

*Humanismus und Philosophie im  
Kalten Krieg*

Der französische Moment der  
Philosophie, I  
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# Partikulare Momente der philosophischen Universalität

“Philosophy is thus both a universal aim of reason and, simultaneously, one that manifests itself in completely specific moments. Let us take the example of two especially intense and well-known philosophical instances.

First, that of classical Greek philosophy between Parmenides and Aristotle, from the 5th to the 3rd centuries BC: a highly inventive, foundational moment, ultimately quite short-lived.

Second, that of German idealism between Kant and Hegel, via Fichte and Schelling: another exceptional

# Partikulare Momente der philosophischen Universalität, 2

philosophical moment, from the late 18th to the early 19th centuries, intensely creative and condensed within an even shorter timespan. I propose to defend a further national and historical thesis: there was-or there is, depending where I put myself-a French philosophical moment of the second half of the 20th century which, *toute proportion gardée*, bears comparison to the examples of classical Greece and enlightenment Germany.”

(Alain Badiou, The Adventure of French Philosophy, in: New Left Review, II, 2005, Nr. 35, 67-77)

# Heroische Momente der Philosophie als Tätigkeit

- Griechisch-römischer Moment (Vorsokratiker - Seneca)
- Spätantiker Moment (Plotin - Origines)
- Arabischer Moment (Ibn Sina - Ibn Khaldoun)
- Scholastischer Moment (Anselm von Canterbury – Wilhelm von Ockham)
- Humanistischer Moment (Petrarca – Machiavelli)
- Moment der Aufklärung (Descartes/Bacon – Encyclopédie/Adam Smith)
- Deutscher Moment (Kant/Herder – Junghhegelianer – Husserl/Heidegger)

# Der französische Moment der Philosophie

Sartre's foundational work, *Being and Nothingness*, appeared in 1943 and the last writings of Deleuze, *What is Philosophy?*, date from the early 1990s.

The moment of French philosophy develops between the two of them, and includes Bachelard, Merleau-Ponty, Lévi-Strauss, Althusser, Foucault, Derrida and Lacan as well as Sartre and Deleuze- and myself, maybe.

(Alain Badiou, a.a.O.)

# 1. Ursprünge [und Hintergrund]

- First, origins: where does this moment come from, what were its antecedents, what was its birth?
- In 1911, Bergson gave two celebrated lectures at Oxford, which appeared in his collection *La pensée et le mouvement*. In 1912, simultaneously, in other words, Brunschvicg published *Les Étapes de la philosophie mathématique*.

# 1. Ursprünge ..., Forts. 1

- In Bergson we find what might be called a philosophy of vital interiority, a thesis on the identity of being and becoming; a philosophy of life and change. This orientation will persist throughout the 20th century, up to and including Deleuze.
- In Brunschvicg's work, we find a philosophy of the mathematically based concept: the possibility of a philosophical formalism of thought and of the symbolic, which likewise continues throughout the century, most specifically in Lévi-Strauss, Althusser and Lacan.

# 1. Ursprünge ..., Forts. 2

- On one side, a philosophy of life; on the other, a philosophy of the concept.
- At stake in any such discussion is the question of the human subject, for it is here that the two orientations coincide. At once a living organism and a creator of concepts, the subject is interrogated both with regard to its interior, animal, organic life, and in terms of its thought, its capacity for creativity and abstraction. The relationship between body and idea, or life and concept, formulated around the question of the subject, thus structures the whole development of 20th-century French philosophy from the initial opposition between Bergson and Brunschvicg onwards.



# 1. Ursprünge ..., Forts. 3

- A first definition of the French philosophical moment would therefore be in terms of the conflict over the human subject, since the fundamental issue at stake in this conflict is that of the relationship between life and concept.
- We could, of course, take the quest for origins further back and describe the division of French philosophy as a split over the Cartesian heritage. In one sense, the postwar philosophical moment can be read as an epic discussion about the ideas and significance of Descartes, as the philosophical inventor of the category of the subject.

# Hintergründe

- Etatismus und Zentralismus in der französischen Kultur
- Besondere Bedeutung der Bildung in der Elitenreproduktion in Frankreich
- Zentralität der Philosophie im französischen Bildungssystem
- Die ‚Sonderentwicklung‘ der ‚sciences humaines‘ in Frankreich
- Die realen Illusionen der Résistance und des ‚Dritten Weges‘: intellektueller Gegenpol zum NS-Faschismus und imaginäre Alternative zur Blockkonfrontation

## 2. Philosophische Operationen [und Gehalt]

- Next, what were the principal philosophical operations that it undertook?
- Vier Operationen:
  - The first move is a German one, or rather, a French move upon German philosophers.

All contemporary French philosophy is also, in reality, a discussion of the German heritage. Its formative moments include Kojève's seminars on Hegel, attended by Lacan and also influential upon Lévi-Strauss, and the discovery of phenomenology in the 1930s and 40s, through the works of Husserl and Heidegger.

## 2. Philosophische Operationen [und Gehalt], 1. Forts.

What was it that they sought?

In a phrase: a new relation between concept and existence. Behind the many names this search adopted—deconstruction, existentialism, hermeneutics—lies a common goal: that of transforming, or displacing, this relation. The existential transformation of thought, the relation of thought to its living subsoil, was of compelling interest for French thinkers grappling with this central issue of their own heritage.

## 2. Philosophische Operationen [und Gehalt], 2. Forts.

- The second operation, no less important, concerns science.

French philosophers sought to wrest science from the exclusive domain of the philosophy of knowledge by demonstrating that, as a mode of productive or creative activity, and not merely an object of reflection or cognition, it went far beyond the realm of knowledge. They interrogated science for models of invention and transformation that would inscribe it as a practice of creative thought, comparable to artistic activity, rather than as the organization of revealed phenomena.

## 2. Philosophische Operationen [und Gehalt], 3. Forts.

- “The third operation is a political one.”  
“they looked to politics for a new relation between concept and action, in particular, collective action. This fundamental desire to engage philosophy with the political situation transforms the relation between concept and action”
- “The fourth operation has to do with the modernization of philosophy, in a sense quite distinct from the cant of successive government administrations.”

## 2. Philosophische Operationen [und Gehalt], 4. Forts.

“French philosophers evinced a profound attraction to modernity. They followed contemporary artistic, cultural and social developments very closely. There was a strong philosophical interest in non-figurative painting, new music and theatre, detective novels, jazz and cinema, and a desire to bring philosophy to bear upon the most intense expressions of the modern world.”

## 2. Philosophische Operationen [und Gehalt], 5. Forts.

“In sum: the French philosophical moment encompassed a new appropriation of German thought, a vision of science as creativity, a radical political engagement and a search for new forms in art and life.”



## 2. Philosophische Operationen [und Gehalt], 6. Forts.

Die Frage nach dem philosophischen Gehalt -> Frage nach dem Einsatz, um den es dabei immer wieder ging: ein neues Denken der Befreiung zeitgebunden materialisierter Subjekte, aber wiederum in dezidiert philosophischer Form – kein Verlassen der Philosophie wie es Marx und Freud antizipiert hatten

(in Richtung Befreiung von Kapitalherrschaft –Marx – und in Richtung Überwindung der Neurose als Bedingung der Liebesfähigkeit – Freud).

# 3. Stil und Verknüpfung mit der Literatur

- “Third, the fundamental question of these philosophers' link with literature, and the more general connection between philosophy and literature within this sequence.”
- “common attempt to find a new position, or disposition, for the concept: to displace the relation between the concept and its external environment by developing new relations to existence, to thought, to action, and to the movement of forms”

### 3. Stil und Verknüpfung mit der Literatur, 1. Forts.

- “this posed the issue of the form of philosophy itself: one could not displace the concept without inventing new philosophical forms. It was thus necessary not just to create new concepts but to transform the language of philosophy. This prompted a singular alliance between philosophy and literature which has been one of the most striking characteristics of contemporary French philosophy.”

### 3. Stil und Verknüpfung mit der Literatur, 2. Forts.

„ The surrealists also played an important role. They too were eager to shake up relations regarding the production of forms, modernity, the arts; they wanted to invent new modes of life. If theirs was largely an aesthetic programme, it paved the way for the philosophical programme of the 1950s and 60s; both Lacan and Lévi-Strauss frequented surrealist circles, for example.

### 3. Stil und Verknüpfung mit der Literatur, 3. Forts.

“The specificity of this moment in French philosophy is to play upon several different registers in language, displacing the borders between philosophy and literature, between philosophy and drama. One could even say that one of the goals of French philosophy has been to construct a new space from which to write, one where literature and philosophy would be indistinguishable;

### 3. Stil und Verknüpfung mit der Literatur, 4. Forts.

a domain which would be neither specialized philosophy, nor literature as such, but rather the home of a sort of writing in which it was no longer possible to disentangle philosophy from literature. A space, in other words, where there is no longer a formal differentiation between concept and life, for the invention of this writing ultimately consists in giving a new life to the concept: a literary life.”

### 3. Stil und Verknüpfung mit der Literatur, 3. Forts.

This is a complex history, but if the surrealists were the first representatives of a 20th-century convergence between aesthetic and philosophical projects in France, by the 1950s and 60s it was philosophy that was inventing its own literary forms in an attempt to find a direct expressive link between philosophical style and presentation, and the new positioning for the concept that it proposed.”

# 4. Philosophie / Psychoanalyse [/ Marxismus]

- “And finally, the constant discussion throughout this whole period between philosophy and psychoanalysis.”

“At stake, finally, in this invention of a new writing, is the enunciation of the new subject; of the creation of this figure within philosophy, and the restructuring of the battlefield around it. For this can no longer be the rational, conscious subject that comes down to us from Descartes; it cannot be, to use a more technical expression, the reflexive subject.”



## 4. Philosophie / Psychoanalyse [/ Marxismus], 1. Fortsetzung

- “If psychoanalysis has been an interlocutor, it is because the Freudian invention was also, in essence, a new proposition about the subject. For what Freud introduced with the idea of the unconscious was the notion of a human subject that is greater than consciousness-which contains consciousness, but is not restricted to it; such is the fundamental signification of the word "unconscious".”

# 4. Philosophie / Psychoanalyse [/ Marxismus], 2. Forts

„ Three key texts may give us an idea of it.“

“The first, perhaps the clearest example of this complicity and competition, comes from the beginning of Bachelard's work of 1938, *La psychanalyse du feu*. Bachelard proposes a new psychoanalysis grounded in poetry and dream, a psychoanalysis of the elements-fire, water, air and earth. One could say that Bachelard is here trying to replace Freudian sexual inhibition with reverie, to demonstrate that this is the larger and more open category.”

## 4. Philosophie / Psychoanalyse [/ Marxismus], 3. Forts

“The second text comes from the end of *Being and Nothingness* where Sartre, in his turn, proposes the creation of a new psychoanalysis, contrasting Freud's 'empirical' psychoanalysis with his own (by implication) properly theoretical existential model. Sartre seeks to replace the Freudian complex-the structure of the unconscious-with what he terms the 'original choice'. For him what defines the subject is not a structure, neurotic or perverse, but a fundamental project of existence. Again, an exemplary instance of complicity and rivalry combined.”

# 4. Philosophie / Psychoanalyse [/ Marxismus], 4. Forts

The third text comes from Chapter 4 of *Anti-Oedipus* by Deleuze and Guattari. Here, psychoanalysis is to be replaced by a method that Deleuze calls schizoanalysis, in outright competition with Freudian analysis. For Bachelard, it was reverie rather than inhibition; for Sartre, the project rather than the complex. For Deleuze, as *Anti-Oedipus* makes clear, it is construction rather than expression; his chief objection to psychoanalysis is that it does no more than express the forces of the unconscious, when it ought to construct it. He calls explicitly for the replacement of "Freudian expression" with the construction that is the work of schizoanalysis. It is striking, to say the least, to find three great philosophers, Bachelard, Sartre and Deleuze, each proposing to replace psychoanalysis with a model of their own."

# 4. Philosophie / Psychoanalyse [/ Marxismus], 5. Fortsetzung

- Die Frage des Subjekts in historischen Prozessen (-> Annalen-Schule der ‚longue durée‘)
- Marginalität des ‚westlichen Marxismus‘ in der französischen Debatte (späte und marginale Rezeption von Lukács, Horkheimer/Adorno, Nichtrezeption von Korsch, Benjamin und Bloch oder des britischen bzw. US-amerikanischen Marxismus)
- Die Problematik der Ideologie als materielle Reproduktionsinstanz der Subjekte tritt an die Stelle des ‚Klassenbewusstseins‘ (Lukács, Goldmann)
- Louis Althusser als ‚marxistischer Philosoph‘

# Gründe für die Zentralität der Psychoanalyse

“At issue, most fundamentally, has been the division of French philosophy between, on one side, what I would call an existential vitalism, originating with Bergson and running through Sartre, Foucault and Deleuze, and on the other a conceptual formalism, derived from Brunschvicg and continuing through Althusser and Lacan. Where the two paths cross is on the question of the subject, which might ultimately be defined, in terms of French philosophy, as the being that brings forth the concept. In a certain sense the Freudian unconscious occupies the same space; the unconscious, too, is something vital or existing yet which produces, which bears forth, the concept. How can an existence bear forth a concept, how can something be created out of a body? If this is the central question, we can see why philosophy is drawn into such intense exchanges with psychoanalysis.”

# Das Projekt der ‚französischen Philosophie‘, 1

“We may summarize the main points of the programme that inspired postwar French philosophy as follows.

1. To have done with the separation of concept and existence-no longer to oppose the two; to demonstrate that the concept is a living thing, a creation, a process, an event, and, as such, not divorced from existence;
2. To inscribe philosophy within modernity, which also means taking it out of the academy and putting it into circulation in daily life. Sexual modernity, artistic modernity, social modernity: philosophy has to engage with all of this;

# Das Projekt der ‚französischen Philosophie‘, 2

3. To abandon the opposition between philosophy of knowledge and philosophy of action, the Kantian division between theoretical and practical reason, and to demonstrate that knowledge itself, even scientific knowledge, is actually a practice;
4. To situate philosophy directly within the political arena, without making the detour via political philosophy; to invent what I would call the 'philosophical militant', to make philosophy into a militant practice in its presence, in its way of being: not simply a reflection upon politics, but a real political intervention;



# Das Projekt der ‚französischen Philosophie‘, 3

5. To reprise the question of the subject, abandoning the reflexive model, and thus to engage with psychoanalysis-to rival and, if possible, to better it;
6. To create a new style of philosophical exposition, and so to compete with literature; essentially, to reinvent in contemporary terms the 18th-century figure of the philosopher-writer.”

# Das Projekt der ‚französischen Philosophie‘, 1

“Such is the French philosophical moment, its programme, its high ambition. To identify it further, its one essential desire - for every identity is the identity of a desire - was to turn philosophy into an active form of writing that would be the medium for the new subject. And by the same token, to banish the meditative or professorial image of the philosopher;

# Das Projekt der ‚französischen Philosophie‘, 2

to make the philosopher something other than a sage, and so other than a rival to the priest. Rather, the philosopher aspired to become a writer-combatant, an artist of the subject, a lover of invention, a philosophical militant-these are the names for the desire that runs through this period: the desire that philosophy should act in its own name.”

# Das Projekt der ‚französischen Philosophie‘, 3

“Greatness is a road toward something that one does not know'. Fundamentally, the French philosophical moment of the second half of the 20th century was proposing that philosophy should prefer that road to the goals it knew, that it should choose philosophical action or intervention over wisdom and meditation. It is as philosophy without wisdom that it is condemned today.”

# Rückblick von der radikalen Philosophie

- Philosophie und Wissenschaften
- Philosophie und Kunst
- Philosophie und Politik
- Philosophie als inkonklusive Tätigkeit begreifen
- Die Position des ‚under-labourers‘

# Ausblick: Marxismus und Subjekttheorie im französischen Moment der Philosophie

- Sciences humaines: Henri Lefebvre, Lucien Goldmann
- Politik der Befreiung: Cornélius Castoriadis, Claude Lefort, Guy Debord
- Psychoanalyse: Jacques Lacan
- Marxismus: Louis Althusser
- Aufarbeitungen: Étienne Balibar, Pierre Macherey, Dominique Lecourt, Michel Pêcheux, Jacques Rancière, Alain Badiou