political anthropology depends on the close collaboration of the 'Hegelian' philosopher with a successful 'man of action' or a 'master'. In Kojève's political terminology, this 'master' is also called a 'tyrant', here understood as the total integration of all possible and realized existential attitudes of 'consciousness', which coincide with the Hegelian concept of action. In other words, if the *Phenomenology* is not just 'literature' but also a 'scientific'-political programme of action that depends on the couple Hegel-Napoleon, then the Russian manuscript is, philosophically speaking, its exact replica; historically speaking, though, it is a programme of action for the 'eastern revolutionary' consciousness Kojève-Stalin. This thesis was amply discussed in the 1936-37 lectures, all of which were omitted from Allan Bloom's English edition of the text. The conclusions of those lectures are quite striking. The duality of the '*Réalisateur-Révélateur*', as it manifested itself in the historical objective reality Napoleon-Hegel, is '(universal) action and (absolute) knowledge; *Bewusstsein* on one side, and *Selbstbewusstsein* on the other'.¹³

Napoleon has his eyes on 'the social and natural world outside'. He understands the world because 'his action in this world is successful'. Napoleon, however, does not understand himself *in the world*; that is to say, he is blind to the objective reality of his revealed self-consciousness as it has been realized in the empirical existence of his action. He is consciousness without self-consciousness because 'he does not know that he is God'; that is to say, creator of the world in which his action succeeds, a world that comes into (historical) being as a set of successful acts that negate the social and natural given (as given in absolute spatiality, or in the identity of the *topos*). To Kojève's mind, the historical interpretation of Hegelian action is neither natural philosophy nor ethics. Since negativity and the negation of the given are anthropogenic rather than cosmic or biological, they cannot be understood from a monist perspective, in the same way that they cannot be described as moral or amoral, in a bourgeois-Christian sense.

Hegel, on the other hand, has his eyes on Napoleon and on the world Napoleon created and realized. Understanding Napoleon allows Hegel to understand 'the total integration of history, which is self-consciousness'. Where others found 'evil' or 'crime' in Napoleon's action, Hegel pronounced a verdict of 'forgiveness' from the point of view of universal history.¹⁴ By 'justifying' the tyrant's consciousness, the philosopher actualizes and completes his or her own self-consciousness. At the end of (Western) history, Hegel is one single step away from seeing himself 'complete' and fully *satisfied* in the presence of his *realized* self-consciousness; and all he has to do is conjoin the *phenomenological* consciousness of the world with its *logical* self-consciousness in-the-world. Hegel, Kojève tells us, 'does not like dualism' and all he wanted to do was to eliminate the last dyad of his phenomenology. 'Napoleon will have to "recognize" Hegel, in the same way Hegel "recognized" Napoleon.' In 1806 he was expecting Napoleon to summon him to Paris, and appoint him philosopher of the universal and homogenous state. His role would consist of 'explaining (that is to say justifying), and perhaps even managing Napoleon's business', but Hegel's wait was in vain.

Napoleon never 'recognized' him. Such were the last words of Kojève's 1936-37 lectures on Hegel, against the background of the dramatic spectacle of the Moscow Trials. In all his subsequent writings, Kojève never wavered in his pronouncement on political crime as a neutral act that fails, and that it is never one with an intrinsic 'moral' value.

A political 'anti-Christ' must either be recognized or put to death. Kojève's Letter to Stalin is unequivocal on Trotsky and the outcome of his political action.¹⁵ The political failure of the French Revolution has nothing to do with the 'crimes' of its leaders. The French Revolution failed to materialize in a universal and homogenous state because neither its tyrant's consciousness nor its philosopher's self-consciousness were fully satisfied by recognizing each other. In that sense, all vulgar interpretations of Kojève's end-of-history thesis, from Fukuyama to Agamben, as an event which concludes with the French Revolution have all, wittingly or unwittingly, written off his recurrent references to the Russian Revolution as an autonomous form of (partial) historical consciousness. In his letter to Stalin, Kojève describes a new opportunity for revolutionary action that will 'Sovietize' (that is to say, unify) the realized consciousness of 'the man of action' with the revealed self-consciousness of 'discursive wisdom'.

Since the mid-1930s and until his last public interview in *La Quinzaine Littéraire*, Kojève was saying openly and unequivocally that he was 'Stalin's consciousness', but no one took him seriously.¹⁶ Conservative French historian and assiduous attendee of the lectures, Raymond Aron, believed that his master's self-confessed Stalinism or his deep sadness after Stalin's death were insignificant tasteless jokes, but he also harboured suspicions that there was something there not quite right. In November 1999, *Le Monde* published a report based on Mitrokhin's and the French counter-intelligence agency's archives, claiming that between 1938 and 1968 Kojève may well have been a KGB informer.¹⁷ Such biographical and anecdotal details are, however, speculations that only detract from the strength of Kojève's philosophical argument. His letter to Stalin proves that he was expecting an invitation to Moscow, and that was not a joke, because the stakes were high. The success of the Russian Revolution was taken to depend on Stalin's recognition of the philosopher Kojève, who was so keen on avoiding Hegel's mistakes. In the autumn of 1940, he went back to Hegel's 'letter to Napoleon' and tried to determine the reasons that kept the tyrant's consciousness alienated from the philosopher's self-consciousness. He concluded that while Hegel's argument in 1806 was accurate, the structure or the order in which it was outlined nullified its impact on the tyrant's consciousness.

Hegel's *Phenomenology* was more literary than 'scientific' and failed to speak to the tyrant's desire for recognition. Hegel's 'Sophia' as the *an sich oder*

für uns is lost in his Preface, Introduction, various conclusions to chapters, and in yet another final chapter with further sub-introductions. Was the *Phenomenology* edited by Raymond Queneau's Bavarian ancestor? The tyrant is a 'man of action' and he (or she) has no time for literature. The philosopher will communicate with the tyrant's desire through a different art of writing.¹⁸ The categories of (revealed) self-consciousness must be identified in a separate and independent 'Introduction', and only this method can 'give a "scientific" or philosophical character to the phenomenological description (which otherwise would be purely literary)'.¹⁹



In the opening section of his letter, Kojève offers his correspondent a vantage point onto the homogenous and universal ground of 'wisdom'. He then outlines a comprehensive point-by-point theoretical argument on how the sphere of political power presides over the objective reality of wisdom; that is to say, over 'revolutionary-socialist consciousness' realized through 'complete self-consciousness as perfect or absolute knowledge'. The second part of the 'Introduction' ends with a succinct description of the role of philosophy and phenomenology in the system of knowledge. Philosophy would be some sort

of storage device used to upload and download elements of the *für es*; that is to say, 'existential attitudes found everywhere and at all times', as well as partial 'existential attitudes characterizing an outstanding historical epoch'. Phenomenology is 'the dialectical introduction to philosophy' and its aim is to activate the partial categories described in the 'imperfect knowledge' of *reflexion-philosophie* and elucidate the 'dialectic of being and the real' in the succession of particular stages or universal moments.

The introduction on wisdom in Kojève's letter to Stalin is, therefore, the common ground where the philosopher's self-consciousness and the tyrant's consciousness recognize each other, and where they both agree on the purpose of philosophy and phenomenology. The remaining part of the letter outlines 'the dialectical triadic articulations' of all partial 'phenomena of historical human existence' from their 'pre-historical foundations' (Part One), to their historical manifestation in relation to 'revolutionary existence' (Part Two). In each part of the phenomenological analysis, Kojève shows 'the active-practical aspects' of pre-historical and revolutionary existence, first; and then describes their corresponding 'ideological reflections' in 'the cognitive-theoretical aspect of existence'. Both the active and the cognitive (ideological) categories of existence – in 'pre-historical phenomena' as in the course of 'revolutionary time' which marks the transition to 'historical' phenomena – anticipate the event of the Russian Revolution. The concluding part of the letter (Part Three) describes 'post-historical existence' as the integration of 'Marxist communism and Hegelian individualism' in the universal and homogenous condition of wisdom which is, Kojève says, 'Lenin–Stalin (and my book).'

The working notes of Kojève's 1941 Russian manuscript seem to suggest that its final version also contains, besides the opening address directly aimed at 'comrade Stalin', numerous other managerial memoranda to his civil servants. The outlines indicate the existence of appendices for publication in self-contained volumes on: dialectics, the Marxist critique of ideology and Freud's psychoanalysis, death, crime and punishment, happiness and satisfaction, war and pacifism, and finally holidays. Kojève's letter to Stalin was neither a 'book' in the literary sense of the term, nor intended to become one. It was a substantial piece of diplomatic correspondence signed A.V. Kozhevnikov. Its purpose was to explain to the concrete practical consciousness of power its 'cognitive-theoretical' reflections in

the 'ideology of wisdom'; and then deduce from this (practical-cognitive) 'anthropological phenomenology' a biopolitical theory intended as managerial advice on how to harness human resources by understanding how they are manifested in practical and cognitive phenomena.

In his essay on 'L'action politique des philosophes' (1950), published at the height of anti-colonial struggles,²⁰ Kojève equates the notion of tyranny with the notion of authority. In other words, tyranny as used in his political philosophy is distinguished from all other forms of despotism, but it is also, as we shall see later, different from the autonomous sphere of authority. Authority can exist only when it is consciously and freely recognized as such. When tyranny is one and the same thing as authority, it does not use force even though it may have initially seized power through violent means. Both tyranny and authority, therefore, have a 'morally neutral sense' of (political) legitimacy. The aim of classic tyrannies was to maintain an already established social class in line with personal or familial ambitions. Conversely, 'modern' tyranny is 'exercised in the service of political, social or economic ideas which are truly revolutionary, that is to say in the service of objectives that are radically different from all that already exists'.²¹ That some form of tyranny, as Kojève understands it, emerges at one point or another in the course of history, this, in itself, needs no *a priori* philosophical justification. However, when a philosopher is seen in the company of the tyrant, and is finally 'recognized' as his or her equal, this event will have to be justified philosophically, although it is perfectly acceptable historically speaking.

Kojève's letter to Stalin does not just explain or 'justify' Stalin by understanding his desire; it also explains and justifies Kojève, who 'knows what he wants' and not just 'what he wants'.²² Philosophical consciousness is driven by the desire for (universal) recognition; like consciousness, it tends to expand from sensation and subjective self-perception to social understanding and social reason; and finally reaches 'satisfaction' in wisdom at the end of philosophy. The philosopher, therefore, knows that tyranny is its most adequate concrete manifestation in empirical existence. Unlike Plato, who appears as much of a theologian as a philosopher, or Kant, who was a bourgeois hypocrite terrified by the idea of becoming contemptuous to himself,²³ Kojève did not believe that philosophy is the *enemy* of power. Both philosophy and tyranny share the same metaphysical grounds and must therefore join forces rather than

work against each other. Kojève has no qualms whatsoever about sending his letter to Stalin. In 1941 there was no other tyrant worthy of his recognition – that is to say, worthy of his desire.

The philosopher and the tyrant who conform to the model of the pagan attitude of mastery are, by definition, oblivious to love, affection or happiness, all of which ‘imply elements that have nothing to do with politics’ or philosophy, understood in the sense of ‘perfection’ and becoming.²⁴ A ‘loving’ (Platonic) dialectic is pseudo-dialectic because that which is loved is always loved for its *being* and never for what it becomes or how it acts. Love does not expand, it does not become (any different or any better), and it may well lead to contentedness or well-being, but it certainly is not a means to achieve Hegelian satisfaction, that is to say self-consciousness. As for Kantian-theist notions of ‘moral perfection’, they are all asocial and apolitical since they are grounded in duties to act that may carry on working but will never struggle. In the ontological isotope of philosophy and power, recognition and satisfaction are achievable regardless of whether their subject or object is happy or unhappy, loved or unloved. It is not necessary for philosophers to be loved in order for them to be recognized, unless perhaps they are Plato or Kant, rather than Hegel, Heidegger, Marx or Kojève. Similarly, the recognition of Stalin’s authority may make many of its subjects happy or miserable, as it may incite their hatred or love, but in the sphere of authority the economy of affects is entirely inconsequential.

In addition to the philosophical justification of the authority of the philosopher, there is, in Kojève’s mind, a historical one. In order to make an established state of things endure without resorting to ‘structural reforms’ or a ‘revolution’, the *unconscious* application of widely accepted prejudice and abstractions is not a major impediment on the exercise of power or thought; and in such cases there is no need for the council of philosophers. The intervention of philosophers becomes important in situations where ‘structural reforms’ or ‘revolutionary action’ become objectively possible, and therefore necessary. On the other hand, political tyrants have always emerged as a historical necessity whenever a political reality had to be actively negated in its essence – that is to say, in revolutionary times. Kojève’s letter to Stalin was written in that spirit of the philosopher’s intervention in the sphere of tyranny that has emerged in revolutionary time. It is, therefore, Hegel’s *Phenomenology* transformed into practical philosophy, designed for the political objective reality that has been revealed

in empirical existence after the Russian Revolution. This line of thought explicitly affiliates itself with the intellectual genealogy Marxism–Leninism, and can be described as Hegelianism–Kojèveanism: a project proposal for the official managerial ideology of the Stalinist universal and homogenous state.

Bourgeois comedy: second interpretation of Kojève’s letter to Stalin

After his retreat from Paris to the *Zone libre*, Kojève kept a close watch on the unfolding events. He contemplated the possibility that any of the belligerent powers had equal chances to win. He was prepared to settle in any new historical reality, not in the sense of acceptance or submissive surrender, but to work closely with(in) it, like ‘the worm in the fruit’.²⁵ He would soon find out that the tyrant of Moscow is not the only game in town. Kojève’s letter to Stalin will, therefore, make sense only if read alongside his three other (known) correspondences with other ‘tyrants’ in the course of the Phony War. All of the documents listed below were made public long after their author’s death.

Kojève’s letter to Vichy (16 May 1942)

There is enough bibliographical evidence to document Kojève’s participation in the French Resistance throughout the occupation years. He joined Jean Casou’s underground regiment as agent number 1231, and later the group *Combat* in Marseille, distributing documents and leaflets for both movements, while infiltrating enemy lines using his language skills.²⁶ To Kojève’s mind, Vichy’s government was, nevertheless, a historical objective reality which needed to be engaged and confronted on its own turf. At the height of Vichy rule, he put together a short, but very elaborate, text on the notion of authority. The style, approach and method are very much similar to the ones used in his letter to Stalin, but the content is different. Kojève’s memo to the tyrant of Vichy was completed on 16 May 1942.

The *Notion of Authority* sets out to analyse (political) authority as a quadruple phenomenological and metaphysical system made of the authority of the past (Father), present (Master), future (Leader) and eternity (Judge). Kojève explains the de-totalizing element in the ‘total authority’ of Maréchal Pétain to show its lack of authority, and then, ironically, concludes his study with a few recommendations on Pétain’s *révolution nationale*. He points out that this programme has a *topos* in empirical existence but ‘lacks an idea’ that is objectively real. When a

national revolution has no idea one will need to invent a simulacrum of a revolutionary idea. Pétain and his government will have to 'pretend' that they are leading a revolution. Such strange and preposterous recommendations come to conclude Kojève's letter to Vichy. On 9 July 1942 he received a cordial reply from Henri Moysset recognizing receipt of his manuscript on the notion of authority, and praising its insightful content. So, what is one to make of this correspondence with Vichy? Does this mean that Kojève was a Machiavellian opportunist who made a fatal error of judgement? The answer is



categorically no. It is very doubtful that the philosopher of recognition, the Kojevenikoff of *The Notion*, was addressing himself to someone unworthy of his desire. Authority had been explained and justified by the philosopher's self-consciousness; its manifestation as Maréchal Pétain was however inadequate. In the era of bourgeois domination, the quadruple topology of authority explodes and splinters into separate triangles. Bourgeois revolutionary impulse operates in urban geography, and its first casualty is the authority of the Father. It then proceeds to the systematic division and separation of authorities and the implementation of 'class justice' through the absolute and eternal authority of Right, which is often involved in a conflictual relationship with the authority of the Leader and that of the Master. Both Montesquieu's constitutional theory on the division of powers and Rousseau's theory of the will of the people must be understood as the direct outcome of bourgeois authority.

Bereft of its paternal limb (past), social existence is left prey to the oppressive hegemony of the three remaining metaphysical forms of authority. History is now regulated by the absolute present of the

Master's authority, for whom pseudo-risks will have to be invented, in the guise of perpetual wars. Under the authority of the Leader, which is metaphysically driven by the idea of the future, life is characterized by the proliferation of utopias; while under the 'Eternal' and unchecked authority of the Judge, an oppressive notion of Right rules supreme. Life is dehumanized and policed like raw data by an impersonal Administration, and by the brute force of law.²⁷ Where political authority is reduced to the authority of the Judge, there is neither state nor 'citizens', but a 'society of private and isolated individuals with rights and duties'. Margaret Thatcher was therefore empirically justified in her claim that there is no such thing as society. In the condition of a divided authority, one that has realized the bourgeois theory of constitutional power, there is neither a universal nor a homogenous state to be found. Kojève described a catastrophic condition of absolute political chaos, where Stalin emerged as the only 'revolutionary leader with a universal project', paralleled with the culmination of bourgeois constitutional projects in the leadership of Hitler. Kojève's portrait of Maréchal Pétain can be read as a concrete phenomenological manifestation of consciousness in the era of 'bourgeois domination'. Was Kojève convinced at this point that all future political authorities of the West are offsprings of Pétain? He had no doubt that the fall of the government of Vichy was imminent, but he also believed that the spectre of its tyrant is the misrecognized fourth term of all future postwar bourgeois models of (political) authority.

Kojève's Letter to Henry Ford (1943)

By 1943, long after the failure of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, and at a turning point in the fortune of Hitler's campaign on the Eastern front, Kojève completed a voluminous study on the question of right.²⁸ In the same year, Sartre published *Being and Nothingness* and Bataille *Inner Experience*. A comparative reading of these three texts can highlight the consistency in Kojève's approach to the conversation of philosophy with tyranny. Kojève never had much esteem for Sartre's celebrity. Similarly, he had always distanced himself from Bataille's first flirtations with *Contre-Attaque* and Boris Souvarine's anti-Stalinism. To his mind, both Sartre's republic of letters and Souvarine's revolutionary posturing were missing the point, as was most of the literature of the Eurasian circle in Paris.

As Kojève waited in vain for Stalin to summon him to Moscow, he must have realized that he may have to

settle in the world affiliated with Napoleon's political success rather than relocate to the one transformed by Stalin's political crimes. This also meant he would not be working with a tyrant who truly believes in the 'pagan value of vanity'. The bourgeois tyrant and the bourgeois philosopher have a different understanding of authority from the one cultivated by the philosopher and tyrant of the Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist objective reality. Throughout the first half of the 1940s, Kojève negotiated with one of his former students, Robert Marjolin, the possibility of working for France's postwar government as adviser on foreign trade and financial matters. If in the 1930s, he 'always inwardly read "Stalin" instead of "Napoleon"', he also realized that the emerging postwar reality worked according to a slightly different formula:

Stalin = the Alexander of our World = *Industrialized*
 Napoleon = World = empire. [As for] Hitler, [he]
 was only a new enlarged and improved edition of
 Napoleon's single and indivisible Republic. Napo-
 leon wanted to *sublate* the state as such in favour
 of society ... and [now] the Anglo-Saxons *want the*
same thing (certainly with more success). And Marx
 also meant nothing other than this with his 'Realm
 of freedom'.²⁹

In this emerging new reality where all postwar tyrants seem to 'want' the same thing, Kojève's understanding of practical philosophy shifted from a phenomenology of *spirit* to a phenomenology of *right*. In the looming postwar objective reality there is nothing left for the philosopher speaking from the position of 'absolute knowledge', other than 'producing'.³⁰ The political in the sense of 'tyranny' or 'authority' is redefined in the guise of 'administrations' and the 'police'.

The phenomenology of right anticipates the dissolution of the dualism 'East-West'. 'Molotov's cowboy hat [becomes] a symbol of the future', and Henry Ford emerges as 'the only great authentic Marxist of the 20th century'. All other pseudo-Marxists are 'Romantics' who tried to impose distorted Marxist theories on economic systems which had no fully developed capitalist relations. Ford's programme of 'full employment' allowed 'the capitalists to do exactly what they ought to have done according to Marxist theory in order to make the "social revolution" impossible, that is to say, unnecessary'.³¹ Unlike the Russian manuscript of 1941, which clearly equates the (Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist) socialist idea with the point of view of wisdom and absolute science, the study on right, one can argue, is written from the perspective of the pseudo-revolutionary consciousness of

the bourgeois 'citizen' (without a master) who has not yet fought the final battle to become *the* Citizen of the Universal and Homogenous State. The subjects of right, as described by Kojève, are either (pseudo) masters without slaves or (pseudo) slaves without masters. The subjects of right are 'loyal' pseudo-citizens living in an alienating political reality and social existence.

The condition of right described in Kojève's 1943 manuscript consists of a complex legal system which combines aristocratic *equality* and bourgeois *equivalence* within particular and heterogeneous states. Already at this point in the context of his philosophical œuvre, Kojève is no longer writing or thinking from the position of 'wisdom' and at the end of history, as in his letter to Stalin. Contrary to erroneous interpretations recently popularized by the Straussian Republic of Letters, Kojève's *Phenomenology of Right* is neither about a post-historical condition where right rules supreme, nor about a 'hyper-liberal order' of justice beyond tyranny and empires.³²

In the era of bourgeois domination, Kojève predicted that the absolute despotism of right, detached from its grounding metaphysical fourfold topology of total authority, will be the type of (pseudo) authority that neutralizes all possible forms of revolutionary action. It will be an authority of 'eternity' (Judge) in relation to present (Master) or future (Leader), but one which is without a past (Father). Welcome to the century of 'infinite justice' and 'enduring freedom'.

Kojève's letter to de Gaulle (1945)

The most important aspect of the 1943 manuscript, in the context of Kojève's political philosophy, is the crucial distinction he makes between the autonomous sphere of right and the autonomous spheres of both tyranny (or political power) and authority or legitimacy. In 1945, he completed one of several versions of his 'project Kojevnikoff' or *L'Empire latin: Esquisse d'une doctrine de la politique française*.³³ How much from the memo addressed to Jean Filippi was later recycled in the Schumann Declaration is yet to be determined. Be that as it may, the memo situates France in the context of a new historical configuration which presciently describes the world we live in today. Kojève predicted that Germany will ultimately emerge as a major political and economic threat to France. The leading role of France in Europe, and its very survival, would depend on the exclusion of Germany from all future geopolitical configurations of the continent, which must be facing south towards

the Mediterranean, rather than north towards the Anglo-American or Slavic-Soviet empires.

'Project Kojevnikoff' was openly sceptical about the idea of the nation-state, and advised France to construct its Latin Empire as a distinct ideological and economic entity against the two 'erroneous ideologies' of Stalin's communist but anti-internationalist empire, and the bourgeois liberalism of the Anglo-(German)-American Empire. In *The Notion of Authority*, Kojève laments the lack of a 'revolutionary idea' in the national consciousness of the French, and claims that where this idea is lacking, one will have to invent its 'simulacrum'. In his second *Esquisse*, he names this 'idea' the Latin Empire. Here, once again, we are still far removed from the Universal and Homogenous State, and in the same twilight zone of indecision and suspension described in *The Notion of Authority*.³⁴

Kojève's St Pauline administrative memoranda and policy papers, including his letters to the Kremlin and to Vichy, as well as his report on legal policy and international diplomacy for the future post-Fordist empires and their economic societies, are all written from the point of view of the particular and heterogeneous condition of historical existence. Neither of these texts describes a post-revolutionary or a post-historical condition. Each tyrant is pointed in the direction of the ideal of the homogenous and universal state as the goal of their total authority. This may of course sound pleasing to any tyrant's ears, but in the context of Kojève's philosophical system there is a catch to this. The universal and homogenous state is also the end of the state, total tyranny is the end of tyranny, in the same way 'wisdom' is the end of philosophy and the *Encyclopaedia* was the end of the *Phenomenology*. If this dialectical process is already imbedded in the Communist idea, it remains untenable to the spirit of capital.

Concluding remarks

In Kojève's political philosophy, legality pertains to economic and familial spheres where a 'disinterested and impartial third' intervenes in the social relation of A to B. This is not a political relation because the Schmittian friend-enemy political relations do not count beyond two, and neither is it a relation of legitimacy where A recognizes an authority B both voluntarily and consciously without the coercive use of force. In Kojève's mind, the political, legitimacy and legality are radically autonomous spheres.

There is no such thing as a just or legal war, in the same way as it would be a contradiction in terms to talk about a legitimate or legal revolution.

That the spheres of legality, legitimacy and the political are autonomous is one of the major findings of Kojève's thought during the Second World War and in conversation with various tyrants of the twentieth century. The consequences of this formidable thesis are yet to enter contemporary consciousness in the sphere of revolutionary action because it is lagging behind a more intelligent reception in the sphere of managerial literature. This sorrowful state of affairs may explain why Kojève has found an almost immediate following in the midst of bourgeois bureaucrats and managers while his reception in left scholarship has failed to grasp the revolutionary project outlined in his work.

In each one of Kojève's 'political writings' in the first half of the 1940s, history is seized as a 'monad' where, in Benjamin words, 'thinking suddenly stops in a configuration pregnant with tensions' and 'recognises in this structure ... a revolutionary chance'.³⁵ The tyrant addressed in the Russian manuscript is the Stalinist state, which had best incorporated the revolutionary idea (even in the guise of its simulacrum) at the beginning of the 1940s. By the time Kojève got to his first and then second *Esquisse*, a new objective and concrete historical reality started taking shape. At that point already, the revolutionary idea has been completely diluted in the contradictions of the bourgeois world of capital. It then became clear to the philosopher of recognition that he was dealing with another tyrant, one without a face, who must be reawakened to its desire for recognition and then pointed in the direction of the universal and homogenous state – that is to say, their 'end'. As Kojève's political writings gradually shifted from practical philosophy to managerial literature,³⁶ he must have also understood that he was now the civil servant of modern historical consciousness as revealed through absolute legality, inadequate legitimacy and the pseudo-political.

The pagan notion of recognition is unbearable to bourgeois sensibility and to its slavish moral values. In bourgeois modern tyrannies, the pleasures of recognition are replaced by a different discourse on the pleasurable rewards of work, and the desire to succeed in a given enterprise. Bourgeois tyrants cultivate their authority like 'conscientious' and 'enthusiastic' workers who aspire to guarantee the most adequate conditions for the success of their hard work. This new practical consciousness as it materializes in the sphere of (political) action corresponds to the bourgeois variant of the philosopher who is devoted to pure theory and verbal struggles. 'The aristocratic

chatelaine' who didn't have to work and confined himself to his recluse 'garden' is no longer available to the bourgeois philosopher who has to work to earn a living. The aristocratic garden is then replaced with a more affordable and less glamorous option in the guise of the Republic of Letters.³⁷

A philosophical existence devoted to 'theory' and pure thought and dissociated from action is philosophically untenable. The philosopher must, therefore, run away from the society of the bourgeois epicureans, and exchange their 'garden' and the company of 'trees' with the street and the company of the crowd, in the manner of a Socrates, or like Queneau's philosopher-*voyou*.³⁸ Kojève, however, suspects that behind the petty struggles and uneventful dramas of the reclusive Republic of Letters there may well be a more sinister neurosis, which keeps the bourgeois intellectual from any active participation in politics and public life. The tragic (moral) conflict of the philosopher faced with a tyrant is perhaps the concrete expression of the tragic dilemma of the intellectual faced with action or the necessity to act. The philosopher who renounces political action can contend her- or himself with discussion, and there has always been discussion about and between philosophy and politics. A purely verbal form of dialectic does not solve problems and can only result in the proliferation of books. A new philosophy can only emerge from an encounter with a new historical or political reality that is fully understood in the sphere of action, as praxis rather than pure theory. Kojève's relationship with the tyrant does not consist in verbal discussion, or in theories formulated beneath the trees, with fellow bourgeois Epicureans in the Republic of Letters. To Kojevenikoff, a *voyou* among the *voyoucracy* of historical dialectic, his conversation with eastern and western tyrants was well justified both historically and philosophically; and if that triggers the hatred of some or the love of others, he has nothing to say to them. Authority does not discuss, nor persuade; it acts; and on a few occasions it listens carefully to a philosopher 'in a hurry' and always pressed for time.³⁹

There is another document which can bring to light a very important aspect of Kojève's letter to Stalin. On 14 October 1931, Kojève completed a draft of the opening section of his philosophical system. The manuscript is in Russian, and its author was extremely enthusiastic about his achievement. He even recorded the exact time it took him to write the last pages in '145 hours and a half, at the rate of 0.84 pages per hour'. He also mentions in one of

his footnotes that no section of the manuscript, no matter how substantial it may be, must ever be published until his 'general philosophy' or the 'system' is completed.⁴⁰ Kojève, however, never returned to what he described as his 'fantasy book'. Was he perhaps distracted by numerous personal misfortunes?⁴¹

In the context of his philosophy, there is a more plausible explanation for the failure of Kojève's first attempt at formulating his 'system' in a completed piece of writing. He had a clear outline of the project's major articulations: (1) philosophy of the inexistent, (2) philosophy of the existent, and (3) philosophy of philosophy. As he began formulating his ontological deductions from the 'abstract existential attitude of the theist-atheist intuition' he reached an impasse and failed to progress any further from the philosophy of the inexistent to the philosophy of the existent. In the first part of the system, his final deductions were absolute freedom of men-in-the-world who either kill themselves (suicide) or kill each other. There was no plausible explanation of the phenomenological plane of the system. There is, however, a social dialectic, but it is not clear how that happened. An answer would only become possible after Kojève's engagement with the findings of modern physics, and his close reading of Hegelian desire, which led to a coherent theory of work. But none of these details explains exactly why or how the (unfinished) 1931 Russian manuscript resonates with the (lost) 1941 letter to Stalin. The two manuscripts have exactly the same conclusion and were meant to lead to a final chapter on silence. This is where we need to make a final detour via Georges Bataille to understand what this is about.

Kojève and Bataille followed each other's work for more than thirty years. But while Bataille recognized Kojève as the most important thinker of his time, the latter never reciprocated such accolades. Bataille was left out of Kojève's inner circle and he rarely responded to Bataille's invitations. He steered clear of his connections with Souvarine and the Surrealists, and he expressed contempt in private reviews of his books, and openly rejected his agnostic mysticism. When Bataille wrote in *Inner Experience* a 'comic little summary' of Hegel's system as a coward's choice of 'satisfaction' over 'supplication', leaving Hegel like a useless 'handle of a shovel',⁴² Kojève replied: 'Stalin is a shovel done and completed' and while you say 'supplication' Hegel and Stalin say 'struggle'.⁴³ When Bataille asked Kojève to preface his *Summa Atheologica*, he sent in May 1950 what, at first, looks like a contemptuous summary of Bataille's system of non-knowing:

the pages that will follow are situated beyond circular Hegelian discourse. It remains to be seen if they contain a *Discourse* (which would, in this case, have the value of refutation) or if, there, one finds contemplative Silence in a verbal form. Now, if there is only one possible way to say the Truth, there are innumerable ways it remains concealed (in silence).

Although this seems like another way to reiterate Kojève's open rejection of the Bataillean brand of sovereignty, and the same sarcastic comment on his *Inner Experience*, the 1931 and then 1941 Russian manuscripts prove otherwise. They both end with Bataillean silence. Even more intriguing is the fact that Kojève's letter to Stalin incorporates substantial sections from Bataille's alternative edition of the *Lectures*.⁴⁴ As we know, Bataille hated Queneau's edition, and found it both disorderly and inaccurate. Perhaps the ultimate irony of Kojève's letter to Stalin is that it recognized Bataillean sovereignty without Bataille ever knowing of this recognition. If only Bataille had read Russian. If only he had known that Kojève agreed with him, he probably would have died a happy man. That Bataille kept the Russian manuscript in his office for the rest of his life (not knowing its content) only goes to show that, in the words of their mutual friend, a letter always arrives at its destination.

Notes

1. The earliest studies on Kojève that sought to correct widespread misconceptions that he is a marginal commentator of Hegel rather than a philosopher in his own right include an academic dissertation by Bernard Hesboi, *Le Livre et la mort. Essai sur Kojève*, (Université Catholique de Louvain, 1985) and Dominique Auffret's intellectual biography *Alexandre Kojève, la philosophie, l'Etat, la fin de l'Histoire* (Grasset, Paris, 1990). Both studies claim that since the early 1950s and until his death, Kojève was trying to write a book on his philosophical system but never managed to bring this project to completion. In a more recent study, *Alexandre Kojève, un système anthropologique* (Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 2005), Dominique Pirotte describes Kojève's system as 'anthropological' and 'dualistic' and draws on posthumous texts to highlight its Heideggerian elements. Although Pirotte acknowledges the existence of a system in Kojève's philosophy, which he keeps pointing at from the heights of Heideggerian philosophy, he never explains what the elements of this system are, how they work, or where they are. Pirotte's study ends on a disappointingly deconstructionist note about infinite writing and the yet-to-come – notions that are entirely strange to serious and close readers of Kojève.
2. 'To Kojève who was my master (truly, the only one!)' – Lacan's hand-written note to Kojève, dated 13 July 1956, was sent with a copy of *La Psychanalyse: publication de la Société française de psychanalyse, 1 (travaux des années 1953–1955)*, PUF, Paris, 1956. Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BNF) Kojève archives.
3. Roger Caillois, 'Lucifer at the College of Sociology: Interview with Gilles Lapouge', June 1970, in *The Edge of Surrealism: A Roger Caillois Reader*, ed. Claudine Frank, Duke University Press, Durham NC, 2003, p. 143.
4. Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel*, Gallimard, Paris, 1947, p. 338.
5. See V.P. Smirnov, 'L' Union soviétique, le Komintern et la Résistance française en 1940–1941', in *La Résistance et les français: villes, centres et logique de décision*, CNRS-IHTP, Paris, 1995, p. 502.
6. See Evgenij Rejs, *Koževnikov, kto vy, Russkij Put'* [Kojève, who are you?], Moscow, 2000; and 'The Cabinet of Doctor Kojève', in *Kojève mon ami* [in Italian], ed. Marco Filoni (Aragno, Turin, 2013). The Russian manuscript in the BNF Kojève archives includes an intriguing empty envelope [page 936] dated 1942 with the French title: 'Essai de l'introduction à la philosophie (en russe), plan du livre et notes sur la philosophie (en russe)'. The inscription on this empty envelope seems to confirm Rubin's impression that Kojève's letter to Stalin was nothing other than a 'translation' into Russian of his lectures on Hegel.
7. I am indebted to Evgeni V. Pavlov (Metropolitan State University of Denver) for his kind permission to use his translation of the draft outlines produced in the last five pages of the Russian manuscript, and for pointing out a Russian publication on the subject. Russian philosopher A.M. Rutkevitch began transcribing and translating with Kojève's partner, Nina Ivanoff, the introduction of the manuscript titled 'Sophia, Philosophy and Phenomenology'. They published thirty or so pages from the 400-page introduction in a Russian academic journal of philosophy. In this publication all references to Marxism–Leninism–Stalinism have been deliberately omitted. (A.M. Rutkevich, 'Rukopis' A.Kozheva 1940–1941' [The Manuscript of A. Kojève 1940–1941], *Istoriko-filosofskii ezhegodnik 2007* [History of Philosophy Yearbook 2007] (Moscow, 2008), pp. 271–324. A few years before Nina Ivanoff died, Italian researcher Marco Filoni came into possession of the Russian manuscript and Nina's completed translation of the 'introduction'. Although Filoni had unrestricted access to Kojève's papers long before the creation of the BNF Fonds, he described the Russian manuscript as a sensational discovery of the missing link in Kojève's unfinished 'System of Knowledge'. This misguided judgement is based on the false premise that Kojève died before he completed his philosophical system.
8. See the third appendix to *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel* (Gallimard, Paris, 1947), 'Structure de la *Phénoménologie de l'Esprit*', pp. 576–97, and in Allan Bloom's truncated English edition, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* (Basic Books, New York, 1969): 'The Structure of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*', pp. 261–87.
9. Kojève's Letter to Tran-Duc-Thao (7 October 1948), cited in G. Jarczyk and P.J. Labarriere, *De Kojève à Hegel*, Albin Michel, Paris, 1996, p. 64. See Alexandre Kojève, 'Hegel, Marx et le Christianisme', *Critique* 3–5, 1946, pp. 339–66. 'The work of an interpreter of Hegel takes on the meaning of the work of political propaganda ... the future of the world and therefore the meaning of the present and the significance of the past depend, in the final analysis, on the way in which the Hegelian writings are interpreted today.'
10. A. Kojève, *Le Concept, le Temps et le Discours*, Gallimard, Paris, 1990, p. 35 (my translation).
11. Kojève, letter to Strauss, 29 October 1953, in *On Tyranny*, corrected and expanded edition including the Strauss–Kojève correspondence, ed. Victor Gourevitch and Micheal S. Roth, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2013.
12. Kojève, letter to Strauss, 29 October 1953. This letter also rejects his correspondent's condemnation of collectivization in the Soviet Union and China.
13. *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel*, p. 153.
14. Kojève, 'Hegel, Marx et le Christianisme', p. 361.
15. 'On nihilistic protest and frivolity: revolutionary insurgency and permanent revolution of Trotskyism via Kirilov in

- Sub-section 3: [The citizen and social ideologies], in Chapter 3: [Schemes of ideological reflections of basic manifestations of historical human existence], in Section A- [Active practical aspect of human existence], in Part I: Pre-historical foundations of the phenomena of historical human existence.' The same ideas can be found in Alexandre Kojève, *The Notion of Authority*, trans. Hager Weslati, Verso, London and New York, 2014, pp. 78–9.
16. Alexandre Kojève, 'Interview with Gilles Lapouge: I'm Not Interested in Philosophers, I'm Looking for Wise Men', *La Quinzaine Littéraire* 53, 1–15 July 1968, pp. 18–19.
 17. See the summary of Kojève's espionage scandal with reactions from friends, translators and biographers in James H. Nichols, *Alexandre Kojève: Wisdom at the End of History*, Rowman & Littlefield, London, 2007, pp. 133–7.
 18. See Alexandre Kojève, 'The Emperor Julian and His Art of Writing', in *Ancients and Moderns: Essays on the Tradition of Political Philosophy in Honour of Leo Strauss*, ed. Joseph Cropsey, Basic Books, New York, 1964. Following Kojève's reading, Emperor Julian invented an art of writing that has the same 'pedagogical impact' as poetic myth and theology.
 19. *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, p. 262.
 20. See also Kojève's Düsseldorf public lecture (1957), 'Colonialism from a European Perspective', *Interpretation* 29, 2001, pp. 91–130.
 21. All quotations are from *De la tyrannie*, Gallimard, Paris, 1954, and are my own translation. Here, p. 222.
 22. *Introduction à lecture de Hegel*, p. 280
 23. See Alexandre Kojève, *Kant*, Gallimard, Paris, 1973.
 24. There are two existential attitudes here: mastery and slavery, which are the most popularized, albeit truncated, are developed in Kojève's lectures on Hegel. However, in the context of his 'dualistic ontology', which operates on a plane in his philosophical system different from the phenomenological sphere of the Hegelian dialectic and the philosophy of history, mastery corresponds to a 'pagan' consciousness, while the slavish attitude has its ontological grounds in what Kojève often calls the bourgeois Judeo-Muslim-Christian world-view. See Alexandre Kojève, *Essai d'une histoire raisonnée de la philosophie païenne*, Volume I: *Les présocratiques*, 1968; Volume II: *Platon-Aristote*, 1972; Volume III: *La philosophie hellénistique. Les neo-platoniciens*, 1973 – all published by Gallimard, Paris.
 25. See Auffret, *Alexandre Kojève, la philosophie, l'État et la fin de l'Histoire*, ch. 5, pp. 265–90.
 26. *Ibid.*, pp. 367–404.
 27. Kojève, *The Notion of Authority*, p. 75.
 28. Alexandre Kojève, *Esquisse d'une phénoménologie du droit*, Gallimard, Paris, 1981; translated as *Outline of a Phenomenology of Right*, Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham MD, 2007.
 29. Kojève's Letter to Carl Schmitt (16 May 1955), *Interpretation*, vol. 29, no. 1, Fall 2001, p. 97.
 30. Kojève's notion of 'giving' [gift] economy and 'producing' economy was developed in his private conversation with Carl Schmitt. A 'giving' economy would be an economy affiliated with 'aristocratic egalitarian' economy of struggle, while a 'producing' economy would be affiliated with slavish notions of equivalence. Postwar 'intellectuals' will be producers of knowledge, contributing to the culture of 'greasing'. Postwar intellectuals 'work' but do not 'struggle'.
 31. Alexandre Kojève, 'Colonialism from a European Perspective' [16 January 1957, Düsseldorf], *Interpretation*, vol. 29, no. 1, Fall 2001, pp. 115–28.
 32. Robert Howes and Bryan-Paul Frost, 'The Specificity and Autonomy of Right: Alexandre Kojève's Legal Philosophy', *Interpretation*, vol. 24, no. 1, Fall 1996. Translators of the *Esquisse d'une phénoménologie du droit* erroneously equate Kojève's concept of the Universal and Homogenous State with what they think is a more viable entity in the guise of 'a legal integration between states that results in a kind of supranational constitutional order'. However, the juridical context Kojève was describing is not primarily developed at the level of states and international law. Expanding the strictly social context of the *Esquisse* to an imperial triumphant and unique notion of Justice is a serious disfiguration of the scope and details of the book. Such readings write off Kojève's entire theory of revolutionary action, and claim that all such forms of action are no longer necessary or even possible.
 33. The Hoover Institute and its affiliated journal *Policy Review* were first to publish an English translation of Kojève's memorandum to de Gaulle, 'Outline of a Doctrine of French Policy' (translated by Erik de Vries), *Policy Review*, 2004, pp. 3–40. A distorted version of the same document was published in France, in Bernard-Henri Lévi's journal *La Règle du jeu* (no. 1, 1990). While this 'Doctrine', or, as it is popularized in English, 'The Latin Empire', seems to be widely known to students of Kojève directly linked with right-wing, pro-capitalist scholarship, there is no mention of its close connection with the *Notion of Authority*. However, the two texts are linked like a tree to its subterranean roots. The ugly roots seem to have been deliberately glossed over by a seemingly healthy outgrowth.
 34. See Robert Howse, 'Kojève's Latin Empire: From the End of History to the Epoch of Empires', *Policy Review* 126, 2004. 'The memorandum outlines Kojève's ultimate deviation from Marxism and predicts his later 'despising of the student rebels of the 1960s'. In his reading, Howse claims that Kojève was calling for all countries to strive towards embracing the same realized ideal of recognition in a single political community by giving in to a 'forced transformation into a regime of rights'.
 35. Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, Fontana/Collins, London, 1973, p. 254.
 36. Kojève's political-philosophical writings must be distinguished from numerous, still uncatalogued policy papers and diplomatic memoranda. Kojève's letter to Stalin, his study on authority, and the study on the phenomenology of right – these three manuscripts are all part of his philosophical system. His policy papers between 1945 and 1968 must be studied separately in the context of the history of the European common market.
 37. See Alexandre Kojève, *Identité et réalité dans le 'Dictionnaire' de Pierre Bayle*, Gallimard, Paris, 2010.
 38. See Raymond Queneau, 'Philosophes et voyous', *Les Temps Modernes* 63, January 1951, pp. 1193–1205.
 39. According to Kojève, philosophers are always in a hurry to deal with political matters as quickly as possible, so that they can return to the study of philosophy. It is for that reason that when philosophers intervene in the political sphere, they usually choose tyrants (rather than 'democrats'), partly because tyrants never waste their time explaining their decisions or persuading their subjects about the wisdom of their policies.
 40. Alexandre Kojève, *L'athéisme*, Gallimard, Paris, 1998, p. 273.
 41. By the early 1930s, Kojève had lost all his investments in La vache qui rit. He divorced his wife, Cecile Shoutak, on 22 November 1931. She soon left for Germany, where she married an architect of the Third Reich. He would later receive the tragic news of her suicide in Nazi Germany. Finally, at around the same time, his letter to his uncle, Kandinsky, mentions an incurable illness that he had contracted, which rendered his handwriting illegible.
 42. Georges Bataille, *Inner Experience*, SUNY Press, New York, 1988, p. 43.
 43. Kojève, letter to Bataille (1943), *Textures* 6, 1970, pp. 61–5.
 44. See George Bataille's outlines of an alternative structure to Kojève's *Lectures on Hegel*. Fonds Bataille, Box II, NAF 28086, BNF.