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Raphael Sassower

The Price of Public Intellectuals

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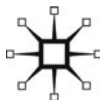

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Dedicated to the memory of Shoshana Reich
who inspired me to think about public intellectuals

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Preface

No matter how hard we try to separate our thinking from our feeling, it doesn't work. To be passionate about an idea is an affirmation that we are wired in such a way that our thinking elicits an emotional response. Critical thinking is indeed the culmination of this prewired process, bringing about a heightened sense of passion. I recall years ago when one of my professors turned to me in an elevator and asked me to never lose my sense of inner anger. Perhaps by now I can appreciate what he meant: Keep on reading, thinking, and writing as if something personal is at stake! It is a plea to be passionate (not necessarily angry) about what you are studying, about what is important for us. In my case it has been philosophy, but I have also encountered those for whom passion was directed toward cultivating the land or renovating old buildings.

At some point of every thinker's life, there is a moment of self-reflection about the role played by intellectuals. The reflection may be a comment on the margins of a discussion about an important topic – important, of course, to the author. It may become more elaborate when the author explains a life of letters. These moments demand some introspection – the kind scholars commonly shy away from because it's seemingly irrelevant to their research. It's as if they all recall Moliere's observation that we use prose to express ourselves, too obvious to notice, yet important to recognize.

Beyond this personal level, there is also the level of action: If you think of yourself as an intellectual, if you acknowledge your responsibility as a thinker, how does

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this responsibility manifest itself? Who else are you responsible to, if anyone at all? There are those among us who claim that they write for themselves, as if the very activity – the process of reading, thinking, and writing – is an aesthetic experience tinged with enjoyment. In this case, the audience is indeed one. If, on the other hand, the audience includes one's students or readers, family, friends, and neighbors, then the question of responsibility is transformed into a moral one: What will awaken others from their cognitive slumber?

At this second-level self-reflection, one's identity as an intellectual takes on a different, expanded dimension. Moving beyond the self and the subject matter, this added layer of responsibility is one which is difficult to control: Will the audience hear me? If they do, will they hear me the way I want to be heard? Control is swiftly taken away, and the best one can hope for is that some in the audience will appreciate what is being said or written the way it was intended. So, now we are exploring intentions: Are they pure or manipulating, true (in some sense) or propagandistic? Can we tell the difference? Is the intellectual, in this shift to sharing with a public (however narrowly or widely defined), still responsible for the perception of the ideas or concepts or critiques as they were originally meant?

In 2006 my friend and I bought a small paper in the Rocky Mountains (Colorado) and turned it into a weekly with a circulation of 10,000. On a weekly basis I had the opportunity, under the Publisher's Note, to rail against the war in Iraq (and other issues of the day). We published, on opposite pages, weekly cartoons from the political right and left that made waves on the Internet. It was an effort to make a difference, one that lasted only about a year because our monthly losses got out of hand. We shut down in early 2008, feeling that we had at least tried to reach laid-back, pot-smoking, and ski lovers of this region a taste of an edgy national critique. Did we make a difference? Did anyone hear us? Perhaps if they had they would have helped fund the effort, or at least sent letters of support. Perhaps the high altitude had something to do with the lethargic response. I miss my soapbox, my corner in the public commons.

For over a year, starting in the spring of 2011, I volunteered to write a weekly column for a small paper. I was excited to write critically about a variety of topics, local and national. After one-and-a-half years, my contributions became more sporadic, but still allow a critical engagement with a public different from my familiar academic surroundings

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that include students, colleagues, and professional counterparts at conferences. This experience was enriching because it forced me to avoid jargon, write shorter sentences, and make my critical points clearly and without equivocation. Some of my pieces were repeated after they appeared in print; some were ignored. But overall, to have a philosophy professor write for a wider audience was better accepted than I expected. Is the public, even limited to businesspeople, receptive to thinking beyond daily scandals and concerns? The fact that I still write columns here and there attests to the positive effects of academic participation in popular print media.

The question that has haunted me since my graduate student days has been about the insulation of the life of the mind. Beyond a low threshold of healthy narcissism, what difference can a professor make? Some argued that classroom activism was as potent as demonstrating in the streets. It seemed like an American answer, as opposed to the European and South American culture of street life and workers' strikes. Others argued about the impact one's writing might have on the public. I took that to be too lofty to be real; how many among the members of the academy ever reach a wide audience for philosophical questions? It's difficult to answer these questions when launching academic careers.

To me, the answer to this question is informed by my biography. Born in Israel to German refugees (whose parents were Polish refugees) whose academic achievements fell short of high school diplomas, I was at once cognizant of the fate of the wandering Jew and of the need to prove that I was smart enough. Smart enough for what? To run a business? To be a loyal government employee? To become an officer in the military? All of these require some intellectual skill, but none offers the most esoteric exercise of one's mind for its own sake. Philosophy seemed an obvious candidate. Not only will I graduate from high school, but I'll attain the highest possible certification, a doctorate. Not only will I join the academy, but I'll become a tenured full professor. The quest for knowledge was underwritten by a personal (Nietzschean?) will to power. And the simmering anger underlying this process was a combination of being an immigrant, a Jew, and an academic in a hyper-capitalist Christian America. Anywhere you turned, numerous injustices were evident: No matter what exposure to popular media, there was plenty to be upset about; no matter whom you met, hypocrisy was prominently displayed.

With this in mind, it was quite obvious that I would be attracted to the critical and messianic promises of Marxism, the self-righteous critical

distance of Popperians, and the aloof jestering of postmodernists. If only I could combine them into one way of thinking, if only I could harness the advantages these ways of thinking offered and discard their failings (rigid determinism, stubborn disregard for induction, and moral detachment, respectively), I'd have the best of all worlds: a passionate critical engagement with the social and political world around me. I could simultaneously offer detailed analysis of the situation as well as a thoughtful and constructive critique. Oh, if it were as easy as that!

Academics tend to endorse a paradoxical view of our learning, our road to personal enlightenment. On the one hand, we have seen those chosen to be rabbis and priests, scholars and monks, devoting their lives to another world, the one sanctioned by divine providence and embodied in the sacred texts. Add to this traditional view of the exclusive group of thinkers the concept of genius (as some were designated), and it's likely that most of us may feel unlike them. On the other hand, there is the Enlightenment ideal of education that is predicated on the twin concepts of freedom and equality. According to this tradition, all of us are equally endowed with an intellect (Aristotle's notion of rational animals), and as such we are all potentially thinkers and sages. Some of us use this natural endowment sparingly and succeed in different ways (competition, innovation, patience, kindness, sociability); others find it attractive enough to become professional intellectuals insofar as they earn a living from the life of the mind. So, we are partially intellectuals all the time and partially completely alienated from the world of thinking.

My interest in public intellectuals, as the title of this book suggests, is not limited to the personal narratives we construct of our life trajectory and how we have or haven't joined the ranks of intellectuals. Instead, I'm interested in the public arena, in the insertion or positioning of intellectuals among their fellow humans. If defining intellectuals may be difficult – professional, amateur, jesters, critics – defining the public arena has recently become even more problematic. Perhaps this is an excuse for modern capitalist culture to evade the question by offering the Internet as the latest open-ended virtual reality in which we can all feel equal and free to offer our commentary on everything we encounter. Perhaps it's an admission that we have no idea where the private domain ends and the public begins. Are the boundary conditions static or in flux? Should we have rigid boundaries or none at all? When you live in a commune (Israeli kibbutz), the boundaries are so elastic so as to seem nonexistent; when you live in prison, they are clear (imagine solitary confinement).

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What happens when you live in the urban sprawl where most of us find ourselves?

The latest uproar about the National Security Agency's whistle-blower Edward Snowden is a clear case of murky boundaries. How much surveillance of our private technoscientific lives is acceptable? Where should the lines be drawn between national security (public) and our civil liberties (private)? A so-called liberal (read: Democrat in the 21st century) President states that Snowden isn't a hero or a patriot. Some Americans disagree, because their sentiments are drawn to his disclosure of unconstitutional activities of certain government agencies. Snowden is no intellectual, so by definition he wouldn't be counted as a public intellectual. But he does alert us, as have whistle-blowers in the past, to the injustices and hypocrisy inflicted on law-abiding citizens who hold dearly certain beliefs (myths?) about what is right and wrong, morally and politically.

Although the motivation for writing this book is quite personal as a way to examine what public exposure is warranted and under what conditions, the bulk of this book is devoted to broad surveys, first of what are the characteristics of public intellectuals, from ancient Greece all the way to present commentators on postmodernity, and second, of the different approaches to the activities of public intellectuals, from the sociological to the political, psychological, and economic. Although there are many overlaps, certain features of the activity are unique to periods in history when public debates were more frequently covered in the popular media. Having asked some public intellectuals to respond to a questionnaire, it's fascinating to see in their self-reflection both humor and humility. Perhaps there is no training or certification for this mysterious public engagement, but we appreciate its fruits whenever contested issues are brought to the foreground, competing for our attention with entertainment and celebrity gossip. So, is this a necessary public activity and, if yes, at what price?

Part of the title of this book refers to the price of public intellectuals in its dual meaning: what it costs them and what society has to pay for their services. The university isn't the cloistered refugee camp for intellectuals the way monasteries were in the past. It has become, as Thorstein Veblen already showed a century ago (1918), a business bureaucracy where services are rendered to the highest bidder (nowadays the Department of Defense), and where professionalization and specialization have narrowed the intellectual focus of academics so they no longer ask the

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big questions about the meaning of life and the pursuit of happiness. As such, America is unwilling to endorse academic intellectuals as its paid critics. Paper media is a disappearing mode of mass communication so that journalism is becoming less of an intellectual vocation than a way to offer a well-digested apologetics for whoever owns the newspaper or magazine, from Rupert Murdoch of the *Wall Street Journal* to Jeffrey Bezos, the new billionaire owner of the *Washington Post*. Perhaps this is because there is a deep "anti-intellectualism" that characterizes American culture, as Richard Hofstadter suggests (1962), or an attitude that prefers practical to reflective thinking, as Alexis de Tocqueville suggested a century earlier (1945/1840, Vol. II, 3–8).

The price is then both materially real – poorly paid if paid at all – and psychologically nagging – must I be alienated from my community to be a moral beacon (Aronowitz 2012)? There is therefore a more profound issue at stake for public intellectuals. Not only must they find the ways in which to enter the Public Square or chat room, they must do so with clear moral principles and trepidation (Chomsky 1967). In this sense, a public intellectual is by definition a reluctant participant in the critical activity that will determine her or his livelihood and future prospects. The price is not alienation as such – many workers are alienated from their work, and many from their families. But few are voluntarily entering the public domain – exposing themselves to the ridicule or praise of others without the ability most often of defending themselves, fully exploring the multiple meanings of what they are saying and the unintended consequences that necessitate a revision, a restatement, or even a retraction, as Richard Posner potently requires of them (2001).

The critically engaged public intellectual pays a dear price, but one that is foisted on her or him as if it were natural and unavoidable. But is it? Must it be so? Can we not offer a low price, so low in fact that any intellectual would be willing to pay it in order to enter the public domain? The goal of this book is to explore ways this price should be paid by the public for its own sake, so as to enrich our public life and ensure that the glorifying myths about individuation and individuality are once and for all broken down, if not completely abandoned, in the name of community health.

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1
The Myth of “Speaking Truth to Power”

Abstract: *This chapter outlines the historical and conceptual basis for the true and at times false dichotomy between truth seekers (and speakers) and those in power (primarily politicians). It covers the shift from Socrates the martyr to Plato’s vision of a philosopher-king. In conflating the two roles (philosopher and king), it is possible for the position of public intellectual (whose various conception will be covered in the next chapter) to surface. There is, though, an assumption about Truth that is contested in the postmodern age. With this in mind, certain instances of revelations of truths (by whistleblowers and hacktivists) are critically analyzed so as to differentiate them from the standard views of public intellectuals.*

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1.1 The Quaker statement

The statement "speaking truth to power" is so familiar that we are inclined to believe it has been with us since time immemorial. It is, though, relatively recent, written in 1954 by Milton Mayer and published in 1955 under the title *Speak Truth to Power* (Ingle 2013). The pamphlet proposed a new approach for the American Friends Service Committee to the Cold War. "Children of the Light" or "Friends of the Truth" were labels accorded to Quakers, known more for their egalitarian prayer services than for their moral militancy. Yet this quiet and small group of worshippers, dating back to the 17th century, had the courage to critically think about how to avoid the potential of nuclear catastrophe of the Cold War.

Has this been the motto of the Quakers from their very start? Like other Christian sects, there is a "calling" associated with this group, a divine calling to direct the "light of divine wisdom" into the dark areas of human existence and interaction so as to bear witness to the "truth." Without venturing into theological debates about the meaning of this approach to religious devotion, what becomes clear is that a group of believers, numbering as few as 199 in Germany in 1933 when Hitler became chancellor, takes it upon itself to claim authority of a truth to which others may not be privy. This claim for divine revelation is as old as institutional religions, and in its name some great and some horrible ideas and wars have been fought. Quakers during World War II have a mixed record: resisting conscription into the Nazi ranks, under claims of conscientious objection, while at times not saying or doing much to object or undermine Nazi policies of deportation of Jews and other "undesirables" (Ibid. 2–4).

With a slogan of "speaking truth to power" there is both a call to action, the speaking part of the slogan, and a realization that there is truth that must be acknowledged by those who have the privilege of receiving it. The very claim of having a special access to the truth can be perceived as problematic if not an outright pretense: Who are you to tell me what is true? On whose behalf are you speaking? What makes you so special that you were designated as the recipient of truth? The tension is exacerbated when a minority group such as the Quakers is confronting both other fellow-humans and those in power. In Nazi Germany the audience was clear, but who was it in America in 1955? To whom was the pamphlet addressed and what will be its impact? Was

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this a cry for fairness and justice, or was it rather a plea for moderation? How does is compare to Albert Einstein's plea for nuclear disarmament and world peace? Obviously not much was done between 1955, when the pamphlet was published, and 1989, when the Berlin Wall came down and the Soviet Union, with its satellite countries, transformed itself and put an end to the Cold War. But the slogan, the call to speak the truth to power, remains embedded in our minds as a valiant effort of the few to speak truth to the powerful authorities, the ones who could imprison the speakers in the Soviet gulags, as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn documented, or in ways yet undocumented in the United States.

Born of a religious belief, the notion of having access to divine truth also offers a dichotomy or schism – between the earthly and the heavenly, between the here and now and the transcendent – so that human experience in this world must measure up against an ideal not of this world. One may argue that this dichotomy is a false one, that it really doesn't exist, and that in fact it creates more problems for human affairs than it solves. Others argue that humans need this other-worldly image or ideal as a heuristic to understand better not only how to assess human interactions, but also how to envision reforms or transformations. Both Judaism and Christianity make claims to divine revelations and the intervention of God in the affairs of their followers: Moses demanding the freedom of his people from Pharaoh's enslavement and Jesus protesting the wayward behavior of the rabbis in the Temple and the rule of the Romans. They both spoke "Truth," they both confronted "Power," and they both remain symbols of bravery and sacrifice in human imagination. Did the Pharaoh listen to Moses because of the miracles he performed, the ten plagues, whose devastation brought fear of the wrath of an unseen and yet unknown god? Did Moses escape Jesus' later fate of crucifixion because his God shielded him from the Egyptians? Were they messengers, prophets, or lunatics? Their acts have earned them canonical status, but how many others have simply faded into the dustbin of history without any trace whatsoever?

In what follows, it will become clear how this dichotomy between earthly and heavenly affairs has been deployed in order to set the stage for understanding the role some people must play in the affairs of the state in order to offer a different – divine or imagined – view of human affairs. The price they and what we would call today public intellectuals paid in their lifetime for earning posthumously martyrdom status remains a vivid reminder of the dangers associated with this activity. But

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with a privileged position, reminds us Noam Chomsky, intellectuals bear a special moral duty to uncover lies and present them to the public, as was the case during the Vietnam War (1967).

1.2 Greek archetypes: Socrates' *Trial* and Plato's *Republic*

Without fully defining yet the category or class of people who embody the notion of *public intellectuals*, it's clear that in contemporary culture they are considered to be *speaking truth to power*. The archetypal case of Socrates (469–399 BCE) in ancient Greece teaches us one important lesson: if you speak truth to power publicly, you will be killed. In other words, if you don't want to die by the hands of the authorities, remain silent or speak in ways that are pleasing to the powerful. Does this mean that we should no longer seek the truth? Or rather, should we seek the truth without speaking it out loud to others or to those in positions of power? While the next chapter outlines the various labels bestowed upon public intellectuals, here I confine my observations to problematizing the very activity undertaken by them: their so-called truth, their so-called confrontation with the powerful, and their power relations in the postmodern age.

Historically, the typical choice has been to continue seeking the truth in isolation from the citadels of power. For intellectuals this meant a mixture of contempt for nonintellectuals, dependency on patrons, and general irrelevance in the affairs of the state. Monks insulated themselves in monasteries under the auspices of the almighty Catholic Church; professors in the modern university either sought church protection, the largesse of patrons, or state funding; and all other independent thinkers became marginalized against their will or well-paid apologists in think tanks. The Athenian Senate apparently accomplished its task and forever silenced gadflies like Socrates. But did it? As any tract about public intellectuals attests, Socrates remains an iconic figure worthy of emulation. Was he indeed the martyr for truth that future generations have claimed him to be? Given the two charges leveled against him – corrupting the youth and disbelief in the gods of the city – assessments of his innocence (and therefore his claim on our imagination as a martyr) remain somewhat open ended.

While the standard view emphatically follows Socrates' own arguments in his defense so as to bolster his "human wisdom" (as attested by the

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oracle at Delphi), his expertise in teaching the youth (rather than corrupting them), and his right to believe in whatever gods he wishes, there is another view that claims the opposite. Without too much detail about Socrates' trial as told by his admiring student Plato (427–347 BCE), we recall not only the accusations, the speeches, and the guilty verdict; we also recall the punishment of death (hemlock) that had been challenged by Socrates himself – wanting to remain a paid gadfly – and his friends – wanting to secure his escape. Turning to I. F. Stone's scathing critique of the cult of martyrdom associated with Socrates may prove useful if somewhat unsettling. To begin with, Stone rightfully reminds us that, "We know the story only as told later by loving disciples" (1988, 3), those who have turned their beloved teacher into "a cult hero and a secular saint" (Ibid. 108). But isn't it a well-deserved status? According to Stone, there was a "fundamental philosophical divergence between Socrates and Athens. He and his disciples saw the human community as a herd that had to be ruled by a king or kings, as sheep by a shepherd" (Ibid. 38). Unlike "the dominant Greek view" that in fact "gave dignity to the common man," the Socratic view "demeaned him. This was an irreconcilable divergence" (Ibid. 40). Instead of viewing Socrates as roaming the streets of Athens and conversing with whomever he could find, Stone portrays him as an arrogant, out-of-touch, elitist: "Neither the Xenophonic nor the Platonic Socrates makes any mention of the poor. They never seem to enter his field of vision" (Ibid. 44). And even when political events shake the city, like the tyrannical rule of the Thirty, "it is as if he continued to live apart from the city, in the clouds above it, still looking down on it with disdain" (Ibid. 156).

According to Stone, who has been derided by those who find the critique of their idol unacceptable, there are more serious grounds for his view of Socrates. Socrates' folly has been to argue that "virtue was knowledge, but real knowledge was inaccessible" (Ibid. 39). This inevitable disconnect between the virtue of learning and acquiring knowledge – and the truth along the way – and the fact that human wisdom, no matter how well honed, remains inherently wanting, brings about what he calls "the negative dialectic of Socrates." That means that Socrates' "identification of virtue with an unattainable knowledge stripped common men of hope and denied their capacity to govern themselves" (Ibid. 97). Stone's assessment of the "real" Socrates is that he is "revered as a nonconformist but few realize that he was a rebel against an open society and the admirer of a closed. Socrates was one of those Athenians who despised

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democracy and idealized Sparta" (Ibid. 121). Using the terminology made popular by Karl Popper (1902–1994) in his *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (1966/1943), distinguishing between Socrates the democrat and Plato the autocrat, Stone's Socrates is as guilty of being an antidemocrat as Plato.

Stone retells the story of Socrates' trial: "So it became Socrates' mission in life to go about and question his fellow townsmen to see if there was anyone among them wiser than he. And that, Plato's Socrates tells the jurors, is how he got into trouble and made himself unpopular" (Ibid. 80). But in fact, Stone claims that Socrates used "his *sophia* or skill as a logician and philosopher – for a special political purpose: to make all the leading men of the city appear to be ignorant fools. The divine mission he claimed from Delphi turned out to be what we would call an ego trip – an exercise of self-glorification for Socrates and of belittlement for the city's most respected leaders. He thus undermined the *polis*, defamed the men on whom it depended, and alienated the youth" (Ibid. 81). An unflattering picture indeed, but one that Stone has to qualify as well: "When Athens prosecuted Socrates, it was untrue to itself. The paradox and the shame in the trial of Socrates is that a city famous for free speech prosecuted a philosopher guilty of no other crime than exercising it.... He was the first martyr of free speech and free thought" (Ibid. 197).

Incidentally, lest one considers Stone an offbeat crank who couldn't see the obvious martyrdom of Socrates, let's consider a recent affirmation of his view. On January 31, 2013, The National Hellenic Museum (NHM) in Chicago staged a re-enactment of Socrates' trial. Under instructions by the Honorable Richard Posner, Socrates was judged under Athenian and not contemporary law; a jury of Chicago politicians, business leaders, and notable media voted, ending in a hung jury. "The surprise came when the audience convicted Socrates, albeit by a slim margin... According to NHM's President Connie Mourtoupalas, 'This is a first. I've been involved in three other Socrates trials, twice in Washington, DC, and once in New York, and all three times he was found innocent. Convicting Socrates in the 21st century is no easy feat, but they did it.'" As the report continues, "There was no need for hemlock however, as jurors, audience and judges voted against the death penalty. Judge Posner issued the final ruling stating that Socrates was 'a crank' who 'encouraged the brats of Athens,' but wasn't a threat to society. 'A 70 year old loud mouth [sic] shouldn't be put to death, and the punishment is a fine and home confinement'" (2013).

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The report concludes "with a majority of one thousand 'jurors' finding him to have been guilty of the charges of corrupting the youth and not believing in the city's gods. History was wrong, according to this trial, in finding him innocent and a *martyr* for all future critical thinkers. Conformity is the rage in democratic America despite whatever 'checks and balances' we so enthusiastically endorse for our governance" (Ibid.). If we are inclined to retain Socrates as a role model, we best stay among library book stacks than in the streets of our metropolitan centers; we better worry about the cultural context in which audiences listen to a Socrates of their times. One may find Chicago typical – it's in the heartland of America, the Midwest – or atypical – it's a relatively liberal urban city with conservative judges, like Posner. Either way, it's fascinating to note that just like in 399 BCE, a jury and audience in 2013 found Socrates guilty. The only lesson of history then is not to execute, but show mercy, free the "old crank," perhaps out of pity and self-assured pomposity that someone like Socrates was "no threat" at all than out of a deep commitment to free speech, however cranky it may sound to the refined ears of the elite.

Against the archetype or model of the one against the many, the lone seeker of truth and spokesperson of divine revelation or human wisdom – Moses, Jesus, or Socrates – there was another archetype where the dichotomy between truth and power could disappear from view. Socrates' disciple, Plato, offered a cunning solution in Socrates' name in the utopian blueprint for a republic: the *philosopher-king*. No longer will there be tension between truth and power, but instead they'll be combined and embodied in one. Here, truth is power; power is truth. And once the two coalesce, power, which is now in the service of the truth, is legitimate and absolute. Plato's solution, however clever, challenges the example of Socrates' tale of speaking truth to power. It reveals a way out of the truth-power binary that can result in devastation: What happens if the presumed "truth" is no truth at all, but simply an expression of the powerful? What critical checks will be available to curtail tyranny?

In *The Republic*, itself a utopian vision – prescriptive and normative rather than descriptive – Socrates prefaces the outline of his image of a philosopher-king with the words: "It is likely to wash us away on billows of laughter and scorn" (*Republic* 5.473c). But in addition to laughter, perhaps a lesson will be learned:

> Unless, said I, either philosophers become kings in our states or those whom we now call our kings and rulers take to the pursuit of philosophy

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> seriously and adequately, and there is a conjunction of these two things, political power and philosophical intelligence, while the motley horde of the natures who at present pursue either apart from the other are compulsorily excluded, there can be no cessation of troubles, dear Glaucon, for our states, nor, I fancy for the human race either. Nor, until this happens, will this constitution which we have been expounding in theory ever be put into practice within the limits of possibility and see the light of the sun. But this is the thing that has made me so long shrink from speaking out, because I saw that it would be a very paradoxical saying. For it is not easy to see that there is no other way of happiness either for private of public life. (Ibid. 5.473d–e)

For Socrates it seems a necessary condition for the constitution to be put into practice and for human happiness to be viable privately and publicly that "political power and philosophical intelligence" should be combined, should be the purview of one and the same ruler or king. This is said while the fragile democracy of Socrates' Athens is still under pressure, and while Plato has been drawn to Syracuse three times under the urging of Dion to help the young Dionysius II, who had philosophical pretensions and tyrannical aspirations. Chiding and dismissing the "motley horde of the natures who at presently pursue either apart from the other," Socrates himself sounds as if his worry is not limited to the "laughter of scorn" of others. Why would he "shrink from speaking out," if he had not done so with so many other topics? What would induce him to keep quiet? Was it his elitist arrogance, as Stone claims, or his fear of repercussion (as his eventual trial demonstrated)? Was the very idea of merging philosophy and power preposterous?

Bernard-Henri Levy, for one, thinks (in a footnote) that, "It should be recalled that Jambet has shown that the Platonic *dream* was never that of the 'counselor of the prince,' but, and this is altogether different, the dream of a Master who would no longer be a Master, who would abolish the principle of all lordship, and whom he names, *for lack of a better term,* 'philosopher-king.' The Syracuse adventure should thus be understood as a solution chosen out of *despair,* and not as the mirage of some intellectual and moral reform of the *polis*" (1979/1977, 205; italics in the original). The very constellation of the philosopher and the king (or ruler or leader) is a dream-like image that comes out of "despair" rather than out of a courageous invention. The despair is that of power engulfing, suffocating, and extinguishing the "intelligence" of philosophers, their knowledge of the truth. The "master," in Levy's commentary,

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is losing his power, or more accurately the legitimacy of the authority accorded to him (either democratically or by force), and as such desperately needs some philosophical grounding to re-establish the warrant for the exercise of power.

Mark Lilla agrees with Levy's interpretation, and adds that, "The philosopher-king is an 'ideal,' not in the modern sense of a legitimate object of thought demanding realization, but what Socrates calls a 'dream' that serves to remind us how unlikely it is that the philosophical life and the demands of politics can ever be made to coincide" (2001, 212). The likelihood being remote, perhaps there is no danger in entertaining such an image or a dream. But if the dream is heuristically powerful, if it remains one of the most profound expositions of how a state ought to be ruled justly, if it becomes the archetype for future generations, then it can't so easily be dismissed. It must be set in motion as an alternative to the lone philosopher, Socrates, speaking his mind and suffering the consequences; it's an image of what would be an ideal if all our political leaders were philosophically minded and if all our philosophers were politically sensible. With this in mind, it suggests that intellectuals should by the very definition of their "philosophical intelligence," as Socrates calls it, be public intellectuals who are fully engaged in the affairs of "political power."

1.3 Intellectuals and public intellectuals

For Socrates and Plato the idealized intelligence is philosophical intelligence, so that to speak of intellectuals is in fact to speak of philosophers or those who have philosophical intelligence. This, though, isn't to claim that they ought to be public intellectuals. Their intelligence can remain in the private domain, may it be in their own dwellings or in cloistered environments such as temples, churches, mosques, yeshivas, or monasteries. As insulated religious institutions – where the chosen are taught and trained – they offer a sanctuary where the very activity of feeding the mind, living the life of the mind, or attending to the well-being of the intellect is sacred and therefore protected. Unlike Socrates who roamed the streets of Athens or Jesus the streets of Jerusalem, we do have records of how intellectuals were valued members of their community, admittedly more often religious than secular. Socrates' lament over the separation between those practicing "philosophical intelligence" and those who

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administer "political power" has remained intact. Perhaps the motivation has been the lesson learned from Socrates' death: to safeguard the life of the mind, better keep the two domains apart.

Just as monasteries were kept in remote places for spiritual tranquillity and undisturbed scholarship, in the deserts and cliffs high above the oceans, so have universities sought their refuge from the mundane and the protection of the Church. The modern university is still indebted, however remotely, to the ones set in place in the 11th century throughout Italy and beyond. Commonly associated with or under the guidance (and at times with the financial support) of religious sects, these universities maintained at least some, if not all the external ceremonies and internal hierarchy associated with the Church: robes for professors, power structure, and annual rituals to pay homage to a tradition of one's own making. The modern university, however secular, still emulates the codes of conduct and internal workings of a church, with high priests who claim absolute authority and financial trappings that verge from the charitable to the obscene (Schachner 1962/1938). Academics are considered by some to be intellectuals, even though the overlap between the two categories is neither clear nor set in stone. Some intellectuals are to be found in the academy, but most academics aren't necessarily intellectuals (as we shall see at the end of Chapter 4), because of the privatization of the university system and the specialization of its inhabitants.

Outside of churches and universities, one could look for intellectual activity to happen in think tanks and mass media. But in these venues, just as with the others, the main question about the life of the mind is not simply: Is one dedicated to study the great ideas of the past in order to bring to light new pearls of wisdom?, but rather more directly addressed to the issues for which funding is provided: How does one justify the ideas of one's sponsors? This is called apologetics; the process, however intelligently designed, by which one gets paid to say what is expected, what the establishment wants, and what is least troublesome. In this sense, then, theological work is about explaining and finding consistent meaning in the sacred texts; it's also the way in which theocracy is advocated as the natural outgrowth of religious beliefs and divine laws finding their way into the political domain. Israel under Jewish law is a country whose legal framework is underwritten by the Bible. Iran under Islamic law (*sharia*) is likewise a country whose legal framework is underwritten by the Quran. And some American organizations are keen to emulate such theocratic practices, despite constitutional wording to the contrary,

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and follow in the footsteps of Jesus of Nazareth. It's only with more modern incarnations of Socrates – Baruch Spinoza comes to mind with his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* of 1673 (1951) – that the shift is more pronounced from apologetics to the critical activity of intellectuals. But just as an apology is addressed to an audience (one's patrons), so is a critique. But since a critique is less welcomed (and definitely not funded), it stands to reason that its audience, if present at all, is much smaller. Here is the beginning of our concern with intellectuals speaking more publicly about their works. *The Republic* was published after Socrates' death; Spinoza published his *Tractatus* anonymously. However remorseful the Athenians may have been after the execution or the Romans after Jesus' crucifixion, no intellectual could trust the public anymore; no one was safe from retribution. Words were lethal, and the weapon of choice of its opponents was the sword.

Most of those who write about public intellectuals posit the 1860s in Russia and the 1890s in France as setting the stage for the public's acceptance and use of the term – at times in laudatory terms, at others as a form of disapproval. For example, Alvin Gouldner states, "The term *intelligentry* was used in Russia during the 1860s to refer to a self-conscious elite of the well-educated characterized by critical tendencies toward the *status quo*; the term 'intellectuals' came into vogue through the 'Manifesto of Intellectuals' protesting the French government's persecution of Dreyfuss" (1979, 57). Likewise, Russell Jacoby concurs with Gouldner's timeline with the Russian intelligentsia of the 1860s, which was alienated from the state, to the 1890s French use of the term in relation to the Dreyfus affair: "Where once there was talk of intellectuals as critics and bohemians, now there is talk of intellectuals as a sociological class" (1987, 106–107). The actions of individuals here and there are being pulled together to designate a group of people, a class (more on this in Chapter 3).

Perhaps it's worth noting at this juncture what the American Nobel Laureate in economics, George Stigler (1911–1991), had to say about intellectuals. According to him, "Since intellectuals are not inexpensive, no society, until the rise of the modern enterprise system, could afford many intellectuals. As a wild guess, full-time intellectuals numbered 200 in Athens in the extraordinary Age of Pericles, or about one for every 1,500 of the population; and at most times in later history, intellectuals fell far, far short of this proportion. Today there are at least one million in the United States (taking only a fraction of those who live by pen and

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tongue into account), or one for each 200 of population. At least four out of every five owe their pleasant lives to the great achievements of the marketplace. Professors are much more beholden to Henry Ford than to the foundation that bears his name and spreads his assets" (1984/1963, 144–145).

Let's update Stigler's speculations. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2010 the population was 308,745,538, and in 2009 there were about 1,439,000 faculty members. Cognizant of the fact that population size is difficult to accurately ascertain, and that likewise faculty members in institutions of higher education is a problematic category (How many are part-time? How many have terminal degrees?), it's still interesting that we have fewer "faculty members" than the 1,613,740 "Prisoners Under Jurisdiction of Federal or State Authorities," not to mention the 7,225,800 "Adults Under Correctional Supervision" (from the same 2009 Census Bureau report). Perhaps the comparison between faculty and prisoners is unfair, and we should compare how many students we had then in universities. In 2009 there were about 4,495 institutions of higher education, public and private (four and two years), with a total enrollment of about 20,428,000. As for the American population as a whole, in March 2011, for the first time ever, more than 30% of U.S. adults, age 25 and older, had at least a bachelor's degree, according to the Census Bureau. Given these data, what can we say about intellectuals in America? Should we count only faculty members? Should we count those in the population who have earned a college degree, and in this sense might be considered intelligent? And how would this compare with the Athens of Socrates and Plato, where among the population of about 60,000 only about 6,000 were citizens of the city-state? And if Stigler is right to assume 200 intellectuals in Pericles' time, can we assume 20% of faculty to be intellectuals? If yes, then there are about 287,800, or 1 in 1,072, much less than his estimate (more on this issue in Chapter 4). The number of so-called intellectuals in the population is difficult to figure out, let alone quantify what contributions these intellectuals make to their societies.

Having established that intellectuals can be found in and outside academic institutions, and that some may be public intellectuals, I leave it to the rest of the book to keep on questioning the different classifications of them. There seems to be a presumption that intellectuals are necessarily public intellectuals (see Fuller's response in Chapter 4). But how this cashes out in the intersection of the life of the mind and

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political administration remains at this juncture an open question, one that wasn't resolved in ancient Greece and is a mystery still today. There are some individuals and groups whose actions look like "speaking truth to power" and could thereby qualify as public intellectuals, but whose underlying credentials and messages aren't "intellectual" in some broad sense of the term. We turn to them next.

1.4 Whistle-blowers and hacktivists

Popular media has been fascinated with WikiLeaks, an international, online, nonprofit organization that routinely publishes government documents and secret information from anonymous sources. Its website, established in 2006 in Iceland by the organization Sunshine Press, is directed by its founder, the Australian Julian Assange, who also serves as the editor in chief. In November 2010, WikiLeaks collaborated with major global media organizations to release classified and unclassified (but concealed) diplomatic cables and reports attributed to the U.S. State Department. Some of them were unflattering portraits of foreign officials and dignitaries; some were about secret initiatives and programs previously unknown to the American (and international) public. Someone with access to these encrypted files was leaking them to Assange, who then leaked them to the media. The insider was later identified as U.S. Army Private Bradley Manning. He subsequently faced charges of espionage and treason, and was sentenced in July 2013 to 35 years in prison (and received a dishonorable discharge from the Army).

Recent commentators on how Private Bradley (now self-identifying as female and wishing to be called "Chelsea") Manning should be viewed, include promoters of the Internet Age like Harvard Law School professor Yochai Benkler and attorney Floyd Abrams who specializes in First Amendment cases. The issues they bring to light revolve around the theoretical approach that should guide such cases: are these revelations "aiding the enemy" and thereby threatening the lives of American soldiers actions (freedom of speech) protected by the First Amendment that deserve public support? When deciding on the Pentagon Papers case in 1971 (a United States Department of Defense history of the United States' political-military involvement in Vietnam from 1945 to 1967, withheld from the public and eventually leaked by former government aide Daniel Ellsberg), U.S. Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart suggested that, "It is

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elementary that the successful conduct of international diplomacy and the maintenance of an effective national defense require both confidentiality and secrecy." But the court sided with Justice Hugo Black, who argued instead that, "The guarding of military and diplomatic secrets at the expense of informed representative government provides no real security for our Republic" (Abrams and Benkler 2013).

Justice Stewart argued for keeping the papers confidential, asking what "if a disclosure of sensitive information in war time would result in the sentencing to death of a hundred young men whose only offense had been that they have been 19 years old and had low draft numbers?" The lawyer who argued for public disclosure responded: "I'm afraid that my inclinations of humanity overcome the somewhat more abstract devotion to the First Amendment." What is at issue with cases of censorship on behalf of national security or the damage that revelation may cause is potential as opposed to actual harm; the focus is on "what if" speculations that, because of the high price they may exact, warrant drastic measures of secrecy. But can anyone ever predict what might happen? Is it realistic to judge ahead of time what effects may take place (Sassower and Cicotello 2010)? We are reminded in this context of David Hume's standard concern with asserting a causal connection: can this specific effect be directly and exclusively related to this specific cause? Even if such relation has been proven once, can it be assumed to hold in other, different cases? And if doubt is introduced here, shouldn't we err on the side of democracy and free speech than on the side of secrecy and government control of information? The shift, however subtle, is indeed from disputes over legal interpretations of free speech to broader concerns with democracy. Along the way what is questioned is the status of knowledge claims and the responsibility we have to each other as citizens of the same community. The truth, then, is quite controversial, open-ended, and clearly uncertain.

On June 14, 2013, U.S. federal prosecutors charged Edward Snowden, a computer specialist working for the defense subcontractor Booz Allen Hamilton (one of the largest in the United States) with espionage and theft of government property. Snowden revealed that the National Security Agency (NSA) has been spying on American citizens through telephone and e-mail records. No different from the case of Manning, Snowden's charges are serious and, despite his asylum in Russia, his case reminds us about what fate awaits such whistle-blowers. Is he a traitor, hero, dissident, or patriot? While President Barack Obama has claimed

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that he is no patriot, former President Jimmy Carter suggested that he has benefited American democracy with his revelations of secret, unauthorized surveillance. The NSA has either evaded congressional supervision or blatantly lied to congressional oversight committees about the extent of its surveillance capabilities and operations in the name of national security.

These cases of public exposure raise a variety of questions: Are Manning and Snowden public figures that deserve our support? Are they indeed the conveyors of truth or their own take on the truth? Do they provide a more comprehensive picture of national security or simply their own perspective? Though they are public figures insofar that they have had wide national and international exposure, though they have done a great service in exposing that which has been secret, and though they have taken some grave personal risks in doing so, can we call them public intellectuals? Perhaps there are theoretical underpinnings for their action – freedom of speech, the balance of secrecy and surveillance, the protection of individuals from Big Brother – but on another level they aren't intellectuals at all. They are activists. Their activities can be the consequence of a deep conviction based on their own deep thinking, or an attempt to initiate a public debate about issues that should concern all citizens in a democracy. But their actions aren't a substitute for their thinking, whatever it may be; they may have had honorable motives, but have they considered the broadest framework against which their actions can be judged?

It should be recalled that the notion of whistle-blowing came from the context of business activities and the corporate culture that underlies them. As early as the 1970s, there were case studies that outlined the conditions under which corporate loyalty (including proprietary knowledge and intellectual property) should be exposed to public scrutiny when an employee finds it warranted for the sake of the greater public benefit. The standard theory of the justification for whistle-blowing made the following stipulation: first, that the product or activity of a corporation was such that it would necessarily cause some harm; second, that the whistleblower could be sure of that fact and that no internal procedure would stop such potential harm; third, that any third party would agree with the whistle-blower as to the facts of the matter; and fourth, that the whistle-blower, in reporting this potential harm outside the organization, would indeed prevent the alleged potential harm. This, of course, is a tall order. Not only must the whistleblower be sure of the

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potential harm and not only must the organization disregard such harm, but there must be also a definite external course of action (testimony to congressional committees, for example) that would prevent this harm or catastrophe. The most oft-cited cases are those where corporate entities knowingly dumped toxic waste into waterways or overlooked simple procedures to ensure the safety of employees, such as in the case of the Space Shuttle Challenger (Davis 1996).

Although the origins of the whistle-blowing debates have been associated with the business world, where profits overshadow any other concern, the logic of the debate is easily translatable to the cases of government whistle-blowing. The balance may have been between corporate loyalty and the protection of corporate intellectual property on the one side and the potential public hazards on the other, but this balance hasn't really changed much. In the Manning and Snowden cases the balance is between national security and personal privacy, between the consequences of 9/11 (and the so-called Patriot Act) and the categorical surveillance of citizens. The stakes may have shifted from the financial concerns of corporate America to the power of government agencies, but the logic of the situation hasn't changed much. The moral balance sheet remains as problematic as ever: at what price are we willing in democratic societies to give up our privacy? Socrates died for exposing the hypocrisy of his fellow citizens; should Manning and Snowden follow in his footsteps? Unlike Socrates, their claims haven't had much to do with the truth as such, but rather with misleading information and the posture of government agencies in regards to the truth – national security – they abide by and protect.

A more contemporary concern with whistle-blowing is related to hacktivists, those computer hackers who have been able to infiltrate websites and databases that are thought to be secure. Some have done so to show off; some have done it as a form of bank robbery, transferring funds from one bank account to another. There are those who are undertaking this activity for personal gains, and those who are sincerely wishing to ensure the security of databases by showing where deficiencies are apparent. We should note that many of the court cases associated with such activities come under the violation of the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act (1986/1984); they routinely invoke the language and history of Socrates' trial and his claim to having been a gadfly. Are hacktivists providing a public service insofar as they are exposing hypocrisy and misrepresentation of what some government agencies claim to be doing?

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Are they gadflies or pretentious computer whizzes? Either way, they have exposed the activities and capabilities of government agencies, and when doing so have exposed themselves to legal retribution (Ludlow 2013). The digital age promises to be both egalitarian (anyone can blog about anything) and transparent (everything is open to scrutiny). What remains at stake is whether or not the activity of hacktivists is indeed honorable and disinterested, as opposed to self-serving and debilitating. Are the hacktivists ensuring government integrity or simply attempting to embarrass it and show its failings? At issue are the motives that propel hacktivists: Is it selfless or self-serving? Who should be trusted, hacktivists or the government?

One notorious group of hacktivists, originating in Canada, has been called Anonymous. In addition to acts of sabotage, this group has been responsible for the numerous Occupy Wall Street demonstrations around the United States. However successful these acts have been since 2011, they were targeting American capitalism, the alliance between government and corporate institutions, and the fact that 1% of the American population owns more than all of the rest 99%. This movement has faded from the public arena; it has been demoralized and discredited; it has lost the luster of its original message. But it demonstrated in unequivocal terms that there could be a movement inspired by Internet intervention to provide some truths to a public inundated by misinformed popular media and anesthetized by the great injustices afflicted daily on Americans. Are hacktivists, Occupy Wall Street activists, and others indeed public intellectuals? Do they speak truth to power? Does anyone listen to them? And if they do intend to reveal or expose the truth, would we all agree that it is indeed the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth? These questions, already brought forth in the case of Socrates' pretensions, remain in the forefront of out discussion of the myth of speaking truth to power. Whose truth? Is it absolute? Should it be contested? With these questions in mind, we turn to examine the postmodern condition that renders some of them obsolete.

1.5 Truth in the postmodern age

Having reviewed the Quaker call to arms, having mentioned some cases of individuals who challenged government secrecy, we now turn to

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asking the difficult question about the nature of truth and where it can be found (and eventually exposed). Perhaps a good place to start, once again, is Plato's *The Republic*:

> Picture men dwelling in a sort of subterranean cavern with a long entrance open to the light on its entire width. Conceive them as having their legs and necks fettered from childhood, so that they remain in the same spot, able to look forward only, and prevented by the fetters from turning their heads. Picture further the light from a fire burning higher up and at a distance behind them, and between the fire and prisoners and above them a road along which a low wall has been built, as the exhibitors of puppet shows have partitions before the men themselves, above which they show the puppets ... See also, then, men carrying past the wall implements of all kinds that rise above the wall, and human images and shapes of animals as well, wrought in stone and wood and every material, some of these bearers presumably speaking and others in silent. (7.514a–c)

The famous image of the cave illustrates the ways in which we might be watching images on the wall of a cave rather than the entities these images represent. Socrates suggests to Glaucon that if the men were to be freed and turn around, climb out of the cave and face the sun they'd be blinded at first, until they learned how to look at the world around them. Socrates considers the ability to leave the shackles behind and ascend toward the outside of the cave as a means by which we "would be able to look upon the sun itself and see its true nature" (Ibid. 7.516b). The truth, then, is beyond our surroundings and requires dialectical education and the desire to learn about the essences of the world, not simply images. Socrates also discusses what it would be like for those who leave the cave and then return to it to confront others who have remained there. In his description, not only would they "see" different things, their understanding of what is real would differ as well (Ibid. 7.518). The image of the cave has stayed with us over the years, offering an ideal of education and knowledge that transcends the limitations of any cave's walls. For Socrates, the truth is attainable despite the heights to which our gaze must adjust, despite the work we must undertake to get there.

But when it comes to the late 20th century and the dawn of the 21st, the very notion of truth has been challenged. How would you know if you left the cave? How would you be able to discern the difference between *your* attainment of the truth and that of others? Is it self-assertion, a self-declaration? Moreover, when an intellectual claims to have ascertained

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the truth, this claim in itself is quite powerful – or at least is accompanied by a sense of power – even when it's only the power of the truth itself. The Quaker "speaking truth to power" is therefore misleading in its distinction between truth and power, as far as Michel Foucault (1926–1984) is concerned. As he says:

> The important thing here, I believe, is that truth isn't outside of power, or lacking power: contrary to a myth whose history and functions would repay further study, truth isn't the reward of free spirits, the child of protracted solitude, nor the privilege of those who have succeeded in liberating themselves. Truth is a thing of this world; it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its "general politics" of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (1980, 131)

In this sense, Socrates' image of the cavedweller who leaves the cave and may return, who leaves the cave in order not to return, or who leaves the cave in order for others to follow is quite powerful. It's the power associated with the acquisition of truth. And this power, in Foucault's hands, is as powerful as any political institution, because its discursive authority emanates from its core. Put differently, when humans undertake to establish criteria by which knowledge claims are deemed true or false, or establish methods of inquiry that are considered superior or inferior to other methods of inquiry (superstition vs. empirical or rational grounding), they are then engaged in modes of power relations and not simply in an activity devoid of power considerations. Foucault's notion of "regime of truth" and its attendant "general politics of truth" transcend this or that political power base or rule, this king, queen, or prime minister. The transcendence is immanent to the intellectual domain where disputes over what is true and false have grave consequences, from the justification of war declarations ("Saddam Hussein has weapons of mass destruction") all the way to ideological slogans ("We stand for equal opportunity for all"). From campaign promises to recent debates over climate change, truth and power intermingle in more ways than were thought possible in the past.

Foucault's view of the "political economy of truth" starts with the classical claims of the scientific revolutions of the 16th and 17th centuries and

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continues with more contemporary ways in which scientific knowledge claims to underpin policy choices:

> "Truth" is centered on the form of scientific discourse and the institutions which produce it; it is subject to constant economic and political incitements (the demand for truth, as much for economic production as for political power); it is the object, under diverse forms, of immense diffusion and consumption (circulation through apparatuses of education and information whose extent is relatively broad in the social body, notwithstanding certain strict limitations); it is produced and transmitted under the control, dominant if not exclusive, of a few great political and economic apparatuses (university, army, writing, media); lastly, it is the issue of a whole political debate and social confrontation ("ideological" struggles). (Ibid. 131–132)

From this perspective, intellectual activity is inherently public, because its effects shift from the constraints of one's specialty into the public domain, being used for this or that reason by this or that party. The intellectual, then, is involved in struggles over the rules by which truth is granted its authority and status. The new intellectual struggle is over the politics of truth, the regime of truth: "It is not a matter of emancipating truth from every system of power (which would be a chimera, for truth is already power) but of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic and cultural, within which it operates at the present time" (Ibid.). Since power is intimately interwoven into questions about the truth, truth turns out to be itself a matter of power relations; its producers, distributors, and consumers are always entangled in power struggles to assert or defend themselves against lies and hubris. As Foucault continues, "The political question, to sum up, is not error, illusion, alienated consciousness or ideology; it is truth itself. Hence the importance of Nietzsche" (Ibid. 133). Foucault moves here from Socrates' cave and the illusions of its prisoners all the way to Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) who claims that the attainment of truth is impossible. For Nietzsche, the most we can ascertain is a bit of information here and there, and at best have a "perspective" from which to view anything and know something about it.

Just as it's difficult to know if the reports that we hear are those of Platonic "prisoners" or enlightened thinkers, it's difficult to know if the intellectual parading ideas in the public square is a serious conveyor of truths or a nutcase. Who is to judge? Whose authority should we follow? What criteria must be adopted? When these questions are outlined in public debates, our foundations are shaken, never to return to their

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original (if there ever was) condition. Who should we trust? Who can we trust under these circumstances? Were the Quakers right to speak their minds? Did they indeed have divine light to guide them? For those who have replaced divine light with scientific might, is their new and improved knowledge any better in illuminating the truth? The postmodern condition has shifted the grounds on which we lay our claims by asking (in a Romantic sense) for one's integrity and authenticity when forwarding claims and ideas rather than the authority of technoscientific observational instruments. Does this mean we have nothing to rely on? Does this mean that we should ignore intellectuals when they address the public? In the following chapter I present a variety of perspectives on how to define intellectuals and their roles in our culture. The variety itself testifies to the complexities facing intellectuals nowadays and the reception they can expect from a restless, skeptical, and naïve public.

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2
A Variety of Intellectual Experiences

Abstract: *This chapter outlines a variety of intellectual activities and the labels associated with them, from martyr to amateur and beyond. The plurality of ways in which public intellectuals are viewed explains the difficulty in assigning one exclusive role to these activities. It also attests to the manner in which intellectuals find themselves at times outsiders and at times insiders, without thereby necessarily abnegating their critical edge in judging and interfering with the activities of their communities.*

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2.1 Preamble

The tribute paid in this chapter's title to William James' (1842–1910) book, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (1902), is postmodernist rather than pragmatic in nature. It means that I explore in this chapter multiple activities and labels associated with public intellectuals. At times the activity makes an intellectual a public intellectual by design, and others reluctant participant. Since we are covering a variety of such activities it should be noted that in the postmodern spirit, none are superior to others and that one and same intellectual may engage in them at different times without thereby exclusively committing to one or the other. In this sense, then, I understand public intellectuals in terms of what they *do* rather than what they or others *say* about them. This way of viewing people is indebted to the American pragmatic tradition, where the consequences of one's intentions and thinking are the arbiters of their value. Zygmunt Bauman may have spoken for all of us in acknowledging that "Definitions of the intellectual are many and diverse. They have, however, one trait in common, which makes them also different from all other definitions: they are all self-definitions. Indeed, their authors are the members of the same rare species they attempt to define. Hence every definition they propose is an attempt to draw a boundary of their own identity" (1987, 8). Herein lies the complexity, richness, and open-endedness of the categories of intellectuals and public intellectuals.

In addition, the typology offered later is bound to suffer from the twin maladies of arbitrariness and conventionalism: somewhat clumsy without justifiable criteria of designation, adhering to the tacit agreement of scholars and the public, respectively. Perhaps quoting Foucault (himself quoting Borges) might help unsuspecting readers:

> This passage quotes a "certain Chinese encyclopedia" in which it is written that "animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) *et cetera*, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies." (1970/1966, xv)

This imaginary typology alerts us to the choices encyclopedia authors and editors make in order to convey a distinction among species by using esoteric criteria or none at all, and at times being self-referential.

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If we heed the cautionary tale Foucault offers in this passage, we won't become angry when our preconceived distinctions may not become the standards by which we all classify. In other words, the postmodern mindset asks for a level of open-mindedness that isn't completely arbitrary or relativistic, but can explain itself within particular contexts and outline why certain categories make sense while others do not. This means that judgments are welcome as long as they aren't final. Most of the sections in this chapter survey two or more sets of labels or activities so as to bring them into more profound relief when juxtaposed against each other. These choices as well may suffer from some blind spots, and others could easily be substituted. Heuristically speaking, the running assumption here is that they may convey certain characteristics worthy of remembering. A final note on ordering this typology: the order is historically informed insofar as older labels come first, while more recent ones last. This in no way favors the first ones over the last ones in any sense of significance of logical priority.

2.2 Prophets and Übermenschen

There is a fascinating parallel between Moses (1391–1271 BCE) and Jeremiah (655–586 BCE), both of whom are considered to be prophets, in terms of their reluctance to accept their "calling" (in Max Weber's [1864–1920] sense of the term), their years of prophesying, their persecution by their own people, and the eventual acceptance of their pronouncements. They weren't intellectuals in the present sense of the term, but their activities as prophets speaking truth to power set the tone of what we expect of such figures in our midst. Jeremiah is as reluctant to be put in his position as a prophet as Moses was before him. They both claim that they are poor speakers. Moses says, "Please, O Lord, I have never been a man of words, either in times past or now that You have spoken to Your servant; I am slow of speech and slow of tongue" (*Exodus* 4:10). Similarly, Jeremiah says, "Ah, Lord God! I don't know how to speak, For I am still a boy" (*Jeremiah* 1:6). In both cases God comes to them and they eventually consent to face the Pharaoh and demand the freedom of the enslaved Israelites (as in the case of Moses), or face King Josiah, son of Amon of Judah. They cannot escape their fate; they cannot reject a divine demand to speak out on behalf of God. Do public intellectuals see themselves in this light? Do they think that their calling

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to demand freedom and religious obedience is in fact sanctioned by a power beyond that of kings and pharaohs?

The reluctance of becoming prophets is important for future generations of public intellectuals. Perhaps it's the fear of persecution and execution, beating, imprisonment, and exile that frightens would-be prophets. Perhaps it's the kind of moral responsibility that none wishes to willingly embrace. Who am I to make such demands on others? Although the Bible presents such cases as if they are natural, simply recording the interaction between chosen individuals and God, any skeptical reader can easily appreciate the difficulty at hand, with great empathy toward those so-called chosen. What price will they pay? Can they count on God to protect them? Their choice isn't their own; it is decreed by a transcendent being whose omnipotence is beyond resistance. They are victims as much as heroes; they may pay with their lives before their mission is completed. One need only read the biblical stories of prophets to fully understand not only the risks they had to take, but also the hostile environment in which they preached on behalf of an invisible God amidst polytheistic practices with powerful idols surrounding them – not to mention well-guarded rulers whose vengeance was legendary. Why would anyone volunteer for such a role? Why would anyone agree to be ridiculed and stoned, excommunicated and exiled?

The mantle of public intellectuals we esteem and venerate nowadays is tame by comparison. You might be ridiculed, but you can retain your tenured professorship; you might be excluded from some social circles, but you still remain secure in your job. Moses and Jeremiah, like many other biblical figures of note, were singled out and ordered to perform a role not by their own choice. In this sense they don't resemble contemporary intellectuals. Their knowledge was revealed to them by God and their words were those of someone else. In this sense, too, they differ from public intellectuals whose judgments and choices are their own. But they still remain inspirational figures whose lonely pursuit and the endurance of the wrath of others remain deeply rooted in the collective consciousness of our age; we admire them regardless of the religious element underlying their activities. We keep them as symbols of what it looks like to be in such a position. In short, we haven't forgotten them regardless of our religious orientation or belief system. Did Karl Marx (1818–1883) have their legacy on his mind when writing prophetic and messianic texts on the ideal commune? Was Thorstein Veblen (1857–1929) inspired by them?

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Biblical prophets had the advantage of divine revelation that prophesied that which it eventually brought about. If doom was promised, it was delivered soon thereafter. If freedom from Egyptian enslavement was promised after plagues and some resistance, it, too, was delivered, and the Israelites found their way (after 40 years of wandering in the desert) to the Promised Land. The view of an individual being able to transcend the conditions of the day – to see outside the cave, as Socrates so eloquently portrayed this process of education and knowledge acquisition – has been rekindled by Nietzsche. For him the image is that of the Übermensch (superhuman or overman), the one who transcends "good and evil," who sees farther than anyone else, and who is capable to legislate moral principles outside of the cultural norms of the day. Nietzsche sets his Übermensch in contrast to the "herd man," the one who follows herd mentality and conforms to whatever standards of beauty and morality are already present (Nietzsche 1967, 804; 1887). One model he has in mind is "the Roman Caesar with Christ's soul" – political power with spiritual compassion, an image that spun many commentaries over the years (Ibid. 983; 1884). The image Nietzsche pulls together is "the greatest elevation of the consciousness of strength in man, as he creates the overman," one that can handle and embody "the enjoyment of all kinds of uncertainty, experimentalism, as a counterweight to this extreme fatalism; abolition of the concept of necessity; abolition of the 'will'; abolition of 'knowledge-in-itself'" (Ibid. 1060; 1884).

What is significant to recall with the image of the Übermensch is that it sets apart an individual who overcomes the fears of uncertainty and those of one's own will to power and who is strong enough to have a vantage point to judge any situation and therefore judge others. For Nietzsche this image of the exceptional individual is a goal and an ideal, in the same sense that Socrates envisions the individual who escapes from the cave or the individual who combines philosophical wisdom with political power. For Nietzsche, too, there is an expectation that this individual will become powerful enough to set aside any known (and corrupt) norms of conduct. Others, such as Steve Fuller, have offered the image of the "superhero" instead: "For intellectuals and superheroes, social structures are disposable sites for the ongoing struggle between Good and Evil: what embodies Good one week may embody Evil the next. The heroic intellectual never gives up on the chase" (Fuller 2005, 37).

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Is this an ideal we should strive for? Will the Übermensch's wisdom be as profound and true as that of the biblical prophets? Are Übermenschen the heirs apparent of prophets? Who, then, will whisper into their ears what must be said? If divine guidance is absent, what replaces it? Here is where the questions about truth, as mentioned at the end of the previous chapter, come back to haunt us. But the image of the lone thinker set above and beyond the reach of the cacophony of public debates remains potent. It's an image of solitary individuals whose sense of self and whose self-confidence alone may bring about their positions in society; not a divine calling, but a personal call to arms!

2.3 Gadflies, martyrs, and philosopher-kings

The two classic cases of martyrdom most commonly cited in discussions over public intellectuals are those of Jesus of Nazareth (7–2 BCE-30–33 CE) and Socrates of Athens. Religious or not, steeped in ancient Hebrew and Greek literature or not, the story of the crucifixion is as vivid in our mind's eye as the crosses Christians wear around their necks. Jewish by birth and education, Jesus spent his days admonishing the rabbis, priests, and money changers in the temple. He spread his ideas of love and fellowship among those whose frame of reference rests on a legalistic interpretation of the Bible. His death on the cross wasn't voluntary; he didn't choose to die in this way. But his death nonetheless occasioned a new way of thinking by his disciples, the apostles who contributed to the New Testament decades after his death. Jesus died for our sins, they say, and God showed his mercy upon humanity by sending his son to die on the cross. More than a billion Catholics and millions of members in other Christian denominations view this act of selflessness as an act of martyrdom.

Socrates' trial, as already mentioned, was a trial about two charges: the corruption of the youth and the disbelief in the city's gods. It was a trial of an old man, a 70-year-old citizen who roamed the streets and spoke his mind. He reminds his audience that if they put him to death, they won't find anyone to replace him. This is where the famous gadfly image is explained:

> It is literally true, even if it sounds rather comical, that God has specially appointed me to this city, as though it were a large thoroughbred horse which because of its great size is inclined to be lazy and needs the

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> stimulation of some stinging fly. It seems to me that God has attached me to this city to perform the office of such a fly, and all day long I never cease to settle here, there, and everywhere, rousing, persuading, reproving every one of you. (*Apology* 30e)

Socrates the gadfly, ordered by God to perform his duty, is therefore a necessary rather than superfluous component of the city's workings. He is bound to be who he is. But he was put on trial nonetheless. It was a trial that ended in conviction; Socrates was found to be guilty of the two charges, and sentenced to death. At this point of the trial, Socrates holds nothing back: "Having said so much, I feel moved to prophesy to you who have given your vote against me, for I am now at that point where the gift of prophecy comes most readily to men – at the point of death" (*Apology* 39c). Unlike the biblical prophets who prophesied in their youth without the eloquence that good training and years of experience offer, Socrates suggests that prophetic insights and even the audacity to prophesy at all come at old age, just before one's death. It's true that he invoked the oracle of Delphi to secure his assessment of himself as being the wisest man alive – somewhat like hearing God's voice in the Bible – but overall his appeal was to his own rather than to divine arguments. What is his prophecy? "I tell you, my executioners, that as soon as I am dead, vengeance shall fall upon you with a punishment far more painful than your killing of me. You have brought about my death in the belief that through it you will be delivered from submitting your conduct to criticism, but I say that the result will be just the opposite" (Ibid. 39d). The prophecy came true: we are still writing about the injustice of Socrates' fate, his martyrdom.

There are numerous other martyrs whose names are recalled by intellectuals, public or not. Among them is the French folk heroine (and eventually a Catholic saint), Joan of Arc (1412–1431), who was burned at the stake for challenging the authorities. The Italian mathematician Giordano Bruno (1548–1600) was also burned at the stake for espousing a belief in the existence of multiple worlds, ours being only one of them. Most historians and sociologists of science invoke the great Galileo Galilei (1564–1642) who was under house arrest because of his disputes with the Catholic Church. He has been commonly used as a symbol of courage to stand up to religious authorities in the name of science. Have they all spoken truth to power? Have they, and all those who preceded or followed them, indeed said something so controversial to warrant punishment? What was it that threatened the authorities? It's clear

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that the Pharaoh didn't want to lose his slaves when Moses demanded their freedom; the Roman authorities didn't appreciate the nascent popularity enjoyed by Jesus in his preaching around Jerusalem; and Socrates annoyed his fellow citizens. But in point of fact, none of these individuals in their own time mattered much, since they were powerless and somewhat negligible in the workings of their respective communities. It's their death that posthumously prompted a rethinking – a critical evaluation, as Socrates prophesied – and the granting of martyrdom. Had they been left alone, would we know of their existence? Should someone like Ward Churchill, a tenured professor of Ethnic Studies at the University of Colorado, Boulder, become a martyr because he got fired? Was his insensitive characterization of the victims who worked at the Twin Towers in New York City as "little Eichmanns" so offensive so as to go beyond the protection of freedom of speech? Was he indeed a symbol of a public intellectual who spoke truth to power, or simply an academic whose framing of American imperialism was poorly worded? Is there warrant to his critique? Was this indeed a critique? Must the martyr, following Socrates, be a philosopher?

It seems that Plato's response to the marginality of the philosopher, the critical thinker who roams the streets and insists on being part of the public landscape, was to envision the philosopher-king. We already noted how Socrates admitted that such an ideal or dream may provoke laughter, but that nonetheless it's worthy of consideration. What if the ruler was to account for all the wisdom available at the time? Wouldn't such a ruler be wiser and more just than all other, less-informed ones? Wouldn't it benefit the public as a whole and every individual citizen as well? The shift here isn't only a conceptual shift in moving two seemingly antagonistic categories, truth and power, into unison (as Foucault has suggested earlier), nor is it a sleight of hand where two separate traits are combined (with proper education) into one embodiment. The shift is philosophical as well, according to Leo Strauss, who suggests presenting (according to the medievalist Farabi) "the whole of philosophy proper within a political framework," following Plato's *The Republic* (1952, 9). The Arab philosophers – *falasifa* – "had to assume that the founder of the perfect order, the prophetic lawgiver, was not merely a statesman of the highest order but at the same time a philosopher of the highest order. They had to conceive of the prophetic lawgiver as a philosopher-king" (Ibid. 10). "Farabi discusses the human things which are required of bringing about the complete happiness of nations and of cities. The chief

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requirement proves to be philosophy, or rather the rule of philosophers, for 'the meaning of *Philosopher, First Leader, King, Legislator, and Imam* is one and the same,' and therefore the combination that results in the philosopher-king is not alien at all; it's quite natural" (Ibid. 12). Who might we count as a philosopher-king?

Stone claims that Marcus Aurelius was "the one philosopher among the Roman emperors, and the only true philosopher king ever to appear on the stage of history" (1988, 66). What about more recent incarnations? Would any U.S. President? Some would argue that at least Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826), James Madison (1751–1836), John Quincy Adams (1767–1848), Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865), and Woodrow Wilson (1856–1924) should count, each for a different reason (5 of 45 presidents). But is this true? Had their intellectual activities been part and parcel of their presidency, or rather something they did either before or after their terms in office? Or, should we count Vaclav Havel (1936–2011), a playwright and dissent who was the last president of Czechoslovakia and the first president of the Czech Republic? Is the transformation of a thoughtful dissident and political activist into a political leader what Plato had in mind?

As Strauss continues his analysis, it becomes clear the extent to which "Plato found a solution to the problem posed by the fate of Socrates, in founding the virtuous city in speech: only in that 'other city' can man reach his perfection" (Ibid. 16). Postulating a difference between Socrates and Plato is fairly well known, as we saw earlier (Popper); what Strauss adds through his readings of Farabi is this:

> The Platonic way is a combination of the way of Socrates with the way of Thrasymachus; for the intransigent way of Socrates is appropriate only for the philosopher's dealing with the elite, whereas the way of Thrasymachus, which is both more and less exacting than the former, is appropriate for his dealings with the vulgar. What Farabi suggests is that by combining the way of Socrates with the way of Thrasymachus, Plato avoided the conflict with the vulgar and thus the fate of Socrates. Accordingly, the revolutionary quest for the other city ceased to be necessary: Plato substituted for it a more conservative way of action, namely, the gradual replacement of the accepted opinions by the truth or an approximation of the truth. (Ibid. 16–17)

This means for Strauss that "Farabi's Plato eventually replaces the philosopher-king who rules openly in the virtuous city, by the secret kingship of the philosopher who, being 'a perfect man' precisely because he is an 'investigator,' lives privately as a member of an imperfect society

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which he tries to humanize within the limits of the possible. The secrecy that ought to follow the activities of the philosophically-minded is grounded in the existence of a danger which, however much its forms may vary, is coeval with philosophy. The understanding of this danger and of the various forms which it has taken, and which it may take, is the foremost task, and indeed the sole task, of the sociology of philosophy" (Ibid. 21). Unlike Plato's philosopher-king, Strauss' own recipe for independent thinking in the face of potential state persecution is different: "Persecution cannot prevent even public expression of the heterodox truth, for a man of independent thought can utter his views in public and remain unharmed, provided he moves with circumspection. He can even utter them in print without incurring any danger, provided he is capable of writing between the lines" (Ibid. 24).

Strauss and his disciples have shifted the scholarly discussion from the philosopher-king as the replacement of the philosopher-martyr to a more nuanced view of the activity of intellectuals when they go public. For them the issue is the concealment of one's meanings, the coding of one's words in between the lines, setting in motion the kind of hermeneutics already practiced by Jewish scholars for centuries. It is a process of reading the depths of texts, culling meaning where only hints are given, and stringing together pieces of textual evidence so as to weave a rich tapestry of wisdom. Some of the latest manifestations of this strategy can be found in the writings and advice of poststructuralists, like Jacques Derrida (1974/1967). For them, there are only language and text that require our attention, and the thoughtful exegesis one performs on them would yield pearls of wisdom. Is it really that dangerous to speak plainly? Should we conceal our truths? Socrates paid with his life, so goes the argument, and therefore you should be careful. How careful is careful enough? Can you be safe enough by encoding your messages? Should the intellectual then avoid becoming a public intellectual altogether?

2.4 Clerks and politically responsible

With the provocative title *The Treason of the Intellectuals*, Julien Benda's (1867–1956) lament has become another standard in the discussion over public intellectuals. More Romantic than critical in his assessment of the state of public intellectuals of his culture, Benda uses the term "clerks" in its medieval sense of the clergy, to designate those who were "entirely

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indifferent to these [practical/political] passions... they preached in the name of humanity or justice, the adoption of an abstract principle superior to and directly opposed to these passions... *the 'clerks' did prevent the laymen from setting up their actions as a religion, they did prevent them from thinking themselves great men as they carried out these activities*. It may be said that, thanks to the 'clerks,' humanity did evil for two thousand years, but honored good" (2007/1928, 44; italics in the original). Eventually, the clerks adopt the political passions of their day, descend to the "market place," and behave just like "laymen" (Ibid. 50, 139–140).

As Benda phrases it, "the 'clerks' who indulged in this fanaticism betrayed their duty, which is precisely to set up a corporation whose sole cult is that of justice and of truth, in opposition to the peoples and the injustice to which they are condemned by their religions of this earth" (Ibid. 57). Unlike the individual prophet or martyr, Benda's clerks are spoken of in individual and group terms, as if they constitute a "corporation" or a "cult" of sorts, perhaps a guild of public intellectuals. Unlike the classical clerks who separated themselves from the affairs of the state in order to comment on them in the name of truth and justice, "these new 'clerks' declare that they do not know what is meant by justice, truth, and other 'metaphysical fogs,' that for them the true is determined by the useful, the just by circumstances. All these things were taught by Callicles, but with this difference; he revolted all the important thinkers of his time" (Ibid.). Are the "new clerks" indeed playing with words when they claim not to have full knowledge of truth and justice? Or are they more modest and self-aware intellectuals? Benda's answer is unequivocal: "for practical common sense has become the measure of intellectual values with these strange 'clerks'" (Ibid. 80). The "new" are now "strange," perhaps in the sense of being unusual or never seen before, or because what's new about them is the postmodern realization on the questionable status of truth and justice in absolute terms.

While Benda's clerks are public intellectuals who must remain apart from their societies in order to retain the authority of their pronouncements on truth and justice, more recent collections of essays on public intellectuals emphasize their responsibility. Questions about the political if not moral responsibility of public intellectuals raise three sorts of critiques. The first focuses on the fact that it is political responsibility that should characterize the work and activities associated with public intellectuals. Peter Winch, for one, insists on "noting the important general

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point that responsibility has two aspects: it is not only an admission of accountability but a claim to power, and these two aspects may be so interconnected that an admission of accountability in some cases can *amount* to a claim to power" (Maclean, Montefiore, and Winch 1990, 4; italics in the original).

A second line of criticism is represented by Ernest Gellner (1925–1995) who takes on Benda's view more directly by assessing Benda's book as a Romantic reaction to the Enlightenment, which was concerned with a universalist mindset and its religious precursors (Ibid. 19). Gellner suggests that Benda's "strident denunciation of the treason of the clerics, which pretends that our situation is far clearer and unambiguous than in fact it is, is itself a form of betrayal of truth" (Ibid. 26). So instead of requiring the clerks to remain detached or completely committed to some metaphysical principles, Gellner offers a more problematic prescription: "What I *am* saying is that the task of *not* committing is far, far more difficult than an appallingly simplified model of the intellectual's work situation would have us believe" (Ibid. 27; italics in the original). Instead of the divide being between the universalism of the classic clerks and the involved intellectuals who become part of the "marketplace," Gellner moves public intellectuals into uncharted waters, hovering above the fray without ever committing themselves. This postmodernist view will be examined in greater detail later.

The third kind of critique is represented by Alan Montefiore who claims that "everyone must be considered, to some small extent at least, to have something of the intellectual in them" and because of this fundamental condition – a condition Benda refuses to accept – they inevitably are members of discursive communities (Foucauldian or Habermasian). As he continues:

> Within the interplay of discursive communication everyone has some basic share of responsibility towards everyone else for the maintenance of its overall meaningfulness, and that the basic reciprocity of this interplay is such that it also includes a certain degree or kind of responsibility of self-respect *vis-a-vis* himself or herself; and, furthermore, that these responsibilities carry with them a certain not wholly determinable responsibility for the respect of truth and its expression. (Ibid. 202)

Benda's clerks are brought down a peg and forced to respect their fellow men and women who contribute to the public debate of the day. Perhaps this is a shift from public intellectuals to intellectuals who are part of the public.

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2.5 Unattached/witnesses and organic/connected

Benda's clerks represent the view of the unattached public intellectuals whose distance gives them a vantage point to view more objectively the affairs of the day. Karl Mannheim (1893–1947) defined this group of intellectuals from a sociological point of view: "In every society there are social groups whose special task is to provide an interpretation of the world for that society. We call these the 'intelligentsia' ... This intellectual stratum, organized as a caste and monopolizing the right to preach, teach, and interpret the world is conditioned by the force of two social factors" (1936/1929, 10). One is scholasticism, which is dogmatic, and the other is "its relative remoteness from the conflicts of everyday life; hence it is also 'scholastic' in this sense, i.e., academic and lifeless" (Ibid. 11). Since this new and liberated intellectual class has shaken off the strictures of the church, it must now compete "for the favour of various public groups" in its engagement with them (Ibid. 12). Anchoring this group of intellectuals historically, Manheim continues to say: "This unanchored, *relatively* classless stratum is, to use Alfred Weber's terminology, the 'socially unattached intelligentsia' (*freischwebende Intelligenz*) ... A sociology which is oriented only with reference to social-economic classes will never adequately understand this phenomenon" (Ibid. 155; italics in the original).

According to Mannheim, this class is heterogeneous and therefore difficult to define, except for its common grounding in education and the tradition of intellectual studies. So that "intellectual activity is not carried on exclusively by a socially rigidly defined class, such as a priesthood, but rather by a social stratum which is to a large degree unattached to any social class and which is recruited from an increasingly inclusive area of social life" (Ibid. 156). Unlike Benda's clerks whose characterization relies on the uniformity of the priesthood, Mannheim's view emphasizes their "multiformity" because they take part "in the mass of mutually conflicting tendencies" (Ibid. 157). What Benda portrays as the uniqueness of the clerks as a disengaged cult, Mannheim considers a negative aspect to their life and activities. In his words: "Hitherto, the negative side of the 'unattachedness' of the intellectuals, their social instability, and the predominantly deliberate character of their mentality has been emphasized almost exclusively ... branded this as 'characterlessness'" (Ibid. 158).

In response to this detached posture, this rootless lack of character, Mannheim argues that "There are two courses of action which the

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unattached intellectuals have actually taken as ways out of this middle-of-the-road position: first, what amounts to a largely voluntary affiliation with one or the other of the various antagonistic classes; second, scrutiny of their own social mooring and the quest for the fulfillment of their mission as the predestined advocate of the intellectual interests of the whole" (Ibid. 158). Public intellectuals may never feel completely unattached to their community, nor may they ever choose one of the courses of action offered by Mannheim to remedy their unattached status. Instead, the lament may be much more philosophically profound than exclusively defined in sociological terms. If he is right that "in the long run, history can be viewed as a series of trial and error experiments," and if he is correct that "the failings of men have a tentative value," then it seems reasonable to conclude that in the course of history, "the intellectuals were those who through their homelessness in our society were the most exposed to failure" (Ibid. 159). It is this exposure to failure that may at the end taint public intellectuals, both in terms of their view of themselves (having failed to bring about change) and in terms of how they are viewed by the public at large. But this self-reflexive moment, as Fuller reminds us when invoking Matthew Arnold, is completely overshadowed by the "Anglophone account of the intellectual as a free-ranging cultural critic who is in an ongoing struggle to save the best in civilization from both its decadent would-be defenders in the aristocracy ('barbarians') and its upwardly mobile levelers in the bourgeoisie ('philistines')" (2005, 131). Must self-righteousness always accompany self-doubt and vice versa?

Bernard-Henri Levy, one of France's foremost public intellectuals of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, turns this into a confessional tone in his writing: "I am only an 'intellectual' who has decided to speak his mind to the experts of progressive thought; a shamelessly irresponsible person who will not easily tire of hunting down philistines and impostors; and especially a pitiful politician who believes in the impossible and in radical evil, but who sticks with the simple thesis that the intolerable also exists, and that we must resist it with every breath ... As a tenant of my name and a journeyman of passing time, I have no claim to write except as a witness" (1979, xi). Attached or detached, "homeless" or "free-floating," he continues the tradition of his own country in bearing witness to injustices, just the way Emile Zola (1840–1902) did in Captain Dreyfus' Case. Are public intellectuals witnesses rather than actors? Detached observers rather than participants? Can they be both?

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Against the view of public intellectuals as detached observers, Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937) offers the view of public intellectuals as "organic." Felice Platone quotes Gramsci from memory to have had an encounter with a "young university lecturer" where the question of the intellectual came about: "Who do you think is more qualified to be classed as an intellectual: a lecturer, who has stored up a certain number of more or less disconnected notions and ideas, who knows nothing except his own job; or a worker, even a not very cultured worker, but one who has a clear idea of what the progress and future of the world should be and who coherently organizes and co-ordinates those modest and elementary notions he has been able to acquire around this idea?" (1957, 15). The very idea of separating one group of humans and designating them "intellectuals" was anathema to this compassionate Marxist. But this realization came also from a deeper appreciation, even respect Gramsci had for the Catholic Church: "The power of religions and especially the Catholic Church has consisted and does consist in the fact that they feel strongly the need for the doctrinal unity of the whole 'religious' mass, and struggle to prevent the superior intellectual elements detaching themselves from the inferior ones. The Roman church has always been the most tenacious in the struggle to avoid the 'official' formation of two religions, one for the 'intellectuals' and one for the 'simple people'" (Ibid. 63). Gramsci wanted his Marxism to continue, however radically different, the sense of unity among all humans when directed to actions and policies as much as to beliefs and worship ceremonies.

It is this realization of the unity of an organism, be it small or the entire world, that prompted him to say: "Organism of thought and cultural solidarity could only have been brought about if there had existed between the intellectual and simple people that unity which there should have been between theory and practice; if, that is, the intellectuals had been organically the intellectuals of those masses, if they had elaborated and made coherent the principles and problems which those masses posed by their practical activity, in this constituting a cultural and social *bloc*... Only through this contact does a philosophy become 'historic,' does it cleanse itself of intellectualist elements of an individual nature and make itself into 'life'" (Ibid. 64). He continues to ask: "Are intellectuals an autonomous and independent social class or does every social class have its own specialized category of intellectuals?" (Ibid. 118). His answer is emphatic on behalf of the second option: "It can be seen that the 'organic' intellectuals which each new class creates with itself and

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elaborates in its own progressive development are for the most part 'specialisations' of partial aspects of the primitive activity of the new social type which the new class has brought to light" (Ibid.). Gramsci's view of organic intellectuals is itself Romantic in the sense that he believes in their inherent qualities to bring about change for their constituents and thereby change in the socioeconomic landscape. But can they?

Neil Harding, for one, is skeptical of this promise. He argues that "The very idea that the least cultured, least educated class in contemporary society defined itself solely in terms of its capacity to realize the transcendent philosophio-historical [sic] goals of Hegelianized [sic] Marxism was, at one level, specious nonsense. At another level, it was an ideal vehicle for the reproduction of the power of the intellectuals." The intellectuals were "ever more contemptuous of them [the working class] as a vehicle of emancipation. Finally, they were condemned by the intellectuals to the dustbin of history as being unworthy of the role allotted to them as the vehicle for the realization of philosophy (and the concomitant rule of philosophers)" (Jennings and Kemp-Welch 1997, 219). Harsh words, indeed, but perhaps descriptive of the vanguard of the proletariat that has delivered little or no change in modern capitalist democracies.

How many public intellectuals can lay claims to being organic intellectuals? Should we consider Cesar Chavez (1927–1993), the organizer of boycotts against agricultural corporations, an organic public intellectual? Has the former President of Venezuela, Hugo Chavez (1954–2013), earned this designation, or perhaps that of a philosopher-king, with his numerous social reforms and the nationalization of foreign holdings? Is Richard Rorty's (1931–2007) designation of Cornell West "as the closest thing to an 'organic intellectual' my country has these days" (1991, 78) accurate? Should Rorty's endorsement be taken seriously because West describes himself as "a Christian prophetic pragmatist" (Ibid. 70)? Or is West the idealized "critical organic catalyst" who suffers from "self-imposed marginality" (Jennings and Kemp-Welch 1997, 224)?

Michael Walzer follows the Gramscian tradition by insisting on connectedness and engagement of intellectuals when they enter the public arena. For him, "The ideal critic is part of his or her society, engaged rather than detached" (2002/1989, xii). As such, "My claim is that critical distance is best measured in inches. Closeness is the crucial quality of the good social critic" (Ibid. xiii). As public intellectuals, they need "critical virtues" such as "courage" – both physical and moral – "compassion," must "sympathize with their society's victims," have a "good eye"

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and "down-to-earth honesty" so that "a good critic with a good eye both sees and judges," and finally, "intellectual humility," so that this critic is a "connected critic" "who stands in a certain moral relationship to his or her society" (Ibid. xiv–xviii). Just like Gramsci, Walzer acknowledges that without an organic or deep connection to one's community and the values it espouses, it would be difficult if not impossible to be critical of it, be intellectually honest when offering judgments or suggestions to the public. This becomes more pronounced when realizing, as Mikael Hard and Andrew Jamison insist, what ideological principles inform us: "An intellectual's views are often affected by the social position occupied by his or her group ... an intellectual's ideology is dependent on, although not determined by, his *utsiktspunkt* – the point from which he views society" (1998, 13).

This view of attachment or connectedness is different from mere partisanship, where what is at issue is endorsing, promoting, and justifying one's initial viewpoint rather than being familiar with all the alternative viewpoints and then making a choice. Would think tank intellectuals be included here? Are they too connected to see outside their realms? Is this what plagued the French communists during the Moscow Trials? Is this the commitment, á la Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980), that exposed public intellectuals to fanaticism rather than intellectual honesty? Has nationalism become the new organic connection that allowed the neoconservatives to insist on American exceptionalism and forget about their intellectual training? Is critique and self-criticism possible when one is an insider?

2.6 Specialized and universal

The dichotomy of insiders/outsiders runs through many of the designations we examine in this chapter. The framing of what counts as "inside" and "outside" is of crucial importance. It raises questions about what landscape is covered within or outside the public square. Does it include the media? Must it be national rather than local media outlets? Is it the physical square where demonstrators gather to protest government policies? Or, is it instead the virtual square that extends to all digital modes of communication in the wide world of webs and databases? In addition, the notion of public intellectuals as "universal" is understood variously as universal in the sense of not belonging to any particular class,

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as appealing to some universal ideas and principles that transcend the particular circumstances of the day (Sartre's notion of moral conscience of a nation), as well as covering universal rather than particular concerns of the day (world hunger, as opposed to a particular food stamp program, Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program). But in order to be designated as intellectuals at all, regardless of the potential to become public intellectuals, what specific training ought these individuals to have? Can they comfortably hide behind Socrates' set of relatively few rules of dialectical argumentation? Or, by contrast, must they specialize before venturing to address public issues?

With these questions in mind, we find George Stigler entering our survey. A defender of modern capitalism, a believer in Adam Smith's (1723–1790) notion of the division of labor as the fountainhead for efficiency, Stigler defends intellectual activity as a specialization. As he says: "This is as trite as water: specialism is the royal road to efficiency in intellectual as in economic life. The widely trained individual simply cannot hold his own in any field with the individual of equal ability and energy who specializes in that field. Indeed, the individual who now attempts to survey a whole science or discipline is viewed as a popularizer ('journalist') or even as a charlatan, but definitely not as a creative scholar. It is notorious that when a man combines two diverse specialties, the members of each specialty acknowledge the man's eminence only in the specialty with which they are unfamiliar" (1984/1963, 12). Not only does he argue for specialization as a necessary condition for warranting the title of intellectual, he clearly argues for it being the sufficient condition as well. Without a specialty, you are a "charlatan" or a "journalist," exposed publicly for not knowing enough to be taken seriously. But you are also an "intellectual," according to Stigler, "automatically because I am a professor, and buy more books than golf clubs." What about others? To his privileged audience at the University of Chicago he answers: "You are intellectuals because you are in general well educated and because you would rather be a United States senator or a Nobel laureate than head of Mobil Corporation" (Ibid. 143–144). Is it really so? Is buying books, in the age of digital downloads, a marker for intelligence or a qualification for being an intellectual? Of course not, yet some of these old-fashioned ideas still define our public square.

A completely different tact is undertaken by Foucault whose concern is to respond to the Enlightenment and Romantic call for universal intellectuals on the order of Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) and G. W. F. Hegel

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(1770–1831), Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) and Marx. As he says: "For a long period, the 'left' intellectual spoke and was acknowledged the right of speaking in the capacity of master of truth and justice. He was heard, or purported to make himself heard, as the spokesman of the universal. To be an intellectual meant something like being the consciousness/conscience of us all." In this sense, then, "The intellectual, through his moral, theoretical and political choice, aspires to be the bearer of this universality in its conscious, elaborate form." But as this intellectual identifies with the proletariat – as this identification becomes clear and self-conscious – something happens, and as the intellectual is "being drawn to the proletariat" a transformation takes place and she or he becomes "the 'specific' intellectual as opposed to the 'universal' intellectual" (1980, 126). The transformation of intellectuals into "specific intellectuals" is both chronologically described – as emerging after World War II – as well as in terms of professional application – shifting from general concerns to expertise (Ibid. 127).

The universal intellectual is characterized by Foucault as "the man of justice, the man of law, who counterposes to power, despotism and the abuses and arrogance of wealth the universality of justice and the equity of an ideal law," while "The 'specific' intellectual derives from quite another figure, not the jurist or notable, but the savant or expert" (Ibid. 128). This doesn't mean that the specific intellectual can therefore not be public in the sense of engaging in public debates and controversies, lending expertise to broader social concerns. "The stormy relationship between evolutionism and the socialists, as well as the highly ambiguous effects of evolutionism ... mark the important moment when the savant begins to intervene in contemporary political struggles in the name of 'local' scientific truth" (Ibid. 129). Just because one's expertise is local, as was the case with the American nuclear physicist and leader of the Manhattan Project, Robert Oppenheimer (1904–1967), doesn't mean it cannot transform an entire political debate. "At all events, biology and physics were to a privileged degree the zones of formation of this new personage, the specific intellectual. The extension of technoscientific structures in the economic and strategic domain was what gave him his real importance ... this new intellectual ... has at his disposal, whether in the service of the State or against it, powers which can either benefit or irrevocably destroy life. He is no longer the rhapsodist of the eternal, but the strategist of life and death" (Ibid. 129). The dramatic effects of experts aren't lost on Foucault, and therefore his specific intellectuals should be

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drawn to engage the public. Fuller agrees with this transformation from humanists to scientists, especially in terms of how many more academic and expert scientists are commonly involved in public conversations as popularizers or as partisans on behalf of a policy (2005; 2009).

Though it may seem that the specific intellectual might have an advantage over the universal intellectual in public forums, Foucault is quick to alert us to the dangers faced by the specific intellectual. First, "remaining at the level of conjunctural struggles, pressing demands restricted to particular sectors" rather than addressing universally pressing struggles; second, "the risk of letting himself be manipulated by the political parties or trade union apparatuses which control these local struggles" and thus losing an independent point of view; third, "being unable to develop these struggles for lack of a global strategy or outside support"; and fourth, "not being followed, or only by very limited groups" (Foucault 1980, 130). These dangers should not deter the specific intellectual in attempting to participate in struggles, but they are reminders of how limited the specific as opposed to the universal intellectuals might be: Can they comment on issues outside their own expertise? If they do, will they provide a broader or deeper insight than any journalist or television pundit? Reconsidering the most effective role of the specific intellectual, Foucault's worry and even nostalgic recall of the universal intellectual is itself a strategy for success rather than a lament of failure (Ibid. 130). It is a way to encourage specialists to venture beyond their comfort zone.

2.7 Jesters, sophists, and amateurs

Shakespearian plays may have deep messages embedded in them; they may speak eternal truths of love and rivalry, loyalty and betrayal; they definitely provide a social critique of their time. But they have moments of relief when the court jester or fool enters the stage and abruptly allows for comic relief as well as for a biting commentary that could not have been uttered by the nobles on stage: Touchstone in "As You Like It" (1599), Feste in "Twelfth Night" (1600), and the fool in "King Lear" (1605). Listening to them we become quickly aware that they are no fools. Similarly, Jewish folklore has the mythical village of Chelm as the fountainhead of numerous jokes about the Jews. Some self-deprecating, some explanatory, but mostly they contain a kernel of truth or wisdom

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which is easier to disseminate (and swallow) when it comes coated with humor. Humor disarms us to the extent that we might be willing to hear things otherwise too painful to bear; it also warms us to the words of speakers who mean no ill, but attempt to entertain us. Although court jesters and fools must have suffered the ire of this or that king or queen, they remain indispensable to the present day, with comedy shows and late-night television programs where nothing is taboo, and no matter the power of the target, she or he will not be spared.

Jesters and fools are not so foolish after all, when their words deliver – in funny or cynical form, mostly in question form – a scathing and insightful criticism. They disguise in their formulation the truth of their message, and in this sense may be considered speaking truth to power. But two differences are apparent: first, jesters weren't meant to be public intellectuals, since they were hired by the king's court and second, they didn't see themselves as representing any constituency, merely entertaining their masters. Ralf Dahrendorf takes us into the 20th century and finds that using this label for intellectuals might be useful: "The fools of modern society ... are the intellectuals – now again much despised ... able to combine the critical detachment of the intellectual and the public responsibility of the politician ... As the court jesters of modern society, all intellectuals have the duty to doubt everything that is obvious, to make relative all authority, to ask all those questions that no one else dares to ask" (Rieff 1969, 55). But is anyone "paying" them to perform their task? Are heads of state adding to their administration's payroll a category of "fools"? Perhaps they should, as I shall argue in the conclusion, but currently they don't.

Wishing to retain the playfulness and entertainment value of the jesters' speeches, Dahrendorf continues to say: "The truth of the fool is never quite serious, for it lacks the important mooring of responsibility (and also, of course, of power). This does not lessen its value; it makes it, however, all the more unreasonable to meet it with the heavy artillery of public suspicion and aspersions. Whether a society includes intellectual court jesters who critically question its institutions, and how it tolerates them, are a measure of its maturity and inner solidity" (Ibid. 56). Expecting society to be measured in terms of its tolerance of the critique of jesters and fools is a tall order, indeed, as we see in the current crushing of dissidents in the newly democratic Russia. Should members of the Pussy Riot band be still in prison for their antics in 2012? Did they mean any harm – and therefore should they be taken seriously? – when

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they performed in a Russian Orthodox Church in a less-than-reverential manner? Are they "hooligans" rather than jesters or fools?

Perhaps this manner of expression – tomfoolery – is more acceptable when thinking about entertainers, but not when considering public intellectuals. Whether we nostalgically expect them to be Benda's clerks, or Gramsci's organic and Walzer's connected intellectuals, whether we recall Moses, Socrates, or Jesus as prophets and martyrs, or Zola in the Dreyfus Affair, we always assume that they would be deep thinkers committed to universal values and ideals. But should they? Why not revert back to Socrates's nemeses, the sophists, as Fuller suggests (2005, 7)? Highlighting his own heroes, from Machiavelli to Galileo and beyond, Fuller looks at these intellectuals as sophists and "demystifiers," whose "mutual suspicion" may bring about the truth or a decent public policy (Ibid. 133–136). But there is something dangerous in Fuller's nostalgia for sophistry, the kind of which Socrates was accused, namely, that he "can make the weaker argument defeat the stronger" (*Apology* 18b). Fuller suggests that all our heroic intellectuals "shared in a paradoxical ethic common to all intellectuals: *the end cause of truth justifies whatever means happen to be at your disposal*. This is because the whole truth is rarely what passes for the truth at any moment" (2009, 88–89; italics in the original). With a "postmodernist sensibility" (Ibid. 130), Fuller gives license to the opposite of what has been the credo of intellectuals: as "professional performers" (Ibid. 143) they should "defend a position one does *not* believe" as opposed to what he considers a "Romantic virtue" that "compels us to say what we believe and believe what we say" (Ibid. 159; italics in the original).

It may be reasonable to hedge one's bets on the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth when speaking out publicly; it may even be a virtue, as Walzer reminds us, to remain humble when appearing as public critics. But does this mean, as Fuller suggests, defending positions and ideas one does not hold or believe in? Where is one's integrity and authenticity, one's exposure of what is known and should be known? Foucault's specialist was at least true to her or his expert knowledge. But maybe Fuller's oratory gets the better of him; maybe he is a jester provoking debate and cleverly entertaining us, beguiling us with outrageous claims we should discount offhand. Maybe he wishes to come closer to Rorty's notion of a "liberal ironist"? Rorty has a clear vision of liberal ironists as "people who combined commitment with a sense of the contingency of their own commitment" (1988, 61). Unlike Fuller's

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intellectuals whose commitment might seem opportunistic, Rorty's intellectuals retain a critical and ironic commitment that is liberally open to a plurality of views. For him, "Michel Foucault is an ironist who is unwilling to be a liberal, whereas Jürgen Habermas is a liberal who is unwilling to be an ironist" (Ibid.). Is Fuller neither? Are the jesters, fools, and sophists committed at all? If yes, to what? If not, should they be counted as public intellectuals? Is the Slovene philosopher and social critic Slavoj Zizek a jester?

Perhaps Edward Said (1935–2003), considered a public intellectual in his own right, could help here. In a series of the BBC's Reith Lectures he gave in 1993, Said insisted on "the public role of the intellectual as outsider, 'amateur,' and disturber of the status quo" (1994, x). He was worried about Gellner's noncommittal intellectuals who hedge bets before judging, because of his own personal commitment to the Palestinian cause, for example, and his agreement with the Gramsci-Walzer view of organic and connected intellectuals. Yet this committed intellectual has a duty to "search for relative independence from such pressures." This independence, then, sets the intellectual "as exile and marginal, as amateur, and as the author of a language that tries to speak the truth to power" (Ibid. xvi). At what cost is this exile? Recalling Benda, he argues that "real intellectuals ... are supposed to risk being burned at the stake, ostracized, or crucified" (Ibid. 7). Have many of them been burned at the stake lately? Would Zizek or Fuller ever suffer such fate? But both of them surely fulfill Said's requirement "that the intellectual is an individual endowed with a faculty for representing, embodying, articulating a message, a view, an attitude, philosophy of opinion to, as well as for, a public" (Ibid. 11).

Said's assessment of the intellectual condition is as informed by his studies as by his personal history as a Palestinian who was a professor at Columbia University. Therefore for him, exile is simultaneously an actual, metaphorical, and metaphysical condition of the intellectual (Ibid. 52–53). Would Zygmunt Bauman, the Polish sociologist who was driven to exile in the United Kingdom by communists, fit the bill? Does this condition inform Zizek and Fuller as well, a Slovenian living in Paris and an American living in the United Kingdom? Unlike Bauman and many other refugees, theirs has been a voluntary "exile" of sorts. Have they fulfilled Said's other "duty to address the constituted and authorized powers of one's own society, which are accountable to its citizenry, particularly when those powers are exercised in manifestly disproportionate

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and immoral war, or in a deliberate program of discrimination, repression, and collective cruelty" (Ibid. 98)? Well if they have, then they, too, qualify as amateurs. Is this label a dismissal or denigration of the lofty position of public intellectuals?

As opposed to the pressures of specialization and expertise of professional intellectuals, the kind Foucault promoted as a precondition for public engagement, amateurism for Said is "an activity that is fueled by care and affection rather than by profit and selfish, narrow specialization" (Ibid. 82). On this count, Zizek and Fuller would definitely disqualify, for they claim expertise as well as profit from their travels and speaking engagements. Moreover, since Said insists that, "Speaking the truth to power is no Panglossian idealism: it is carefully weighing the alternatives, picking the right one, and then intelligently representing it where it can do the most good and cause the right change" (Ibid. 102), Fuller's sophistry and Zizek's lightheartedness will not qualify. Said is more nostalgic than Rorty, despite the amateurish credentials he ascribes to his public intellectuals. Does he simply want to broaden the category so as to include nonacademics? Is this his way of including journalists and other activists? Or is there a deeper agreement with Rorty's "contingency"? David Levy may have summarized the reason best when he said, "When it comes to matters of practical philosophy, judgements of value and speculations about the future course of events, we are all more or less percipient amateurs" (Maclean, Montefiore, and Winch 1990, 127). Others, such as Posner, agree with the amateur label: "A public intellectual is a generalist, but in an age of specialized knowledge the generalist is condemned to be an amateur, and the views of amateurs carry little weight with professionals" (2001, 54). In the face of uncertain reality, we are all working in the dark; where our expertise cannot illuminate the truth, amateur guessing must be the rule of thumb. When careful and critical guessing becomes a new standard of judgment (and prediction), public intellectuals should be forthcoming (in postmodern terms) about the limits of these judgments.

2.8 Legislators, interpreters, and translators

Romantic images of public intellectuals revert back not only to the 19th century, but also all the way to much earlier times, as we have seen earlier. Against these images, there have been various designations

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and characterizations, each emphasizing one feature or element in the activity of public intellectuals without necessarily fully dispensing with the nostalgia of the past. In this sense, Foucault's specific intellectual is universal as well, just as Said's amateur is a sophisticated and learned professional. None of the authors we have surveyed so far fully expunges the intellectual from any responsibility, except Fuller on the margins, so to speak. Could irresponsible know-nothings represent the plight of the poor and suffering? What would they bring to the public tribunal in addition to the bare facts of this or that injustice? With this in mind, we can continue the survey fully aware that there are many overlaps among all the descriptions, but that every new label helps highlight yet another feature worthy of note. Postmodernist to its core (without being relativistic in the "anything goes" sense), this is a pluralist survey that accords credibility to those selected without preference given to any particular feature.

Bauman separates modernity and postmodernity along the lines of a combination of the state and intellectual discourse in the former, and an eventual divorce in the latter (1987, 2). For him, then, "The typically modern strategy of intellectual work is one best characterized by the metaphor of the 'legislator' role" (Ibid. 4). Bauman speaks of modernity as a shift from Gellner's notion of "wild cultures" to those of "garden cultures," where cultivation and ordering was the rule: rationality informed a set of criteria according to which the cultivation could proceed (Ibid. 51). Education in this Enlightenment vision was a way by the ruling classes to "manage" society to conform to certain values and rules of state conduct, as a replacement of sorts of following the superstitious beliefs and ceremonies of religious institutions (Ibid. 69, 80). This education, following Foucault, was permeated with "surveillance" of sorts that ensured compliance, however rational and voluntary (Ibid. 72). For the maintenance of an ordered worldview to succeed it must confine its intellectuals to follow certain rules of thought: "The substance of enlightened radicalism is revealed as the drive to legislate, organize, and regulate, rather than disseminate knowledge" (Ibid. 74). The so-called "project of ideology" was a way of civilizing the masses by scientifically trained experts rather than ruthless rulers whose irrational aristocratic and religious authority held no power in modernity (Ibid. 103).

Bauman then moves to describe the "crisis of modernity" that eventually brought about its own demise: "Unlike the medieval certainty of the schoolmen, the certainty of modern philosophers constantly

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entailed the poignant awareness of the *problem* of relativism. It had to be an embattled, militant certainty. A momentary loss of vigilance could cost dearly. It did, occasionally" (Ibid. 126; italics in the original). When militant vigilance weakened, forces of postmodernity have made themselves known. Although for Bauman there is a *replacement* that takes place between modernity and *postmodernity*, there are others, like Jean-Francois Lyotard (1924–1998), for whom this is not historical chronology but a process of *displacement* where alternative modes of thought coexist (Lyotard 1984/1979). Be this as it may, Bauman explains the following about postmodernity: "The typically post-modern strategy of intellectual work is one best characterized by the metaphor of the 'interpreter' role" (1987, 5). The reason for the shift from legislators to interpreters is explained in this way:

> The concept of post-modernity refers to a distinct quality of intellectual climate, to a distinct self-awareness of the era. One of the basic, if not *the* basic, elements of this self-awareness is the realization that modernity is over; that modernity is a closed chapter of history, which can now be contemplated in its entirety, with retrospective knowledge of its practical accomplishments as much as its theoretical hopes ... Instead, it tries to reconcile itself to a life under conditions of permanent and incurable uncertainty; a life in the presence of an unlimited quantity of competing forms of life, unable to prove their claims to be grounded in anything more solid and binding than their own historically shaped conventions. (Ibid. 119–120; italics in the original)

Bauman's two labels of legislators and interpreters are kept apart and are associated with modernity and postmodernity, respectively. The legislator would find it difficult in the postmodern world, just as the interpreter would be dismissed in the age of modernity. If the legislative injunction – helpful as it was to the state authorities – has been displaced by a more nuanced activity of interpretation, it also has brought about the urgent need "for specialists in translation between cultural traditions" (Ibid. 143). The kind of translation Bauman has in mind is being practiced by many public intellectuals who pick up a set of ideas and studies from one discipline to another, as I have suggested elsewhere (Sassower 1995a, Preface). Specialists or experts as translators come close to fulfilling Rorty's expectation of liberal ironists who maintain an open and respectful conversation among competing discourses than to Foucault's expectation that they would be able to universalize from their point of expertise to the rest of the public debate. "In a nutshell, the proposed specialism boils down to the art of civilized conversation ... And the art

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of civilized conversation is something the pluralist world needs badly. It may neglect such art only at its peril. Converse or perish" (Bauman 1987, 143). Intellectual interpretation, following Richard Bernstein, is between communities and inside communities, and when these communities bring to the public arena their own meanings, Bauman suggests that "it refuses to differentiate between communities which produce meanings; it accepts those communities' ownership rights, and the ownership rights as the only foundation the communally grounded meaning may need. What remains for the intellectuals to do, is to interpret such meanings for the benefit of those who are not of the community which stands behind the meanings; to mediate the communication between 'finite provinces' or 'communities of meaning'" (Ibid. 145, 197).

Would the interpreter not become quite powerful despite the precautions to the contrary? Wouldn't the interpreter hide behind the authority of different communities and foreground some while ignoring others? These questions keep coming up in discussions with sociologists of knowledge who are concerned with citations and references (Palacios-Huerta and Volij 2004), with focusing on some intellectuals rather than all of them (Fuller 2009). These are fair questions to ask of public intellectuals, especially when they have left behind the Romantic view of themselves as preservers of a tradition of truth and justice, of universal meaning and a single ideology. Bauman's recipe for avoiding these pitfalls of pretense is to argue that: "It remains in the end a question of decision and commitment. Accepting for oneself the label of 'intellectual,' together with the obligations that other members of the group agree to carry, is in itself a factor of such a commitment. An attempt to set aside those who 'are intellectuals' from those who are not, to draw an 'objective' boundary for the group by listing the names of the relevant professions, occupations, or educational credits, makes no sense and is doomed from the start" (Bauman 1987, 23). Is this an invitation for all of us to view ourselves as public intellectuals? This is doubtful, because the interpreter lives side by side with the legislator, the translator with the expert, and the suffering individual with the privileged. What makes public intellectuals unique is the responsible manner by which respectful conversations keep on going in forums and journals, books and televisions shows, and on the Internet. In Bauman's words: "The intellectual activity draws its legitimacy from the intellectuals' own moral conviction as to the value of their work and as to the worthiness of the discourse they are keeping alive and

guarding against being stifled or numbed in the cacophony of communal traditions" (Ibid. 198).

2.9 Strangers, nomads, and spokespersons

We have entered now the postmodern discursive territory where labels run amok, each author dropping one or two along the way to leave a mark. Not all of them deserve full articulation, and perhaps by now many repeat issues and concerns, traits and features already covered by others. If we said of public intellectuals that they ought to be "engaged" would we say anything different from their attached or connected status, their organic affiliation with those about whom they speak or write? Should we repeat the refrain of critic? How would that differ from all the intonations about their gadfly or prophetic role in their communities? This shouldn't imply reverting back to one set of labels (perhaps just three or four) that cover the whole gamut of the different roles, positions, postures, and pretenses of intellectuals when they enter the public domain. For example, Bauman recalls Georg Simmel's view of the intellectual as a "stranger," a "tragic, homeless wonderer" (Ibid. 157), probably in the tradition of Mannheim's free-floating intellectual who isn't anchored (á la Gramsci) to a particular class. Dick Pels continues in this vein when he says: "Traditionally, intellectuals have often been identified, and have identified themselves, as a 'displaced person'" which translates into what he calls a "*social epistemology of strangehood*" (2000, ix; italics in the original).

The postmodern formulation of "strangehood" as a mode of thinking is as much cognitive as social, grounded in a choice to escape the strictures of particular metaphysical and ontological frameworks; it owes its liberation to the poststructuralists and postmodernists and the American liberal pragmatists. For Pels, the public intellectual is a "self-centered and self-complimentary image of the postmodern intellectual as an essential 'nomad,' who feels called upon to transgress all boundaries and be forever 'on the move'" (Ibid. xi). These are transnational intellectuals who are found in international conferences, pontificating on anything that suits them without any commitment to a grounded ideology or set of ideas and values around which their own reflections make sense. They can quickly condemn and condone, appreciate and dismiss with a wave of the hand, since their nomadic status commits them to nothing except

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their verbal virtues. Whatever else we wish to say about the so-called Frankfurt School, it did retain an adherence to Marxian and Weberian principles (however contradictory at times) and perceived itself as completing the Enlightenment Project (however revised).

But when one speaks as a stranger or nomad, as if one had "a view from nowhere," to recall the philosopher Thomas Nagel's title of one of his books (1989), one still speaks as if to represent the views of others. One can never fully ignore one's tradition or community, especially when claiming to be a public intellectual. So, reminds us Pels, "The narrative of nomadism once again succumbs to the universal danger that resides in the very logic of speaking for others: which is to disregard the inevitable hiatus between representer and represented, or in other words, to de-emphasize the existential strangeness which separates the spokespersons from the subjects or objects they speak for ... *a social distribution of doubt* and the specific mixture of involvement and detachment which is typically concentrated in the precarious condition of strangehood" (2000, xviii; italics in the original). In one paragraph, Pels brings together the stranger – socially and intellectually – and the nomad – an outsider without foundation – and the representative who speaks for others, whether they agree to being spoken for or not. The role of the public intellectual under these conditions is to become an "intermediary," the one who can uncover that which is disguised, illuminate that which is overshadowed, and ensure that the so-called invisible members of the community become part of the conversation (Ibid. xii).

Pels also shifts from the standard dichotomy of truth and power (covered in Chapter 1) to a "third way": "Rather than speaking truth to power, intellectuals mobilize the performative force of a specifically estranged, 'undecided,' and 'unhastened' perspective in order to counterbalance other powers that speak a different ('faster') truth" (Ibid. xix). This shift undermines the possibility of totalizing regimes of objectivity as such. "If the third position defines transcendence, it is a local one which may rise above and transgress a specifically situated opposition, while remaining intensely place-bound, interested, and partisan" (Ibid. 219). Finding a middle ground between the universal and the local, it tries to circumvent the dichotomy set by Romantic voices (Benda and Mannheim) or poststructuralists (Foucault). It is, importantly, "reflexive objectivity as personal authenticity, which acknowledged the importance of personal presence and 'sentimental' commitment in all sociological accounts of the world" (Ibid. 220). This third way should not aspire to "re-present"

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the world, but rather "should produce stories which are at variance with it, which create disturbance, which add new realities to existing ones, which say something strange. A substitution theory of representation" (Ibid. 222).

The strangeness is now exposed as a way to be at variance with standard narratives, a way to rethink what alternatives haven't yet been pursued. Seemingly overcoming all dichotomies (universal/local, attached/detached, true/false, and modern/postmodern), Pels' proposal for a third way by which intellectuals should engage the public will suffer the same fate of all proposals: it will be criticized. But such criticism is invited, because it offers opportunities for various alternative narratives to be proposed. Will anything be heard in such a cacophony of voices? Is it a free-for-all? If it is, wouldn't "might makes right" rear its ugly head and devour the less powerful? However strange or nomadic the regime of discursive power, it makes claims about representing something on behalf of someone so as to remedy an injustice or assist those in need. Do any of the authors we quoted – from Foucault and Rorty to Fuller and Pels – help in fully analyzing discursive power when it gets to public intellectuals? When these or any other claims about one's discourse, language, and perspective are stacked against other similar claims, what criteria of choice are used? If none, then the powerless multitude would have gained nothing, and the nomadic, strange intellectual has shirked the moral responsibility to bring about change. But has this ideal vanished, too, in the age of postmodernity? Has this revolutionary ideal been so tainted by Soviet and Chinese communists to have lost its allure?

2.10 Reckless celebrities, rappers, and bloggers

Mark Lilla laments and critically evaluates the "reckless minds" of public intellectuals and philosophers who have been irresponsible in the 20th century. For him there is a certain "tyrannical" mindset that allows many thinkers, influenced as they were by the Enlightenment, to have blind spots when it comes to fascism (Heidegger), communist-totalitarianism (Sartre), or colonialism (Sartre again). According to Lilla, a certain psychological attitude sets the tone for some ideas that may be justified philosophically, but that are politically reckless and morally unacceptable. In his words: "Tyranny is not dead, not in politics and certainly not in our souls. The age of the master ideologies may be over, but so long as

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men and women think about politics – so long as there are thinking men and women at all – the temptation will be there to succumb to the allure of an idea, to allow passion to blind us to its tyrannical potential, and to abdicate our first responsibility, which is to master the tyrant within" (2001, 216).

The concern with public intellectuals as reckless minds is not limited to who "got it right," as Fuller (2004) suggests in the case of the Austrian exile Popper, who wrote against the Nazis, and the American Thomas Kuhn (1922–1996), who remained silent during the McCarthy era, but extends to any public intellectual around the globe. Perhaps there is added pressure on those who wish to become celebrities, like the African-American Cornel West, as opposed to those who become so inadvertently, as in the case of Zola. Although already known to the French, it was editors and publishers who printed his indictment against the anti-Semitism displayed toward an army captain. What writer would write and what American newspaper would print in 2014 an indictment against the military treatment of Muslim officers? How many public intellectuals have protested years of imprisonment without trial at Guantanamo Bay? When occasionally we hear some critical voices on National Public Radio's "Democracy Now" or CBS's "60 Minutes," is anyone listening? Has Chomsky overstated his case against American imperialism and injustice? Does he follow in the footsteps of the French rivals of many years, Jean-Paul Sartre and Raymond Aron (1905–1983)?

The idea of public intellectuals as celebrities is commonly linked with individuals who have a prominent public profile, who are constantly in the news (followed, in some cases, by paparazzi), and who have a modicum of influence on what the media covers. In the United States these are primarily wealthy individuals whose expenditures and travels, palatial mansions, and multiple marriages and divorces capture the attention of a bored public. When we think of the French Bernard-Henri Levy, knowing his privileged upbringing and the attractive persona he presents to the public, it's easy to consider him a public intellectual who is a celebrity: he is interviewed on television, journalists seek his opinion on political and social affairs, and he is even an unofficial ambassador for this or that French cause. Is Cornel West his American counterpart? Does his involvement with entertainment make his status closer to a celebrity than a theologian? Just as not all academics are intellectuals, let alone public intellectuals, so we can observe that not all public intellectuals are celebrities (even when they are interviewed here and there, or

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write for popular magazines, as the German Habermas is fond of doing). Posner is one of the few who openly claims that "Perhaps then a public intellectual is a celebrity intellectual" (2001, 26). What makes some intellectuals in and outside the academy approach this celebrity status is nothing less than their own "self-popularizing" activities (Ibid. 36). Herein lies the quandary of every intellectual entering the public stage: Should values guide the discussion or an appeal to the lowest, perhaps most base, common denominator (such as fear or greed)? Should the celebrity do anything to stay in public view, say anything, as long as it's clever and quotable (as Fuller maintains)?

As already mentioned in the previous section about "spokespersons," there is an inherent problem in speaking with and to the less-educated public, a public whose main concerns are making a living, remaining employed, and maintaining their few and hard-earned material comforts. Grahame Lock poses this concern in its historical context by working through Plato's *The Republic* to show that first, the multitude aren't capable of philosophical thinking and second, that if the issue of representation of the interests of the masses by philosophers is to be taken seriously, then there is a paradox at hand: imitation is both impossible literally, and corrupt by definition, because it's always tainted; it therefore isn't the truth (Maclean, Montefiore, and Winch 1990, 149–150). Keeping this in mind, Lock identifies the activities of those participants in the public arena as engaging in a "theatocracy" (from theater), and this engaged theatricality is dangerous, because mass media rules the terms of the debate and the standards by which truth and ideas are assessed (Ibid. 159–160).

At this point it may be useful to add another group of participants in the theater of public debate, those who have earned celebrity status, even though their academic credentials might be absent: rappers and hip-hop musicians. The choice of this group may seem at odds with the kind of intellectuals we have examined thus far. Yet they seem, individually and as an underdefined group, to have provided the most scathing, "real," and at times successful social critique to which young Americans will listen. There are, of course, more famous music celebrities, such as the late "King of Pop" Michael Jackson (1958–2009), whose estate still generates hundreds of million in royalties from its own catalog and the part-ownership of the Beatles catalog; or "The Boss" Bruce Springsteen, who actually makes direct references to social issues he feels strongly about. Likewise, there are numerous films that have had social commentary

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as their central theme, from antiwar ("Coming Home" 1978) to corporate hazardous chemical dumping ("Erin Brockovich" 2000), and any number of Michael Moore's movies that critically examine gun control ("Bowling for Columbine" 2002) and American greed ("Capitalism: A Love Story" 2009). Entertainment, going back to Aristophanes' plays in ancient Greece, has always had the potential for social criticism, for making public private concerns and government corruption or hypocrisy. But it hasn't always used its various media to fight for a cause or engage its audiences.

Rappers and hip-hop artists have been criticized for using profane language and insulting rather than entertaining audiences. Rapping is defined as "spoken or chanted rhyming lyrics," or more formally: "Over many centuries, the meaning of the English verb *rap* was gradually extended from 'hit, strike, especially repetitively and rapidly' to 'parley,' and finally, 'speak lyrics to a beat measure (whether or not the beat itself is physically present).'" Its association with the civil rights movement of the 1960s has been overshadowed by more recent popularity among young adults and people of color. Some of the most famous (and financially successful) include Tupac Amaru Shakur (1971–1996), also known by his stage name 2Pac; Christopher George Latore Wallace (1972–1997), popularly known as Biggie Smalls or The Notorious B.I.G.; Curtis James Jackson III, better known by his stage name 50 Cent; Cordozar Calvin Broadus, Jr., better known by his stage name Snoop Dogg; Shawn Corey Carter, better known as Jay-Z; and Marshall Bruce Mathers III, known as Slim Shady and his primary stage name Eminem. Some of them have won Grammy or Academy Awards; some have become actors and producers in addition to their rapping careers. Some have died young; some are still performing into middle age. On the whole, would they qualify as public intellectuals? When the likes of Cornel West join their ranks, does this change the label?

One example of the art form may help readers in forming their own assessment. Notorious B.I.G.'s "Everyday Struggle" is confessional and personal, yet representative of a whole "underclass" of American culture. It begins with shocking statements: "I don't wanna live no more, Sometimes I hear death knocking at my front door." Continues with recounting daily practices: "I'm living everyday like a hustle, Another drug to juggle, another day, another struggle." The notion of the daily grind as a survival struggle permeates the lyrics, with death and suffering surrounding him: "I'm seeing body after body and our mayor Giuliani,

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Ain't tryna see no black man turn to John Gotti." The references are to the mayor at the time and a notorious mob boss. He asks whether he should quit, and answers: "Shit no, even though they had me scared" (Notorious B.I.G. 1993). The struggle continues, and survival instincts do prevail. What should he and his friends do but rap about their condition, make public their anger at the conditions of their existence?

Alhough personal, this also addresses the socioeconomic context in which poor people of color find themselves in America. An earlier example of a broad and pervasive social critique is best illustrated by the band Public Enemy in the lyrics of its "Fight the Power," released as a single and considered by some the best record of 1989. Intoning the sounds of the streets, the band directs its lyrics to an audience of its fellow-travelers: "Listen if you're missing y'all ..., Knowing what I know." And then the listening turns into a (Marxist) call: "Got to give us what we want, Gotta give us what we need." Wants are replaced with needs, so that the very conditions of daily existence can be secured. But in addition to material needs, they say: "Our freedom of speech is freedom or death," namely, no freedom at all. Therefore, "We got to fight the powers that be." Fighting "the power" is what they ought to do, because whatever popular culture may suggest, there is a power relation that promotes some while oppressing the majority, especially if you are black and poor in America. Instead of being fooled, they continue to remind their audience, "Now that you've realized the pride's arrived, We got to pump the stuff to make us tough, From the heart." The appeal is emotional as much as political, so that they are ready "To revolutionize" and "make a change" which shouldn't, according to them, be "strange." Are we all equal, as we are led to believe by American ideology? "People, people we are the same, No we're not the same, Cause we don't know the game." But with an "awareness" provided by rappers like themselves, they can "Make everybody see, in order to fight the powers that be." Being black is no hindrance despite the fact that "Most of my heroes don't appear on no stamps"; instead, the charge is to be "proud," to be "ready and hyped plus I'm amped," so that "What we got to say, Power to the people no delay, To make everybody see, In order to fight the powers that be" (Public Enemy 1989).

The wording may seem harsh to some, but the message is clear; the cussing may be offensive to delicate ears, but the point isn't lost in the delivery. With short verses and poetic presentation, Public Enemy expresses what others feel: a complete disenfranchisement despite the

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American rhetoric of equality and freedom. Not knowing "the game" or not being able to "see" is what the lament and cry for power is about: once you figure out what's going on around you, you will be prepared to "fight the powers" and "revolutionize." If by intellectuals we mean here Socrates' "philosophical intelligence," and if by "philosophical intelligence" we mean critique, then this group of rappers is indeed critical. Add to that their public exposure, and one can easily label them as public intellectuals.

Perhaps what has changed over the years is the definition of what makes the public square an arena where public controversies and debates take place. Perhaps the tools of the 20th century – journals, magazines, daily and weekly newspapers, radio and television programs, public forums – have become less relevant in the Digital Age, an age dominated by the Internet, websites, and blogs. There are many who have contributed to the discussion about digital technologies and the use of the Internet as a medium for the proliferation of ideas, from optimists like Clay Shirky (2010) to pessimists like Evgeny Morozov (2011) and Jaron Lanier (2010). I have summarized some of these issues elsewhere (Sassower 2013a). One of the most vocal promoters of the blogosphere as a medium for the exchange of ideas by a new breed of public intellectuals is Daniel Drezner. Unlike detractors and those who worry about the disappearance of public intellectuals in the Digital Age, he claims that "the growth of online publication venues has stimulated rather than retarded the quality and diversity of public intellectuals" (2008, 2). In finding more venues to express their ideas, more intellectuals have gotten involved and have "partially reversed a trend," because "the growth of the blogosphere breaks down – or at least lowers – the barriers erected by a professionalized academy" (Ibid. 3). Echoing Friedrich Hayek's (1899–1992) notion of "professional secondhand dealers in ideas," Drezner considers bloggers as "second-order intellectuals" who are "bridging the gap between first-order intellectuals and the informed public" (Ibid. 10). But do they really do this "bridging" through the Internet? As of September 2013, the debate over Syria's chemical weapons was still an international debate; the British House of Commons had a heady and lengthy discussion that resulted in a vote that didn't authorize military action; the Americans refused to hold such congressional debates, except for one Senate committee hearing. Is the blogosphere having any impact? Did it have any impact prior to the invasion of Iraq in 2003? As the recent parliamentary versus congressional approaches illustrate, it's a national culture that

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promotes or retards public debates. The British love them, with theatrics and substance, with arguments and counterarguments; their American counterparts shy away from them, except for name calling on television talk shows. Can the blogosphere help? Will it ever become a substitute? Or is it relegated to the position of amplifying that which is already a cultural mindset and attitude?

As we move to the next chapter, Drezner's words can guide us insofar as they remind us of three interrelated issues: first, not all public intellectuals are alike (and can therefore be classified as first and second order); second, there are barriers to entry into the public square (and therefore the medium makes a difference); and third, just because someone expresses a view doesn't mean that anyone is listening (what audience is assumed in the public domain?). When dealing with the complexities of these issues, different approaches are surveyed in the next chapter. Instead of reviewing labels and perceptions, the focus will be on clusters of perspectives.

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3
Four Standard Approaches

Abstract: *While in the previous chapter we surveyed labels associated with public intellectuals, in this chapter we examine group affiliation using different approaches. Before attending to those approaches, we examine the history and conditions under which public intellectuals were considered to have disappeared or to have lost their luster by the late 20th century. This chapter ends with a discussion about academic freedom and freedom of speech as ways to appreciate the privileged potential for intellectual activities in the public domain, a privilege most often underutilized.*

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3.1 The demise of intellectuals and American anti-intellectualism

The previous chapter mentioned many cases of lamentation over the demise of public intellectuals, harkening nostalgically to the days where these august critics steered a nation (Zola in France) in the right direction, recalling the values on which its republic was built. A Romantic appeal underlies such cases, setting a classical benchmark – Socrates in Athens, Jesus in Jerusalem – as the standard future generations should uphold if not fully implement. The standard set by ancient icons or by more recent figures in the past century (Sartre and Aron in France, New York intellectuals between the two world wars) ignores something fundamental that differentiates the United States (the New World) from Europe (the Old World) and Latin America: America's history of anti-intellectualism. This history teaches us to appreciate that the demise or disappearance of public intellectuals isn't something dating to a specific period, but instead has been a steady process associated with public intellectuals. In other words, the lament is itself wishful thinking and an appeal to a past Americans themselves have never fully experienced.

Richard Hofstadter's mark as a historian is very much linked to his analysis of anti-intellectualism in American life, which also serves as the title of his book of 1962. He begins by reminding his readers that "Our anti-intellectualism is, in fact, older than our national identity, and has a long historical background" (1962, 6). More specifically, he explains that "The common strain that binds together the attitudes and ideas which I call anti-intellectual is a resentment and suspicion of the life of the mind and of those who are considered to represent it; and a disposition to minimize the value of that life" (Ibid. 7). The depth of this attitude and suspicion isn't associated with this or that particular group, or with a specific incantation that runs contrary to the mood of the country in a particular historical epoch: "When we are troubled about the position of intellect and the intellectual class in our society, it is not only the status of certain vocational groups which we have in mind, but the value attached to a certain mental quality" (Ibid. 26). In short, "can-do" American ingenuity, a pragmatic mindset that conquers obstacles by performing well practical tasks – working the land and expanding westward – is much more appreciated than philosophical reflections about meaning and truth, about the value of reflection and thought (see also Tocqueville 1945/1840, 3–8).

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This doesn't mean that other cultures haven't had their own intellectual-bashing moments, or that America is only exceptional in its approach to higher learning and intellectual activities. Hofstadter is quick to be critical of his own generalization by quoting the British Leonard Woolf as saying: "No people has ever despised and distrusted the intellect and intellectuals more than the British" (Ibid. 20). He could have likewise quoted Jeremiah's prophecies, Socrates' trial, or Jesus' crucifixion as examples of the rejection of public prophecies by a suspicious and hostile public. But he doesn't. Although he focuses on American history, he seems to explicitly endorse two interrelated assumptions about public intellectuals. First, that "Respect for intellect and its functions is important to the culture and health of any society" and second, that "Few intellectuals are without moments of anti-intellectualism; few anti-intellectuals without single-minded intellectual passions" (Ibid. 20–21).

Unlike British and French intellectuals who "usually take for granted the worth of what they are doing and the legitimacy of their claims on the community" (Ibid. 417) within a cultural context that respects their contributions, American history lacks a rich past dependent upon ideas and intellectual life. This statement, of course, is somewhat misleading, because of the radical break between Native Americans and the conquerors and settlers who arrived on American shores. The newcomers not only refused to incorporate whatever wisdom was already present, but also made every effort to desecrate and decimate any morsel of dignity – and intellectual activity – the indigenous locals had to offer (Barreiro 1992; Pratt 2002). Unlike the European continent they left behind, where historical continuity was more evident, the newcomers relied upon religious leaders to provide the minimal semblance of intellectual life, and given their concerns with religious doctrine (some of which they claimed to have escaped), it's not surprising to find them in the 18th century less than hospitable – and at times hostile – to religious ideas in particular and philosophical ideas in general. As Hofstadter explains: "Religion was the first arena for American intellectual life, and thus the first arena for an anti-intellectual impulse" (Ibid. 55). More specifically, he argues that the first class of American intellectuals were the Puritan clergy against which much scorn was leveled, partially because of the strictures they proposed and the authority they claimed for themselves as speaking on behalf of divine revelation (Ibid. 55–59). As the carriers of enlightenment in the early years of the republic (Ibid. 61), these clergy members tried to overcome and provide some order in what they perceived as religious

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anarchy at the end of the 18th century, when many different denominations sought to control religious, and by extension most, of life in the colonies (Ibid. 82).

Hofstadter sees two converging trends in this early wave of American anti-intellectualism. The first is the contest between the hearts and minds of people playing itself out in the religious domain, as he quotes one of the traveling evangelists: "His intellect improves, and his heart lies waste"; instead of cultivating the mind, one should tend to one's heart, the heart that accepts the Gospels and the Word of the Lord (Ibid. 94–95). The second is the convergence of "faith and democracy" as two venues where "the voices of the people and the truths of the heart" could be easily discerned, as opposed to "the intellectuals, a small arrogant elite given over to false science and mechanical rationalism" (Ibid. 127). These two tendencies enforce each other in establishing an early streak of anti-intellectualism that resurfaces at different junctures in American history. Learned clergymen are castigated as those who fail themselves and their followers in wasting their time on the life of the mind when all that is needed is an open heart to receive God's Word and accept Jesus as a personal Savior. Likewise, learned secular scholars fail themselves and their students by setting themselves above – elitist, privileged, insulated posture – the common citizens whose equality and freedom are the hallmark of democracy. Who needs intellectuals in this environment of faith and democracy?

But for Hofstadter who like other historians insists that "the relationship between intellect and power was not a problem" at the founding of the American constitutional republic, "It is ironic that the United Sates should have been founded by intellectuals; for throughout most of our political history, the intellectual has been for the most part either an outsider, a servant, or a scapegoat" (Ibid. 145–146). He recalls the slander suffered by early political luminaries such as Thomas Jefferson, and suggests that "The egalitarian impulse in America was linked with distrust for what in its germinal form may be called political specialization and in its later forms expertise" (Ibid. 151). If American democracy is based on the farmer-politician, then anyone can fulfill this role; if indeed anyone's voice should be heard as loudly as anyone else's, then why privilege so-called professional politicians? Some states, like Colorado, maintain this mindset in having the state legislature in session only three months out of the year; the rest of the year is devoted by these representatives to earning a living. Would such an arrangement prevent the

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professionalization of politics? Would it ensure that political philosophy would be practiced only when needed, rather than continuously and aimlessly? But the role of political intellectuals who were perforce public intellectuals as well changed from debating and writing a Constitution for the colonies in the late 18th century to political reformers in the early 20th century (such as the New Deal). Just like their predecessors, these intellectuals were welcomed for their expertise: "By making use of theorists and professors as advisers and ideologists, the New Deal brought the force of the mind into closer relation with power than it had been within the memory of any living man – closer than it had been since the days of the Founding Fathers" (Ibid. 214).

As the role of public intellectuals changed, so there was a change in the kind of anti-intellectualism from the late 18th century to the late 20th century: "Once the intellectual was gently ridiculed because he was not needed; now he is fiercely resented because he is needed too much ... Intellect is resented as a form of power or privilege" (Ibid. 34). American culture has shifted its outlook on intellectuals from mockery and dismissal to outright resentment and hostility in two centuries. Along the way this culture forgot the warnings of those, like William James, who thought of intellectuals as guarding their individualism – as an American ideal – against the oppressive and corrupt institutions that surround them: church, army, aristocracy, and royalty (Ibid. 39). While James appealed to American individualism to protect intellectuals from the cultural wrath that afflicted them, his fellow pragmatist, John Dewey (1859–1952), admitted that "intellect *is* dangerous" because once you think and analyze, no one can guarantee to where it will lead (Ibid. 45; italics in the original). Was Dewey closer to the American sentiment of his day than James? Could James not convince his fellow Americans to support the individualism exemplified by intellectuals, public or not?

These early 20th century concerns with intellectuals and their relation to political power reemerged during World War II when expertise was sought, while an ongoing resentment simmered in the public's mind – are these intellectuals needed? If yes, is their advice best for the people? The intellectually minded presidential candidate, Adlai Stevenson II (1900–1965), bore the brunt of this postwar, anti-intellectual backlash in 1952, as Hofstadter reports: "American intellectuals, it was said, did not feel for or understand their country; they had grown irresponsible and arrogant; their chastening was very much in order" (Ibid. 223). If these intellectuals chastised the public, the tables were reversed now, and it

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was their time to be chastised; if they thought their ideas were superior to those of the common citizen, how wrong they were! It's a seesaw movement between wanting expert advice and elevating intellectuals at one point, and then denigrating them just as hastily, pulling them down to earth and showing them who controls the country after all. Perhaps the reason for this tension relates to power: "One of the difficulties in the relation of intellect to power is that certain functions of intellect are widely felt to be threatened almost as much by being associated with power as by being relegated to a position of impotence" (Ibid. 229).

In addition to American anti-intellectualism associated with religion and with politics, there is also a third kind associated with American capitalism. As important a role that American business plays in American culture, being the vehicle for sustenance and progress, it's also characterized by a "can-do" mentality that favors entrepreneurship. The courageous and innovative individual is set against a backdrop of fulfilling the needs of society and supplying its demands, whether in terms of foodstuff or entertainment. Nothing happens in America without a sale of sorts, so that everyone becomes an inadvertent salesperson, promoting products and services, offering their wares in the marketplace. The public may congregate at churches or public squares on Sundays or election days, but it lives most of the time in the marketplace, where work is to be found and where consumption takes place. The marketplace may have become more virtual by the 21st century, but it's still what dominates American culture and outlook, defines our tastes and preferences, and relegates to a secondary position the life of the mind (unless an education offers better job prospects, or when nerds invent gadgets the market eagerly incorporates into its ever-growing offerings). This third kind of anti-intellectualism is important to stress not because businesses are more philistine than other cultural institutions, but rather because they have become the most politically powerful institutions (Ibid. 236–237). Their power keeps on increasing, and their dominance in the political and intellectual domains is evident when examining contributions to political candidates and political parties on the one hand and to academic institutions on the other hand, as we shall discuss by the end of this chapter.

Under such conditions of market proliferation and the incessant growth of consumerist culture, intellectual alienation is apparent on two levels. The first level is associated with attempting to keep the life of the mind separate from consumer culture: it's not about making money, but

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about gaining knowledge; it's not for profit that we learn and think, but for the love of ideas and intellectual disputation; it's not for earthly gain that we learn but for enjoying the life of the mind. This level of alienation can parallel that of the clergy or politicians of yesteryear, whose service for their communities was paramount on their mind (rather than status and privilege, monetary or other). But there is another level of alienation that is juxtaposed against consumer society and the business world it embraces. This kind "is seen not as a risk he must have the integrity to run, but as an obligation which preconditions all his other obligations. Alienation has ceased to be merely a fact of life and has taken on the character of a cure or a prescription for the proper intellectual regimen" (Ibid. 420). The second kind is almost a necessary condition the intellectual seeks as opposed to the first kind that is leveled by the community against intellectuals.

In summary, Hofstadter's historical account makes clear that the very notion of speaking truth to power (Chapter 1) and the concern with the political responsibility of public intellectuals (Chapter 2) were of less concern when the Founding Fathers were intellectually inclined and when the clergy were the sole arbiters of knowledge claims. American anti-intellectualism, then, "is founded in the democratic institutions and the egalitarian sentiments of this country. The intellectual class, whether or not it enjoys many of the privileges of an elite, is of necessity an elite in its manner of thinking and functioning" (Ibid. 407). Public intellectuals cannot help themselves from being set apart from their fellow citizens, and when they are put (or put themselves) in that position, they shouldn't be surprised that some level of resentment and hostility accompanies their posture and pronouncements. Perhaps this is what eventually leads, as we shall see later, to the demise of intellectuals in American culture. Must they necessarily be "shut out or sold out," as Hofstadter claims (Ibid. 417)? Can they not be heard without selling out? Isn't it in the public's self-interest to maintain an intellectual class?

Before one can answer these questions, we should take stock of Russell Jacoby's indictment of American intellectuals, or more precisely, his last rites for the loss of public intellectuals by the late 20th century. Unlike Hofstadter who sees an ongoing anti-intellectual sentiment that plagues American culture, Jacoby seems to argue that in fact there is "a vacancy in culture, the absence of younger voices, perhaps the absence of a generation" of intellectuals (1987, 3). Their absence from the public domain is because "the missing intellectuals are lost in the universities"

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(Ibid. 16). These "younger intellectuals," unlike their disappeared elders, have remained in the academy and "direct themselves to professional colleagues but are inaccessible and unknown to others. This is the danger and the threat; the public culture relies on a dwindling band of older intellectuals who command the vernacular that is slipping out of reach of their successors" (Ibid. x). Jacoby's concern is with public intellectuals who are defined as "writers and thinkers, who address a general and educated audience," that is, "independent intellectuals" whom he describes as "an endangered species" (Ibid. 5–7). This incidentally becomes the subtitle of a more recent assessment of public intellectuals (Etzioni and Bowditch 2006).

Jacoby's analysis of the absence of the independent, public intellectual is linked to two related developments: the first has to do with prosperity, and the second with status. In his words: "Prosperity has undermined the proverbial alienation of American intellectuals, who are now 'close to the top of the social hierarchy'" (Ibid. 75). This is connected to the "hypocrisy of bohemia" as a "flagrant contradiction" between having leisure time (to think and write and be public intellectuals) and the need to fulfill economic needs (through other income-producing endeavors) (Ibid. 29). So what has happened to the so-called New York intellectuals of the interwar period? "Instead of criticizing the mediocrity and mindlessness, they savor their new status; instead of acting as the 'moral conscience of society,' they confound prosperity with advancing culture" (Ibid. 79). As we'll see later, Jacoby relies heavily on C. Wright Mills for his sociological analysis. As this chapter unfolds, it will become clear that Jacoby's assessment sets its tone: "Where once there was talk of intellectuals as critics and bohemians, now there is talk of intellectuals as a sociological class ... The substitution of class for intellectuals encapsulates the change" (Ibid. 106–109).

It should be clear that "the decisive category here is not intellectuals, those who cherish thinking and ideas, but public intellectuals, those who contribute to open discussions" (Ibid. 221). For Jacoby, this contribution cannot be limited to campuses, classrooms, professional conference presentations, and peer-reviewed journal articles. Instead, it's an activity associated with open discussions that are publicized outside the academy, finding their way to popular media outlets. Having left the public arena for the prosperity offered by universities, intellectuals have recast their roles from public to professional intellectuals, secure in the limited conversations they have with like-minded academics. Was this

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only because of the trends Jacoby mentions? Wasn't it also because of what Hofstadter describes as an ingrained anti-intellectual sentiment? Perhaps the university system, however flawed, provides a modicum of security from the antagonism of an unappreciative public, and a freedom to have open discussions among those who care to have them. Isn't this a more genuine way to converse rather than foist on unwilling audiences an intellectual debate?

As for the Gramscian view that at some level we are all intellectuals, no matter our education or class affiliation, Jacoby retorts: "Intellectuals may be everywhere, but almost everywhere they face similar and limited options: the young especially are vulnerable, precisely because they emerge in a situation of dwindling intellectual choices" (Ibid. 234). If they want to make a living at being intellectuals, at reading and writing, giving speeches and commenting on others' texts, they don't have many options. Jacoby's intellectuals aren't Gramsci's, of course. At this point of this survey, we are moving from the view that everyone has an intellect and an ability to think or reflect, to a view of intellectuals as a group, a class set apart from and in some cases in contradistinction to other groups of people or classes. But in order to make this transition, in order to maintain a posture that is concerned with public affairs, Jacoby reminds us that their commitment should be not simply to a "public" but to a "public language," the vernacular (Ibid. 235).

Although Jacoby has definitely set the stage for a discussion about the demise of public intellectuals in the late 20th century, and he has also set the terms of the debate in the starkest terms (and thereby offended many sensitive souls along the way), he hasn't been the only one to do so. Amitai Etzioni, for one, picks up his theme but responds with less pessimism than Jacoby. For him, there is enough support to "the thesis that PI's [Public Intellectuals'] influence did not decline" (2006, 6). Unlike Jacoby, he argues that "the fact that there is considerable tension built into the role of PIs should not be viewed as a sign of decay or as a built-in societal or intellectual problem. It seems largely to serve to keep PIs honest" (Ibid. 14). What was perceived as a weakness is considered here a strength. Others have understood Jacoby's lament not only in terms of prosperity or status, but also more specifically in the "tragic predicament" that afflicted them after World War II. Among them is George Cotkin, who has focused on the convergence of intellectual activity and mass culture in that period, realizing how mass culture is seductive to intellectuals because of its range and the opportunities it lends to them as well

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as an alienating force that allows for totalitarianism (single-mindedness and a set way of how to view the world). Interestingly, Cotkin claims that "Arendt bequeathed to postwar intellectuals a heightened fear of the seductive and pervasive power of mass culture" (Jennings and Kemp-Welch 1997, 253). Why the German-American political philosopher Hanna Arendt (1906–1975) of all people? Cotkin continues: "As Greenberg has noted with kitsch, so too did Arendt consider the massification of society to topple the solidity of tradition and the high ideals of European culture" (Ibid. 254). Translated this means that just as the American art critic Clement Greenberg (1909–1994) was able to codify and set criteria by which art and its history could be distinguished from kitsch, so did Arendt note the difference between the historical traditions of European thought and the overwhelming dominance of mass culture (read: massification).

Interestingly, this way of thinking about intellectual activity follows neither the fate of Hofstadter's anti-intellectualism (which is about power relations and the love-hate relation between the privileged few and the public) nor Jacoby's lament over the professionalization of intellectuals (as academics cordoned off from the public). Instead, this is an analysis of the effects of mass culture to seduce or alienate intellectuals, draw them in, and have them refrain from criticism or shun them away into their academic fortresses of irrelevance. Massification is totalitarian insofar as everything works in a lockstep mode where consensus is mandated, even when short-lived like a fad. Individualism (á la James) is absent; fitting in and fully absorbing the fashion of the day is the norm; full assimilation is expected, whether enforced by peer pressure (from adolescence to adulthood) or (Nietzschean) herd mentality. As Cotkin continues to explain, the power of totalitarian regimes to make propaganda claims about truth that aren't true at all can be traced in literature to the British author George Orwell's *1984* (1948), but remains the *modus operandi* of any mass culture: wants are needs, and needs can be only fulfilled when following the dictates of corporate agenda. He also mentions the American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr (1892–1971) and his worries about "the synthetic and sentimental art of Hollywood" (Ibid. 255), one that in its uniformity doesn't allow for differentiation, personal reflection, or authenticity.

In addition to the totalizing powers of mass culture to erase differences and contradiction (which disallow critical engagement and transformation), there is another danger when mass culture dominates

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power relations. According to Bauman, intellectuals are powerless in the context of consumer culture and the diffuse market where no point of authority remains intact (1987, 167). In this reading of mass culture, it's not the universality and homogeneity of mass culture that is the problem for intellectual critics, but its diffuse nature, where no single figure of authority or a single value is promoted. Unlike the dictator who is an identifiable and easy target, mass culture offers no such convenient target. In the absence of a singular target, any critique is bound to be less effective. Mills was similarly concerned with "overdeveloped" capitalism, where political discussions of power relations have been translated into cultural maneuvers where the masses are moved by cultural symbols rather than by political discourse based on reason (Aronowitz 2012, 242). In this respect, then, it's not simply the problematics, as Bauman argues, of leveling the critique against the proper targets, but also the transformation of the modes of discourse themselves where intellectuals are not simply critics, but in fact are participants in the cultural discourse itself. As Aronowitz explains, "Mills was amongst the first to point to the ubiquity of intellectual labor in the production of contemporary life" (Ibid. 250), and as such one of the first to appreciate the quandary of being a public intellectual. This, indeed, bespeaks of yet another way in which the intellectual disappears or fades away into the massive landscape of popular culture – at times willingly so, at others inadvertently.

If academic institutions haven't absorbed intellectuals and thereby caused them to become an endangered species, as Jacoby calls them, and if anti-intellectualism hasn't fully castigated intellectuals away from public presence, then mass culture has finished the job. Rumors of the demise of public intellectuals may be somewhat exaggerated, as Mark Twain has said about his own death, but they still float around North America. The Europeans may like their public intellectuals, and so may the South American countries, regardless of their own flirtation with mass culture and dictatorial regimes. But the United States is always hopeful that it can substitute moral sages, prophets, and critics with the feel-good platitudes of celebrities, such as the software billionaire Bill Gates. Sometimes the critical voices of other American billionaires are heard, too: the investment guru Warren Buffet chiding wealthy Americans about their low tax rates, or the former New York mayor Michael Bloomberg on smoking and sugar consumption. Are any of these three celebrity billionaires public intellectuals in any of the senses we have so far discussed? Have they replaced the others and filled the vacancy?

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A poignant way of closing this section draws from David Schalk:

> The very appearance intellectuals, and thus manifestation of engagement, of critical dissent, might prove to be a "passing phenomenon, born on the streets of Paris (at the height of the Dreyfus Affair) in 1898, and dying there exactly seventy years later ... [with] the notorious events of May 1968, when the students, apprentice intellectuals if you will, took their elders and nominal mentors by surprise." (Ibid. 272)

Is the life span of public intellectuals 70 years? What happens, then, to the likes of Moses and Jeremiah, Socrates, and Jesus? What happens to Joan of Arc and Galileo, Jefferson and Lincoln? Perhaps the glory days of intellectuals as a class is what is at stake here, rather than individual heroes and heroines whose lasting impression remains indelible in our memories. With this in mind, we move in the next four sections to provide different approaches to the class of public intellectuals.

3.2 Sociological approach

Characteristic of a sociological approach is a focus on individuals as belonging to groups rather than focusing on them as individuals alone. From this perspective, class identification and stratification helps view a society more accurately, and also provides a prism to assess movements among classes and the conventions and power relations that regulate the interaction of individuals within and outside their own class affiliation. As Plato already offers in the *The Republic*, there are classes to which individuals naturally belong, into which they are born, and within which they operate until they die. For him, as for many until the Enlightenment movement of the 18th century, this was a *natural* order, one to which humans naturally fit despite any delusions they might have to the contrary. In this sense, then, the guardians differed from the laborers, and an apparent hierarchy came into being as naturally as any of its components. One's natural dispositions fit perfectly into a preordained organization; therefore, first, everyone would be content in her or his assigned position and role, and second, there would be no reason to object, resist, or rebel against this hierarchy. Overall, the perfectly idealized state would remain harmonious and peaceful, thriving on the best each member could offer the community as a whole. One can imagine how much this utopian image influenced Marx years later in his own thinking. Flattening the hierarchy

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(influenced by Enlightenment ideals) and suggesting a fundamental equality among all members of his commune, Marx still upheld the ideal that all of them could choose freely whatever position and work best fit them, contributing as best they could to the well-being of the whole.

By the time we reach the 20th century, neither Plato's utopia nor Marx's commune has come to fruition. Instead we find different social organizations with different structures, some of which are more stable than others, and some of which are perceived as being more just than others. A sociological focus on class structure and its power relations to other classes – in terms of affiliation, mobility, and appeal to authority – has turned the study of public intellectuals from identifying unique individuals – Jeremiah, Socrates, and the like – to a study of them as a group or class. More significantly, ever since the assessment of Mannheim (already mentioned in the previous chapter) that intellectuals were (and should remain) outside of any class, classless as it were, in order to provide them the (scientific) objectivity to engage public concerns, most discussions about public intellectuals have in one form or another referred to their class affiliation or their grouping as a class.

In this context, then, we recall Gramsci's statement that though on some level "All men are intellectuals, one could therefore say; but all men do not have the function of intellectuals in society." That is, just because we all have an intellect doesn't mean we all use it in the same manner, and more importantly, when we use it in a particular way this action identifies us differently from everyone else: "When we distinguish intellectuals and non-intellectuals we are in fact referring only to the immediate social function of the category of professional intellectuals" (1957, 121). Gramsci already notes the specific role of professional intellectuals, may they be journalists or philosophers, and how they should function in relation to their own class of origin (hence the "organic" designation as an honorific one). Then he proceeds to say: "In the modern world technical education, strictly tied to even the most primitive and unqualified industrial work, must form the basis for the new type of intellectual" (Ibid. 122). As the 20th century unfolds, there is a greater sense, both in Europe and in the United States, that there is a new *type* or a new *class* of intellectuals whose performance transcends that of the literary writer of the previous centuries who referred to values, universal, and national, but who never considered fiction to be the exclusive vehicle for public debate, and therefore didn't necessarily consider the role of writers to be public intellectuals.

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Continuing the radical approach outlined by Gramsci, the American sociologist C. Wright Mills (1916–1962) provides a wonderful example of someone who was himself a public intellectual as well as someone who chronicled critically class formation in his day. In what follows I'll be using Aronowitz's excellent book on Mills because the author parallels in more than one way the life and work of his subject (Sassower 2013b). Labeling Mills "a critical political intellectual," Aronowitz claims that he "remains a model for those who wish to become public and political intellectuals" (2012, 4–5). Echoing Jacoby's lament, Aronowitz admits that "C. Wright Mills is exemplary of a vanishing breed in American life: the public political intellectual who, despite his grating message, often received a hearing in mainstream media ... [whose] job was to sound the alarm" (Ibid. 7–8). Unlike some claims we surveyed in the previous chapter about the intellectual's neutrality for the sake of objectivity, "Mills's attempt to engage a wider audience challenged and continues to challenge mainstream political and academic discourses, especially the notion that intellectuals should remain neutral observers of economic, political, and social life ... Mills held that intellectuals and their ideas were embedded in the social antagonisms and struggles of their own time; they bring to their analysis a definite standpoint, whether or not they are prepared to acknowledge it" (Ibid. 8–9). This means that identifying class structures and the inequalities among classes remain the hallmarks of the sociologist's analysis and critique, and therefore provide the means through which to enter public discourse. What about Mills's own class identification? Did he fit Gramsci's model or Mannheim's?

As Aronowitz tells the story of the New York intellectuals of the early part of the 20th century, he asks, "Can they be considered a class with its own interests that, because of their relatively unique social function as producers and disseminators of knowledge, exert an influence that potentially cannot be reduced to their numbers?" (Ibid. 54). What was unique in the formation of the New York group was that unlike their 18th-century predecessors they didn't come from the aristocracy of the landed gentry but instead came from the middle class, especially the Jews whose parents were poor immigrants (Ibid. 57). As members of the middle class, these intellectuals not only wanted to assimilate, but also "found themselves tied to educational, governmental, or other institutions" as wage laborers (Ibid. 58), and as such realized that there was a certain level of fatalism that is the dominance of mass society/culture. In this respect, "knowledge leads to powerlessness" (Ibid. 59). The crux of

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Mills' frustration is voiced by him in this way: "The craftsmanship which is central to all intellectual and artistic gratification is thwarted for an increasing number of intellectual workers. They find themselves in the predicament of the Hollywood writer: the sense of independent craftsmanship they would put into their work is bent in the ends of a *mass appeal* to a mass market" (Ibid. 60; italics in the original). Aronowitz's commentary is telling: "Clearly, we can see that Mills is nostalgic for a time when the *independent* intellectual and artist was still possible; when the question of how to support oneself was not an overriding consideration; or, to be more precise, when the cost of living, especially rents, made the existence of a coterie, if not a class, of independent intellectual craftsperson possible. Tacitly, he mourns the passing of the traditional intellectual, if not the conditions that made his existence possible" (Ibid. 61; italics in the original).

In addition to assimilation, and therefore a loss of a clearly distinct class formation, these early 20th-century leftist intellectuals had to face another quandary – the Moscow Show Trials (1936–1938) that showed the ugly underbelly of the utopian Soviet Union. Must communism deteriorate into a dictatorship? Are injustices permitted in the name of an ideal? Is it permissible to sacrifice the few for the sake of the many? In light of these questions, "Mills was loudly proclaiming the need for a 'new' Left that had the courage to throw off the ideological baggage of the past Marxist orthodoxy and Stalinism" (Ibid. 21). His books and pamphlets were "notoriously heretic for both their tacit violation of academic insularity [but not methodologically] and because they broke from the main tenets of the Cold War anticommunist consensus at a time when political repression was still alive and well in the United States" (Ibid. 22). In this so-called "age of conformity" (Ibid. 65), leftist intellectuals retreated from their leftist incantations and shifted to the center. In doing so, they found a new way of "reconciliation" between themselves and their culture post-World War II on ideological grounds: perhaps American democracy is indeed the best that can be expected in the 20th century (Ibid. 23, 79). Mills himself could retain his own radical and leftist credentials because he wasn't trying to assimilate to American culture the way his fellow New York intellectuals felt they needed to. Unlike them, Mills "could afford to remain an outsider; he was not eager to shed estrangement from his country and his culture" (Ibid. 83).

Personally, Mills was more of a loner compared to the groupthink of many of his fellow intellectuals who found comfort in their newly gained

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acceptance within the ranks of the professional middle class. What makes his sociological approach of lasting import is his ongoing focus on power relations among the various classes in America. As Aronowitz admits: "The central category that suffuses Mills's thought and to which he returned again and again was power, especially the mechanisms by which it is achieved and retained by elites in the economy and social institutions" (Ibid. 14). Therefore, Mills' critique of labor unions was based on his view of them as not being "voluntary, democratically run, and membership-controlled organizations" but instead "oligarchies of power" with an elitist mindset accompanying them (Ibid. 16). "According to Mills, power consists in a closely integrated series of elites perched at the pinnacle of their respective institutional order," and as such the relation between their institutions (military, government, financial) and classes (upper or middle) depends on the actions of these powerful individual leaders (Ibid. 161). With a realization that American culture is defined in terms of "the permanent war economy" (Ibid. 171), Mills suggests that since the Gilded Age all the way into the early parts of the 20th century, "The elevation of the very rich and corporate executives to celebrity status alongside the usual glitterati of entertainers and politicians was for Mills a marker of the degree to which American civilization has been given over almost entirely to money and power" (Ibid. 176). "Knowledge is Power" is subverted, according to Mills, when the power elites subordinate experts and knowledge producers and pay them to work for them (Ibid. 182), which means that, as Aronowitz cleverly puts it, "knowledge is, accordingly, not power" (Ibid. 184).

What is then left for the public intellectual to do under these conditions of powerlessness? Mills' response focuses on creating an audience for one's critique rather than just worrying about the critique itself: "Instead of blaming the rightward-drifting intellectuals alone for the disaster that has befallen the Left, he ascribes the situation in America to the fact that 'there is now in America no real audience for such statements' of change. For that audience to exist, he argues, there would have to be a 'movement or a party having a chance to influence the course of affairs,' and it would have to contain people who are at least 'attentive, if not receptive to ideas'" (Ibid. 82). So should intellectuals seize power or work with revolutionary movement as was the case in Eastern Europe? Should they become philosopher-kings? Aronowitz suggests that "Mills adhered to the proposition that, at their best, intellectuals are the conscience of society, eternal critics, but only under exceptional

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circumstances should they allow themselves to become functionaries of any system. This suggests that intellectuals should not retain power, lest they are transformed from critics into apologists, at best, and, at worst, protagonists of one or another type of authoritarianism. Until intellectuals face up to the vagaries of their own social position, when they are in power we can only expect the worst" (Ibid. 213). From the vanguard of the proletariat to the hallways of power, from the disillusioned intellectual to the radical, Mills is portrayed as being as concerned with the role of public intellectuals as a class as with his own posture and affiliation. Was he a loner, however successful? Was he still a member of a class of public intellectuals? Should he have been more closely associated with other New York intellectuals?

With these questions in mind we can move now to Alvin Gouldner's (1920–1980) view, the most pronounced appeal for the formation of a new class of intellectuals. According to him, "a New Class composed of intellectuals and technical intelligentsia – not the same – enters into contention with the groups already in control of the society's economy, whether these are businessmen or party leaders ... a structurally differentiated and (relatively) autonomous social stratum" (1979, 1). For him, this isn't an appeal to the so-called universal class of the past, but instead, this New Class "is profoundly flawed as a universal class. Moreover, the New Class is not some unified subject or a seamless whole; it, too, has its own internal contradictions. It is a class internally divided with tensions between (technical) intelligentsia and (humanistic) intellectuals" (Ibid. 8). The historical setting that brings this about in the United States is described by Gouldner in this way: "The emergence of intellectuals and intelligentsia onto the national political scene in American life does not seem significant until Woodrow Wilson's administration and until the involvement of intellectuals in the Socialist and Progressive Movements that preceded it" (Ibid. 16).

Unlike Mills' (and Aronowitz's) lament about these intellectuals, Gouldner argues that "the New Class earns its living through its labor in a wage system; but unlike the old working class, it is basically committed to controlling the content of its work and its work environment, rather than surrendering these in favor of getting the best wage bargain it can negotiate" (Ibid. 20). But can it indeed overcome the totalitarian tendencies of mass culture as mentioned earlier? Can this *New Class* maintain control over its messages? His answer is, once again, Marxist and sociological: "Just as the New Class is not the proletariat of the past, neither

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is it the old bourgeoisie. It is, rather, a new *cultural* bourgeoisie whose capital is not its money but its control over valuable culture" (Ibid. 21; italics in the original). "It is *cultural capital*, the economic basis of the New Class ... it is also a *speech* community ... the culture of careful and critical discourse (CCD)" (Ibid. 27; italics in the original). What this New Class controls isn't necessarily the content of its message, but more specifically a mode of thinking and articulating its messages; as a culture of CCD, it is a class that dictates the means and methods by which it speaks and by which others ought to speak, and therefore the means and methods by which it must be heard. He concludes: "*The New Class thus has both a common ideology in CCD and common interests in its cultural capital*" (Ibid. 29; italics in the original). One notices that as Gouldner pushes this particular view of the New Class, he doesn't appeal to a moral grounding of class identification and authority, but rather to its methodology; in doing so, he eschews any charge of nostalgia to the old classes of privileged or aristocratic intellectuals. Moreover, "the impairment of the New Class's upward mobility, either *politically or economically*, contributes to their alienation" (Ibid. 63; italics in the original), and therefore to the retention of their designation as a New Class.

On the one hand, "the culture of discourse of the New Class seeks to *control* everything, its topic and itself, believing that such domination is the only road to truth ... the New Class silently inaugurates a new hierarchy of the knowing, the knowledgeable, the reflexive, and insightful" (Ibid. 85; italics in the original). As such it continues the kind of power struggle of all classes for dominance, if not full hegemony of society as a whole. On the other hand, the New Class is a "*contradictory* class. Certain of its interests, particularly its interest in CCD, dispose it toward freedom. But its other interests, as a cultural bourgeoisie, make it an elite concerned to monopolize incomes and privileges. What is involved is a trade-off in which some interests are sacrificed for others" (Ibid. 81; italics in the original). Having established intellectuals as a class, even a new one, now Gouldner fully articulates the instability of this class, its internal contradictions, and the conditions under which it attempts to maintain itself. An honest reason for the contradictions and problematic position of intellectuals is given as well:

> Intellectuals have long believed that those who know the rule, who know the theory by which they act, are superior because they lead an "examined" life. They thus exalt theory over practice, and are concerned less with the success of a practice than that the practice should have submitted itself

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> to a reasonable rule. Since intellectuals and intelligentsia are concerned with doing things the right way and for the right reason – in other words, since they value doctrinal conformity for its own sake – they (we) have a native tendency toward ritualism and *sectarianism*. (Ibid. 84; italics in the original)

Continuing with Mills' leftist approach, and admitting to class formation as the prism through which to evaluate the effectiveness of the New Class, Gouldner underlies the relationship between his analysis and classical Marxism. He repeats the standard view of Marxism as a critique against the status quo and as such partially in line with the CCD of the New Class, yet explains that Marxism as it has been practiced in the early 20th century has fallen short of its own utopian and messianic aspirations: "In many parts of the world, Marxism has been the midwife of the New Class, but those she brings into the world may never see themselves in their own mirror" (Ibid. 86–87). Marxist or not, successful or failing, Gouldner's New Class affirms the perception of intellectuals, more public than professional, as forming a distinct class with its own self-identifying features and criteria for membership. How close is this New Class to the working men and women of their society? How bourgeois has it become because of its economic power? How stable will it remain? Will its internal contradiction tear it apart? Will this New Class retain a political power rather than just a cultural one? Or, has the cultural become the political? If this is the case, then the relevance of intellectuals as a class or as individuals remains political through and through, whether they choose to destabilize a political regime or expose its hypocrisy or bad faith.

3.3 Political approach

Recapping the transformation of the Weimar republic into the post-war Germany of the 1960s and 1970s, Jürgen Habermas explains that between the elitist attitudes of the "literary masters" and "mandarins" of the Weimar Republic on the one hand, and the "experts" who thought of "politics as a functionally specified realm of action" on the other hand, there was "no room for the political public sphere and the intellectual in it" (1989/1985, 87). Using the particular circumstances of the German poet and journalist Heinrich Heine (1797–1856) as a public intellectual, Habermas provides a typology of the relationships between intellectuals

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and the political sphere. The first group he calls "the unpolitical among the writers, and the mandarins among the scholars" who separate the "sphere of the mind and the sphere of power." For them any kind of "politicization of the mind" seems like a "betrayal of the creative and cultured personality." This absolute schism between the two realms, politics and truth-seeking, is a protection for the life of the mind so it doesn't become contaminated by political concerns. In the second group he includes "theoreticians oriented to *Realpolitik*," which means those who still maintain the separation of the first group but do so with an appreciation of the "division of labor" that ought to hold between theoretically minded scholars and professional politicians. Politically speaking, the second group struggles for its own position within political activity. The third group of intellectuals enters the political arena as "activists" on behalf of this or that political agenda. The fourth group actually becomes "professional politicians or professional revolutionaries and subordinate themselves to a party apparatus"; they eventually "have power at their disposal." And finally, there is a fifth group of "right-wing intellectuals" who in fact are "national, self-disavowing" intellectuals who undermine the very status and credentials associated with the life of the mind (Ibid. 78–79). There are several variants of conservative disparagement of intellectuals, some more principled (Scott in Jennings and Kemp-Welch 1997, chapter 3), some more personal (Johnson 1988; Sowell 2009), and still others condemning "sterile intellectualism" and legitimating the political agenda of the Nazis (Ingrao 2012/2010, 252–256).

Connecting Habermas' typology with the myth of speaking truth to power, we can quickly observe that beyond the two original Greek options of separation and immersion there are other possibilities. The political sphere can remain alien from the life of the mind or become completely enmeshed in it; it can skirt the pressure to conform or criticize, or it can face it head on. In each of the different cases, intellectuals have made choices, decided whether to remain silent in the face of oppression and injustice – under state communism in the Soviet Union or German National Socialist fascism – or even find justification for such atrocities, as the conservative German political theorist Carl Schmitt (1888–1985) has done. Habermas provides an important link in the discussion over the political role of intellectuals because for him, "in the world of the intellectual, a political culture of opposition complements the institutions of the state" (Ibid. 73). This means two things: first, that no matter what state institutions are operational in a given period, they

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warrant by their very existence some form of critique (or "opposition") and second, that the intellectual is never fully divorced from a relation with state institutions, however tangentially. These points are important to emphasize here, as we are writing in the 21st century with an impression that democratic institutions and welfare programs are acceptable standards that warrant no more commentary.

Even within the cloistered environments of Europe and the United States we can observe how democracy remains corrupt, and how in its name (and the name of capitalism) various choices are being made that seem regressive and unjust. One need only follow the trails of the industrial-military-academic complex to observe nasty incidents of war-mongering and state surveillance commonly associated in our collective memory with the brainchildren of totalitarian regimes of the previous century. Between hyperconsumerism on the one hand (primarily of entertainment) and public apathy on the other hand (because of the proliferation of digital information), we find ourselves less politically engaged. Who should we fight? Who should we endorse? Whose ideology fits our own? Whose political agenda can we justify? Are our political leaders democratically elected? Or are moneyed interests determining all election results? Edward Shils generalizes from these questions to explain that democracies aren't attractive to intellectuals because "there is too much compromise with too many unworthy interests, too much association with boring 'low types'" (Maclean, Montefiore, and Winch 1990, 267). More specifically, this means that "intellectuals in politics tend to have a sense of responsibility to ideals rather than a sense of responsibility for particular consequences" (Ibid. 268), and therefore they become either frustrated or alienated from any engagement in the political sphere. It's not that intellectuals aren't feeling compelled or responsible to think in political terms, but that once they do, however minimally or fully, they find themselves in awkward intellectual positions of having to bend their principles to pragmatic exegeses. Shils concludes that "the most general proposition is that intellectuals have had more sense of responsibility for the maintenance of traditions of intellectual achievement than they have had for the well-being of their political or civil collectivities. But they have not been wholly without that either, even in the present situation of intellectuals in the world" (Ibid. 306). If the scales are tipped, they point to the direction of the exclusion of intellectuals from the political sphere.

If the concern is with the maintenance of an intellectual tradition rather than with a political one, if the insulation of intellectuals as a class of

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politically disinterested "mandarins," as Habermas calls them, then what happens to politics as such? Is the political sphere then ruled by "might makes right" rather than any moral sense? Is politics devoid of ethics? The American Constitution and the French Revolution are hallmarks of Enlightenment ideals seeping into and forming a workable political framework that ensures individual human rights, liberty and equality, and the dignity of humanity as a whole. Benda, whose indictment of the treason of the intellectuals has set the tone for the past century for anyone writing about the political role of intellectuals, has this to say about the different views of the relationship of morality and politics. "One was Plato's, and it said: 'Morality decides politics'; the other was Machiavelli's, and it said: 'Politics have nothing to do with morality.' Today they receive a third, as M. Maurras teaches: 'Politics decides morality'" (2007/1928, 110). Benda's own preference is of course the Platonic ideal where morality decides politics. But what if indeed it's the political power brokers that justify wars, that find it expedient, nay morally justified to cut the safety net for poor families in the United States? What if immigration policy in the 21st century (primarily in the United States, but to some extent also in Europe) is xenophobic but cloaks itself as being about fairness? Political fear mongering among right-wing conservatives can always find intellectual underpinnings, from the likes of Schmitt who portrays the enemy within as a real threat for social and moral harmony. Indeed, Benda's words of almost a century ago ring true today: "Our age is indeed the age of the *intellectual organization of political* hatreds ... The present age is essentially the age of politics" (Ibid. 27–29; italics in the original). If we are in the age of politics, perhaps Bauman has the last word in this context, suggesting that "intellectual freedom" depends on politicians' indifference to intellectual life, their complete irrelevance to the political struggles and maneuvers of the day (1987, 158–159).

Against this view of "complete irrelevance" we have the view of complete engagement, paralleling the "unattached" and "connected" intellectual in the previous chapter. Although viewed here more in terms of classes of intellectuals than individual mavericks, what keeps on cropping up is not simply the politically engaged intellectuals (who are therefore "responsible"), but more importantly their oppositional views with revolutionary zeal and aspirations. Carl Boggs, for one, wants to remind us of this singular expectation of public intellectuals: "As for the role of intellectuals, counterhegemonic politics calls forth the idea of an engaged, critical, public intelligentsia whose activity is grounded in

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social projects, constituencies, and movements – a model that invokes Gramsci's concept of organic intellectuals but also goes beyond it" (1993, 8). With Gramsci's grounding in mind, Boggs continues to explain why his revolutionary intellectuals are not simply the "universal" ones that predated, for example, the Bolshevik Revolution in October 1917. In his words, "Since opposition can no longer be sustained through intervention of a cohesive universal subject but increasingly revolves around multiple centers of resistance and sites of popular struggle, it becomes commonplace for critical intellectuals to perform more distinctly *local* and *organic* functions tied in some way to social movements. It is here that theory, culture, and politics finally merge" (Ibid. 10; italics in the original). The "local" is "organic" not only because of a point of origin and a connectedness in Walzer's sense, but also because there are many diffuse targets worth the intervention (as Pels suggested). Interestingly, Boggs credits 19th-century anarchist thought "which from the outset championed diversity, complexity, and local pluralism over universal systems of thought and action" (Ibid. 35). What about the Marxist legacy? For him, there are those who "agree that intellectuals in advanced capitalism constitute an entirely new formation" that defies Marxist categories of class struggle between the bourgeois and the proletariat (like Gouldner), and that because of their own privilege "pits them against local struggles of workers and others" (Ibid. 86), and thereby also "reduced Marxism to a fringe ideology lacking significant class or popular referent" (Ibid. 77).

One way to combine the overlap between the previous "sociological" section and the present "political" one is to appreciate not only questions of class affiliation and power relations that permeate both approaches, but also the fluidity that characterizes the range of intellectual activities. In Boggs's words, "Intellectuals are neither innately conservative nor radical; hegemonic nor counterhegemonic; elitist nor populist ... Intellectual work is generally filtered through the system of ideological hegemony and its diverse mediation (religion, culture, education, the family, etc.) ... The entire social context of intellectual life obviously remains fluid" (Ibid. 146). This, incidentally, leads them to work more as individuals than as a socially cohesive or integrated group or class: "modern intellectuals can best be understood as the locus of many conflicting pressures and identities rather than as a cohesive social formation. Whether in the government, corporations, mass media, education, or cultural sphere, intellectuals are commonly subjected to diverse and often contradictory ideological codes" (Ibid. 149). Instead of a nostalgic lament over the loss

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of revolutionary fever, Boggs offers a variety of ways in which contemporary intellectuals can retain their "critical opposition" and "insert themselves into the contradictory and dialectically challenging positions from which to work and disseminate their critiques" (Ibid. 162–181).

The role of intellectuals – if not as revolutionary agitators then as political dissidents when political regimes become dictatorial – has been best experienced in the past century in Eastern and Central Europe. Dissident activities warrant their own books, and therefore I shall mention here only some themes that are relevant for our discussion. The first is the direct threat to public intellectuals who confront and oppose the regime, as was the case in the former Soviet Union and Poland, for example (Jennings and Kemp-Welch 1997, Part III). This threat is of internal exile (the Siberian gulags), execution (Stalin, Hitler, and Mussolini), or deprivation of any possible work. Exile to foreign countries was a luxury many intellectuals could not enjoy, and when they did enjoy it there was no guarantee for employment or a receptive public. The second theme is that of the intellectuals' ambivalence as to who they should worry about, their own heritage and ideals or those of their national identity (Maclean, Montefiore, and Winch 1990, Chapters 4–5, 10–14). This means that multiple loyalties vie for the attention of intellectuals, and their choices are forever compromised. Very few – of course those mentioned in laudatory terms as ideal – can withstand the pressure and make the right choice. The third theme strips the general political responsibilities of intellectuals from their theoretical framing and deals more specifically with the autobiography of intellectuals – the particular circumstances that allowed them, as unique individuals, to withstand political and peer pressures (Rieff 1969, Case Studies, 137–370). The fourth theme is encapsulated in the dramatic film "Lives of others" (2006), where questions of family loyalty and betrayal come to the fore. Instead of thinking about the general well-being of the community and the oppositional posture heroic intellectuals are perceived to embody, we are confronted with the sad and ugly, heart-wrenching, and ambiguous posture a husband or wife find themselves in when acting according to their conscience. The fifth and final theme focuses on the nuances of the political interaction of intellectuals: each case is different; each case deserves to be judged within a specific context; at the end of the day we should ask ourselves: What would I have done? How would I have behaved if put into this situation? Would I be complicit or critical of the authorities? Would I have kept my opposition private or made it public?

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In concluding this section, we should acknowledge Nietzsche's notion of the "will to power" and contextualize it in the political situation of the 20th century, especially in view of the dictatorships in the Soviet Union, Germany, and Italy. Lilla puts this in a form of a question: "What is it about the human mind that made the intellectual defense of tyranny possible in the twentieth century" (2001, 198)? Reminding us of the inevitable interaction between philosophy and politics (or intellectuals and politicians), he offers three answers. One answer is that "the Enlightenment not only bred tyrannies, it was tyrannical in its very intellectual methods – absolutist, deterministic, inflexible, intolerant, unfeeling, arrogant, blind" (Ibid. 199); the second answer is that "religious irrationalism" brought about this European tyrannical mindset with messianic promises (Ibid. 200). The third answer is to move from ideas and movements to the "social history of intellectuals," but here, too, there are two answers/narratives: the one by Sartre, a "heroic myth about the rise of the solitary 'committed' intellectual who asserted his 'singular universality' against the dominant ideology of bourgeois society and the tyrannical systems it had bred in Europe (fascism) and abroad (colonialism)," while the other was that of Aron, who challenged Sartre's view and showed that since the Dreyfus Affair intellectuals were incapable of understanding their own position and the ways by which to fight tyranny: "The real responsibility of European intellectuals after the war was to bring whatever expertise they had to bear on liberal-democratic politics and to maintain a sense of moral proportion in judging the relative injustices of different political systems – in short, to be independent spectators with a modest sense of their roles as citizens and opinion-makers" (Ibid. 203–204). These answers repeat yet from another perspective some of the issues and examples already covered in the previous chapter. However, what is worthwhile in quoting Lilla's formulations is the way he labels the entire class of 20th-century intellectuals in Europe as "philotyrannical" (Ibid. 197). For him tyrannical thought and tyrannical politics merged and provided mutual justification for each other. More and more intellectuals lost their critical distance and with their own intellectual "will to power" succumbed or enthusiastically endorsed political "will to power"; while the former is defensible in the Nietzschean sense of an Übermensch, the latter is dangerous and destructive.

Pels echoes Lilla's notion of the Nietzschean "will to power": "Precariously balancing between intellectual detachment and political involvement, fellow-travelers such as Durkheim are 'politicians without

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party,' whose will to intellectual power is continuous with their political will, even though their primary concern is to found a *school* rather than a *state*" (2000, xv; italics in the original). Pels draws an interesting distinction between Socrates' view of living in the political domain, escaping it, and then returning to it, as opposed to the Dreyfus model of being outside it to begin with and then engaging it only to run away from it again (Ibid. 225). This portrayal alerts us to the question of where intellectuals are located, so to speak, leaving or returning into the political sphere. Are they part of it? Can they really fully escape it? If they do, is it temporarily or permanently?

Questions relating to psychological dispositions – a location of sorts as well – lead us directly to the next section where psychological questions can be examined: Do all humans have this tyrannical urge? Is the "will to power" an essential part of human nature? Can we control such potentially destructive urges? Under what educational and political systems can we channel such urges – if they are indeed natural – in positive directions? If we can, what democratic controls can be put into place without becoming "tyrannical"? Who can be trusted in the postmodern age: politicians, intellectuals, or therapists?

3.4 Psychological approach

As we have seen, the notion of "will to power" plays its role in the ambivalent and problematic relationship between intellectuals and politicians, between those devoted to the life of the mind and truth and those wielding political power. The psychological approach is therefore interconnected to the political approach, but focuses on two specific tendencies. The first is personal and associated with some of the characterizations we surveyed in the previous chapter, and the second is a generalization about human nature. It seems that on some level we tend to see the individual writ large: while observing certain behavioral propensities of individuals we impute them, as the Viennese psychologist Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) did, to society as a whole. It then becomes possible to speak of the dread of a community, the fear that permeates a civilization, and the different levels of desires and their controls that come about with social conventions and moral norms. This is what Freud contends in his *Civilization and Its Discontent*, written in 1929 and first published in Germany in 1930, drawing parallels between his view of the human

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psyche, Id, Ego, and Super-ego, and the internal interaction it undergoes; he then extrapolates to civilization as a whole. It seems that many commentators on intellectual activities are prone to such generalizations and the drawing of parallel views of individuals and their environments.

So we see Walzer portraying the critic as a "hero" who "speaks out loud, in defiance of the established powers," displaying moral courage necessary to expose oneself in public (2002/1989, 12). We also see how his view of intellectuals as critics is suffused with psychological terminology, emphasizing the "compassion," "humility," and "hope" of critics as they address their audiences (Ibid. 17). "Social critics are driven by a passion for truth or anger at injustice or sympathy for the oppressed or fear of the masses or ambition for power" (Ibid. 19). The operative terms are "passion," "anger," "sympathy," and "fear," all emotions associated with various activities and their underlying motivations. This isn't a view of cold-blooded logicians who criticize the inconsistencies of a system, but instead of passionate intellectuals who are moved to speak and act out in public, with full disclosure of anger and fear, sympathy, and solidarity (in Rorty's sense). Walzer infuses his descriptions with an appeal to the functionality of these emotions, their potential impact not only on intellectuals but also on the rest of society: "Antagonism, not alienation, provides the clearest lead into the critical enterprise" (Ibid. 22). He also speaks of "disappointment" that leads to a form of "complaint," so that "we feel responsible for, or we identify with particular men and women" (Ibid. 23). In summary, Walzer reverts back to Gramsci's view of the intellectual who "stands among the people; he feels, as Gramsci says he should, their 'elementary passions'" (Ibid. 238). From the heroic posture of the critic that could be viewed as narcissistic, Walzer shifts quickly to compassion and anger. He sees these emotions not simply accompanying the work of intellectuals, but motivating forces that move intellectuals to respond and act, write, and speak publicly.

A similar sentiment is voiced by J. P. Nettl, who appreciates the difficulties of dissent and the price paid by those standing against a powerful political regime. Yet despite its futility, there is a therapeutic value to the engagement of intellectuals in the political domain: "For therapeutic reasons if nothing else, personal dissent, however socially ineffective and unstructured, is better than none" (Rieff 1969, 134). This is reminiscent of existential writings by the likes of the French philosopher Albert Camus (1913–1960), who emphasized conviction and commitment as the antidotes for the meaninglessness of life and the impending death we

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must confront. Instead of feelings of dread (or perhaps because of them), intellectuals are offered a way to find meaning and act on that meaning, involving themselves in activities that however minute may make a difference (Camus 1991/1942). This way of thinking must have motivated dissidents in Eastern Europe in the past century, from the Russian revolutionary and later exiled Leon Trotsky (1879–1940) and the Russian novelist Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (1918–2008), all the way to the numerous thinkers who fled the horrors of communist regimes in Eastern Europe until 1989, when the Berlin Wall came down and these regimes fell apart. Likewise, current Chinese dissidents include those who railed against the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989 to all other repressions of free speech and the use of the Internet. No matter how faint the voice, no matter how marginal the protest, it's a way of feeling something, of expressing one's disappointment and anger, sadness and hopelessness; as such, these emotions find an outlet, one that may reach others, and when successful, may change the power regime. The so-called Arab Spring of 2011 fits into this psychological portrait that moved frustrated individuals to act in unison and bring about political change.

There is another way of approaching this psychological trajectory when it gets to intellectuals. Inevitably inspired (without attribution) by the German-American philosopher Herbert Marcuse (1898–1979), Lilla points out the deep-seated emotional currents that motivate intellectuals. For Marcuse this meant both a reductionist view of modern humanity that has become "one dimensional" (1964), and a deep appreciation of the influence of Marx and Freud (1966/1955), so that (material) sociopsychological determinations push us in a particular direction. For Lilla this means that love, *eros*, inspires the politician and the philosopher in a similar manner: it is a psychological drive that remains a burning desire to achieve much more than one's minimal existence. "All souls – and therefore all human types – can be found somewhere on this celestial path, some closer to earth, others to the heavens, depending on how their erotic horses have traveled" (2001, 209). This follows Plato's description of humans carried by a chariot with two horses: one noble that intends to pull humans toward the eternal and the true and the other a brute that pulls toward the mundane and base fulfillment of instinctual desires. It's not that the passions differ in the souls of politicians and philosophers, but that philosophers ought to have self-control and master their passions in the right direction and proportion (Ibid. 211). Only with a modicum of restraint can the intellectual avoid the temptation that rules the

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politician toward greater power and tyranny. This means that intellectuals should contain and control their own tendencies toward what he calls "philotyranny," because, as mentioned earlier, tyranny isn't dead and nor are the passions accompanying its drawing powers; it's our responsibility "to master the tyrant within" (Ibid. 214–216).

Can intellectuals live up to the ideals set by Plato's image of the chariot with the two horses? Can intellectuals avoid the temptations of power and tyranny, the rule of the few who think they have all the answers and know without doubt what the best course of action should be? Dissidents suffer for refusing to ascribe to the tenets of political authorities, and therefore are never in a position of tyrannical temptation. Yet they, too, are driven by a psychology of superiority at least insofar that they claim to be right while everyone around them is wrong. It is a psychological ambivalence of self-doubt that plagues intellectuals under conditions of tyranny: not knowing for sure if they are right, they feel anxious about their posture, and without much external confirmation may become defensive or fall into the anguish of the existentialist that lets few out of its debilitating clutches. Is this the price intellectuals must pay for their critical thinking?

3.5 Economic approach

The economic approach to intellectual activities falls into two major categories: the first is concerned with intellectuals and their relationship to the marketplace, and the second which considers intellectual activity in general in market terms. The first approach in some respects parallels the political one. Just as it has been argued earlier that there is a fundamental gap between intellectual and political activity – they address different issues and expect different outcomes – so there is a claim that the ethereal activity of intellectuals is separate from and even antagonistic toward the financial pursuits of the marketplace (as already noted by Hofstadter earlier). Stigler, for one, argues that "The intellectual has never felt kindly toward the marketplace: to him it has always been a place of vulgar men and base motives. Whether this intellectual be an ancient Greek philosopher, who viewed economic life as an unpleasant necessity that would never be allowed to become obtrusive or dominant, or whether this intellectual be a modern man, who focuses his scorn on gadgets and Madison Avenue, the basic similarity of view has been

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pronounces" (1984/1963, 143). Contemporary academics are in this sense no different from their Greek predecessors, eschewing the gods of mammon in the name of the pursuit of truth and wisdom. For them, the pursuit of wealth is base, if not outright distasteful, regardless of their own earthly needs.

This view of the life of the mind as separate and excluded from the turbulence and greed associated with market forces is noble from one perspective, let's say that of Socrates and his disciples. What it conceals, though, is the weakness of such an approach in Western civilization where market forces, more specifically hybrid-capitalist ones, dominate every move and choice we make. Can anyone ignore the market? Can one live off the good largess of others? Socrates wasn't wealthy by any stretch of the imagination, but he was financially independent enough to ignore the pursuit of a livelihood. Can this model be duplicated? Enlightenment leaders and 19th-century (wealthy) gentlemen scientists illustrated the extent to which they could follow Socrates' lead; their family's wealth could support their inclinations and free them from day-to-day obligations. Are we back to this model as we begin the 21st century, when only the 1% of the very wealthy can afford to choose the life of the mind, write poetry and commentary no one will pay for? Is the Greek model bound to fail under current conditions of the marketplace?

Critics like Jacoby suggest that what we are facing is the infiltration of market forces into every facet of our culture. If we thought that the "marketplace of ideas" could remain insulated from the pressures of the market, we were wrong. If we thought that we could leave the precious work of intellectuals outside the capitalist forces that buy and sell everything, that quantify and monetize every word and idea, we were sadly dreaming of a lost ideal. In his words: "Inasmuch as the public sphere is less a free market of ideas than a market, what is publicly visible registers nothing but market forces" (1987, 5). Ideas are bought only if they are worth buying, and that means that instrumental rationality – measured by the value of outcomes – is dominating even intellectual activity. This also means that expertise and professional consulting pay the bills in ways that open-ended debates do not. This means that the marketplace dictates what is worth reading and listening to, and therefore is geared more toward particular goals – drilling for oil and gas, for example – than for the general well-being of a country. How would this be measured?

Then there are those who, like Fuller, think that intellectual activity should resemble more directly venture capitalism, a process by which

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funding groups bet on the success of an enterprise before it's fully launched. The risks associated with this investment are mitigated by the calculus that for any ten projects that are funded, only one needs to be successful enough to compensate the investors for all the others that have failed. California's Silicon Valley has been the hotbed for this way of thinking, proving time and again how to promote computer technologies, from hardware to software, all the way to the latest digital gadgets. Thinking in these terms, Fuller argues that tenured academics should be "taking tenure seriously as a basis for what might be called *intellectual venture capitalism* – that is, the risking of some of your reputation and institutional security on ideas whose pursuit would easily bankrupt more poorly placed souls" (2009, 87; italics in the original). Phrasing intellectual activity as risk-taking would appeal to the capitalist mindset, where investments lead to profits, and where risks are calculated to ensure as little harm as possible. If this way of viewing intellectual activity doesn't necessarily bridge the gap between the academy and the marketplace, between intellectuals and businesspeople, then at least it forces the less adept within the group to think in market terms. But should they? We may accept risk-taking by tenured faculty because their risk is minimal (especially if they are also unionized); but is it really "venture capitalism" to speak publicly on the issues of the day? Obviously Socrates didn't look at it this way.

Unlike Stigler, who finds intellectuals' disdain of the market appalling, and Fuller, who encourages (tenured) intellectuals to become risk-taking entrepreneurs, Posner represents more fully the second economic approach to public intellectuals. He sets up his analysis of intellectual activity more directly as a market activity; in this he is followed by Thomas Sowell even though the latter shows more disgust for them (2009, Chapter 9). Although Posner agrees with Jacoby that "it is safe to say that the position, the contribution, most precisely the social *significance* of the public intellectual is deteriorating in the United States and that the principal reasons are the growth and character of the modern university" (2001, 6; italics in the original), he still thinks it's worthwhile to examine the activities of public intellectuals. For Posner, it seems that any activity, even the one associated with thoughts, should be understood primarily in economic terms. Who would count in the intellectual market? Like all others, Posner repeats that "the independent intellectual has been giving way to the academic intellectual" (Ibid. 29), but then adds in a peculiar sense that he is "inclined, therefore, to regard

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the think-tank public intellectual as basically interchangeable with the academic public intellectual" (Ibid. 35).

For Posner, then, what is important is how many intellectuals, whether independent or academic, part of think tanks or not, fit into this marketplace. He suggests that "public-intellectual work could be seen as constituting a market and a career and could be analyzed in economic and sociological terms and compared with other markets and other careers" (Ibid. 2). If we consider public intellectual work as constituting a market, where ideas are bought and sold, where there is a "price" associated with the supply and demand of these ideas, what kind of a market would it be? According to Posner, "public-intellectual goods ... are entertainment goods and solidarity goods as well as information goods" (Ibid. 3). Before we follow his analysis of these kinds of markets, that is, markets different from those where groceries or cars are bought and sold, we should take note of his typology of the activities of public intellectuals. It includes "self-popularizing, own-field policy proposing, real-time commentary, prophetic commentary, Jeremiad, general social criticism, specific social criticism, social reform, politically inflected literary criticism, political satire, [and] expert testimony" (Ibid. 36). As we can tell, not only does Posner include as many intellectuals as possible into a viable market, but he's also willing to have them perform a diverse set of activities, from the esoteric to the mundane.

Posner's analysis of the intellectual marketplace indicates that their "goods" are subject to the market mechanism of supply and demand. "Informational" goods can be examined in terms of "commitment, credibility, and quality"; and the one aspect he focuses on most is the credibility of these goods (Ibid. 42). The demand for such goods is generated from an educated public and from media editors who compete with each other to sell these goods through their delivery channels. What needs are being satisfied? According to Posner, "The need is then not for translation of an existing body of academic thinking into words that the laity can understand, but for the application of a body of specialized academic knowledge to an issue to which it has not been applied before" (Ibid. 45). One may quibble here about the "translation" or "interpretation" notion of intellectual activity (as discussed by Bauman), but what remains intact is the "need" for such goods. Since Posner unabashedly considers these goods to be "rhetorical" or to be using rhetoric rather than sound arguments about the "truth," he concludes that "the test of good rhetoric is efficacy, not veracity" (Ibid. 47). This means, therefore,

that data confirmation is less at stake for the reception of these goods than what impact they have on those who consume them.

Interestingly, Posner doesn't shy away from this notion of intellectual work, and in so doing invokes the words of Aristotle that "rhetoric [is] on the whole a good thing, a way of getting closer to the truth in areas of ineradicable but not irreducible uncertainty" (Ibid.). This means that we should make what Aristotle called "ethical appeal" about the character of the speaker instead of the standard dismissal of *ad hominem* criticism that overlooks the distinction between the speaker and what is being said (Ibid. 49). But if we are now thinking of intellectual information goods in terms of rhetoric (already mentioned earlier by Fuller), they become "credence goods" – namely, goods the credibility of which is at stake. For Posner the market has a number of "devices for increasing the buyer's trust in sellers of credence goods." Among them he counts "advertising" which he admits is the least reliable; the second is "legally enforceable warranty"; the third is "reputation based on the experience of previous consumers"; the fourth is the "consumer intermediary," such as brokers that vouch for the good or "product-rating service such as *Consumer Reports*"; and fifth is the "reputation" of the seller who hopes for repeat business (Ibid. 47–48). Posner explains that unlike "inspection goods" which are monitored before they enter the market, "credence goods" are examined for their results. This means that "The consumers do not make a direct assessment of whether what the public intellectual says is true but instead decide whether the public intellectual is persuasive" (Ibid. 49). Rhetorical powers and a charming personality count more than reserved judgment; appearance counts more than the substance of utterances.

On the supply side of the goods public intellectuals are said to sell in the market Posner counts a variety of intellectuals and therefore concludes that, "Far from there being any shortage of public intellectuals, we are awash in them" (Ibid. 67). More intellectuals are trying to boost their "pecuniary and nonpercuniary earnings," and therefore are eager to engage the public. With plenty of supply and an increasing demand for intellectual goods, why would there be "market failure" in Jacoby's sense? Posner's view is that "missing are the conditions that ensure reasonable quality in other markets for credence goods. In the public-intellectual market there are no enforceable warranties or other legal sanctions for failing to deliver promised quality, no effective consumer intermediaries, few reputational sanctions, and, for academics at any

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rate, no sunk costs – they can abandon the public-intellectual market and have a safe landing as full-time academics" (Ibid. 77). In short, market failure depends on the unique conditions of intellectual life and perhaps shouldn't be thought of in economic terms.

Since there is no "quality control" of or "accountability" for the products of public intellectuals (Ibid. 7, 77, 388), in his concluding chapter Posner suggests how to monitor the engagement of public intellectuals in a published form (websites), content and payment, so that full disclosure of their activities is readily available (Ibid. 389–397). He believes that only under such conditions will academics who are happy to "supply" intellectual goods realize that a level of accountability is expected, and that they cannot simply say whatever they want without any ramifications. If they speak too hastily or thoughtlessly, the record will show their carelessness or "reckless" behavior in Lilla's sense; if they simply enjoy their celebrity status without consequences, they'd be censored and made to repent; if they escape to the academy when convenient, they'd be made to pay with a tarnished reputation broadcasted around the world. In short, Posner wishes to ensure "quality control" is in place for the activities of public intellectuals. But is he right? Even if we endorse his suggestions for full disclosure of public pronouncements, would this ensure careful and sensitive work? Will such controls undermine and constrict the free-flowing well of intellectual information (however mistaken or misguided)? Should anyone be punished for not predicting the future as accurately as can be seen in hindsight? Should the courage to speculate be taken away from intellectuals? In short, will this impede free speech and academic freedom?

3.6 Academic freedom and free speech

The first Amendment to the US Constitution (ratified December 15, 1791) reads: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." In this manner freedom of speech was guaranteed. The same document also has the following provision in regards to the powers of Congress: "To promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts, by securing for limited Times to Authors and Inventors the exclusive Right to their

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respective Writings and Discoveries" (Article 1, Section 8, Clause 8). An inevitable conflict may arise when freedom of speech infringes on the rights of another to safeguard speech and limit its "fair use," as many legal scholars and jurists have interpreted it (Lessig 2008). So, under what conditions is such freedom promoted, curtailed, or censored? We already covered some of this ground in Chapter 1 in the case of military censorship and the risks associated with protecting absolute freedom of speech. Here I intend to deal with freedom of speech within the context of academic freedom.

First, a few words about the university system as it has evolved from its inception as an adjunct of religious institutions in the 11th century to its present condition (Schachner 1962/1938). To begin with, the university system is the largest repository of intellectuals, even when we agree that most academics aren't intellectuals. Most academics are either specialists whose narrow focus is shared by very few other specialists around the world, such as postmodern technoscientists (a group to which I proudly belong). Some academics are teachers rather than researchers, and as such see themselves as exclusively imparting past knowledge or a set of skills (logic or mathematics, linguistics or polling). Still others may stray from their own original specialty only to find that additional areas are too overwhelming to incorporate into their original areas of research. The few academics that are intellectuals, though, still constitute the bulk of public intellectuals, as Posner correctly asserts. Their environment, therefore, deserves some passing mention. Entire library sections are devoted to the university system and its cultural import. I shall only mention a few issues as they pertain to the lives of academic intellectuals and the use (or abuse) they make of their academic freedom to become public intellectuals. Episodes like the McCarthy Era where academics (among many others) were exposed as communists or communist sympathizers and had to go before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on un-American Activities (established in 1938 and abolished in 1975) are shameful and a blemish on anything that resembles freedom of speech or academic freedom (Schrecker 1986).

One of the great American public intellectuals of the early part of the 20th century was Veblen, who had as much to say about the university as about the conspicuous consumption of the leisure class of the Gilded Age. His concern for intellectual work in the academy stems from his concerns for the corporatism that engulfed the university system at the end of the 19th century and into the beginning of the 20th century (which

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unfortunately remains true till today). He laments the loss of "esoteric knowledge" that scholars and researchers deal with, and suggests that some academics have "a disinterested proclivity to gain a knowledge of things and to reduce this knowledge to a comprehensible system" (1918, 1–8). Although the university could offer a shelter from the commercialization of all knowledge and from the instrumental use that is made of it, he argues that: "The human propensity for inquiry into things, irrespective of use or expediency, insinuates itself among the expositors of worldly wisdom from the outset; and from the first this quest of idle learning has sought shelter in the university as the only establishment in which it could find a domicile, even on sufferance, and so could achieve that footing of consecutive intellectual enterprise running through successive generations of scholars which is above all else indispensable to the advancement of knowledge" (Ibid. 37). His hope for the university as refuge and sanctuary has been decimated in short order by its voluntary subordination of the industrial-military complex, as the President of the University of California system so eloquently explained (Kerr 1995/1963).

Foucault, as we have seen in Chapter 2, has described the shift from the universal to the specific intellectual, but still one that could engage in political matters and be a public intellectual. As for the position of intellectuals in the university, he thinks that the university offers them a privileged position: "Magistrates and psychiatrists, doctors and social workers, laboratory technicians and sociologists have become able to participate, both within their own fields and through mutual exchange and support, in a global process of politicization of intellectuals. This process explains how, even as the writer tends to disappear as a figurehead, the university and the academic emerge, if not as principal elements, at least as 'exchangers,' privileged points of intersection" (1980, 127). This means that as centers of exchange, universities can be useful means through which to conduct public debates and bring to the surface disagreements and controversies that are "political" in the sense of affecting the community beyond the confines of the academy. He continues: "And what is called the crisis of the universities should not be interpreted as a loss of power, but on the contrary as a multiplication and re-enforcement of their power-effects as centres in a polymorphous ensemble of intellectuals who virtually all pass through and relate themselves to the academic system" (Ibid. x). If universities are training grounds for intellectuals and if their authority as institutions that produce and distribute knowledge remains intact, then it stands to reason that their overall public power

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has increased over time rather than decreased. They are "centers" and "privileged points of intersection," and as such arm intellectuals on their way to public battles. They aren't sellers of goods, as Posner claims, or selling out to business interests, as Veblen laments, but instead politicized and academically anchored sites for intellectuals who exchange ideas and judgments.

A less optimistic view about intellectuals and their relationship with their training grounds, the universities, is offered by Jacoby: "The institution neutralizes the freedom it guarantees. For many professors in many universities academic freedom meant nothing more than the freedom to be academic" (1987, 119). For him, this kind of freedom to simply remain academics – insulated from the affairs of the state – is unfortunate, especially when they refuse to assert their independence and carry out their activities for the benefit of the public at large (Ibid. 199). Fuller takes this critique one step further. Not only does he suggest, as mentioned in the previous section, that tenured academics should take risks and expose themselves to the public outside the university walls and retain the "right to be wrong," but also more importantly this privileged position should be accompanied by "obligations" (especially for tenured professors as "intellectual responsibility") that include speaking out in public forums as outrageously as possible (2009, 38–39). Oddly enough, he reports: "Interestingly the only academics who have made a concerted effort to act like intellectuals are natural scientists" (Ibid. 84), as opposed to humanists and social scientists whose work is considered more relevant for public policy debates. Most importantly, in his endorsement of the Humboldt model of German universities as public enterprises, he highlights the difference between U.S. academics with tenure that have the freedom to become public intellectuals and the German system that compels them to undertake such activities (Ibid. 109). Not only are most American academics exempt from the German civic duty of participating in the affairs of the state; they have been able to mask their cowardice as academic responsibility: citation matrices that evaluate academics' productivity and "impact" foster "an ability to speak through the authority of others. The result is institutionalized cowardice" (Ibid. 86). Under such conditions of cowardice, would it ever be possible to see academics as intellectuals, and if yes, under what conditions would they have the courage to become public intellectuals?

Stigler's view of academic cowardice is related less to their citation practices, and more to what has been called "political correctness" or

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academic self-censoring, worrying about potentially offending certain audiences. Sensitivity is different from self-censorship insofar as avoiding certain pejorative terms isn't censorship; it's simply a way to undermine if not eliminate the reproduction of prejudices. Still Stigler probably has in mind an idealized marketplace where any idea or word is as good as another as long as there are buyers for it. Is the university reducible to a market? In his words: "In the last twenty years the freedom to express unpopular ideas – unpopular, that is, with audiences – at American colleges and universities appears to have shrunk drastically. Certainly there have been more than enough shameful episodes of censorship. The fact is that academic freedom in its true meaning – the freedom to say unpopular things – is in its present low estate because professors do not use it" (1984/1963, 65). He continues: "My complaint should not be misunderstood or exaggerated. There is no conspiracy among thousands of faculty members to exclude certain views – it is simply the case that Plato would have a difficult time getting an appointment at a major university if he were, say, an energetic leader of the John Birch Society. It is not true that all views are excluded; I am reasonably confident, for example, that I am expressing a viewpoint uncongenial to a majority of my colleagues at the University of Chicago. All important groups in a society succeed in finding intellectuals who will serve as their spokesmen, but many of these groups must search for such people outside the great universities" (Ibid. 69). From freedom of speech and academic freedom we are quickly transported to the realm of academic politics, where identity politics may play a role, and where political affiliation may become a factor in hiring, promotion, and tenure.

It seems that Stigler's concern, though different from Jacoby's and Fuller's, deserves to be reconsidered not in terms of university politics – some of it is shameful and ugly – but in intellectual terms. G. M. Tamas uses the Weberian sense of vocation in the case of intellectuals: "There is such a thing as a *calling* for anyone engaging in intellectual pursuits" (Maclean, Montefiore, and Winch 1990, 249; italics in the original). But this calling may turn into a privileged position that sanctions a level of intellectual dogmatism in the name of searching for truth or expressing it in public: aren't intellectuals speaking of the truth in universal or absolute terms? When they do, they could thus become "irresponsible" when accounting for doubtful ideas (Ibid. 249–253). "We value freedom of speech more than intellectual honesty – about the criteria of which in this world of unbelief we are unable to attain consent" (Ibid. 253).

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For him, this is "an extreme doctrine of freedom of speech, a doctrine absolving us from the responsibility of anything we might say and of the inferences drawn by ourselves and others from what we said" (Ibid. 256). Should intellectuals remain silent? Should they continue to hide in their ivory towers? Or should they admit – be honest – that theirs isn't a privileged position of knowing? Should their credence goods, as Posner calls them, be subjected to the same tests that any other such good undergoes in the marketplace? Would unions undermine this economic model of academics? Would it provide better protection for all faculty members instead of just the tenured ones? We are back to questions with multiple answers already covered in the previous two chapters. In what follows, we move to survey some lists of individuals considered, under different criteria, to be public intellectuals.

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4
Certified Public Intellectuals

Abstract: *Having outlined in the previous two chapters labels and characteristics associated with public intellectuals as individuals and as groups or classes, this chapter reviews three lists of public intellectuals and the criteria by which they have been assembled. It also includes the results of a questionnaire sent to some of them, with concluding remarks about the status of public intellectuals.*

Sassower, Raphael. *The Price of Public Intellectuals*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
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4.1 Posner's list

Richard Posner not only initiated the economic study of public intellectuals, as mentioned in the previous chapter, but has also collected enormous amounts of data and collated them in various tables and lists. In this he has tried to empirically justify or certify the label of public intellectual rather than refer to this or that exemplar, from Zola to Sartre and Aron and beyond. The extensive work that goes into such collection of data becomes meaningful only if the criteria are clear and transparent. Posner's original list of public intellectuals includes 546 names, starting with Floyd Abrams and ending with Howard Zinn; the former a relatively unknown litigator and legal scholar, and the latter a prominent historian and political theorist whose *A People's History of the United States* originally published in 1980 became a national best-seller. Among the others there are some household names mentioned in previous chapters, Hannah Arendt and Raymond Aron, Albert Camus and John Dewey, Michel Foucault and Ernest Gellner, Antonio Gramsci and Jürgen Habermas, William James and Mark Lilla, Herbert Marcuse and C. Wright Mills, Richard Rorty and Edward Said, Jean-Paul Sartre and George Stigler, Leon Trotsky and Michael Walzer. Some are still alive, some are dead; some are Americans, others foreigners. The list is quite extensive, including the author himself, but oddly excluding some of the most notorious contemporary public intellectuals, such as the French Bernard-Henri Levy, the Slovene Slavoj Žižek, and the French Emile Zola whose pioneering and daring journalistic writing set the stage for the very concept of public intellectuals. But instead of quibbling with omissions or with the inclusion of so-called less-deserving individuals, what this list generates is a treasure trove of data, the criteria of which are our focus here.

Posner's initial alphabetically ordered list of 546 (eventually expanded to 607 on his website) has three columns associated with each name: (1) Web Hits – using Google, (2) Media Mentions – using three Lexis/Nexis databases, and (3) Scholarly Citations – using the Science Citation Index, Social Science Citation Index, and Arts and Humanities Citation Index. The period covers 1995 to 2000 (Posner 2001, chapter 5). We should recall here the concerns voiced by Fuller (2009), who follows Randall Collins's work on the inbred citation practices of academics as simple vehicles for bolstering their own views under the authority of others. But these columns serve as the three criteria according to which names are

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certified as belonging to the class of public intellectuals (media mentions, web hits, and scholarly citations are the conditions one must meet to be included). The greater the number in any of these, the higher the ranking; the greater combined numbers, the higher the overall ranking. The raw numbers are then parsed out into two additional tables, one for the "Top 100 Public Intellectuals by Media Mentions," where Henry Kissinger is the first and George Stigler the last, and the other for the "Top 100 Public Intellectuals by Scholarly Citations (1995–2000)," where Michel Foucault is the first and Alfred Kinsey is the last. (There isn't one for web hits.) Then there are various tables for statistical analyses, the first of which is divided into how many of the total 546 were alive in 2000 (67.4%) and how many dead (32%) [how is the total less than 100%?]; how many are male (87%) and female (13.2%) [how is the total more than 100%?]; how many are academic (64.8%) and nonacademic (35.2%); black (4.8%) and non-black (95.2%); how many are foreign (16.1%) and from the United States (83.9%); in government service (14.7%) and not in government service (85.3%); think tank (6.4%) and nonthink tank (93.6%); affiliated to academics or a think tank (68.5%) and nonaffiliated (31.5%); right-leaning (25.6%) and left-leaning (66.3%), or unknown/neither (8.1%); Jewish (43%) and non-Jewish (57%); and average age (74 years old) (Ibid. 207).

There are additional statistical tables that break down public intellectuals in terms of fields of research, publication outlets – all with various regression analyses. This is probably the most extensive collection of data available anywhere, and Posner should be thanked for pulling it together, no matter the errors these data may contain on their margins. What becomes clear from this list is that certain conclusions or criteria for selection can be drawn. First, anyone you talk to can come up with a few names that "qualify" to be on such a list. The list can be as inclusive as Posner's, with 546 (all the way to 607) names, and as exclusive as the "Top 10" even in Posner's compilation. Of course, if we follow his "media mentions" we are bound to find more politicians (Henry Kissinger, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Lawrence Summers, William Bennett, and Robert Reich – though Summers, Bennett, and Reich have academic credentials and have been university professors) than academics, journalists (George Will, William Safire, and Sidney Blumenthal), and celebrity artists (Arthur Miller and Salman Rushdie). The question is then more about celebrity status – courting or even getting the media's attention – than actual contributions to public debate. Was it the fatwa issued against Rushdie in 1989 that made him a household name? Was

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Miller's marriage to Marilyn Monroe in 1956 as important as his Pulitzer Prize-winning play "Death of a Salesman" in 1949? As for the "Top 10" in scholarly citation, would we all agree that Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, Jürgen Habermas, Jacques Derrida, Noam Chomsky, Max Weber, Gary Becker, Anthony Giddens, Stephen Jay Gould, and Richard Posner are indeed the most influential academics? What about Karl Marx and John Dewey (to name just two already mentioned in this book)? Does a quantitative measure necessarily equal the qualitative influence or impact on contemporary thought? A cumulative scholarly citation that spans 100 years would definitely yield radically different results, though Max Weber would probably make it into that hypothetical list. A critical evaluation of Posner's list can be found in Etzioni and Bowditch (2006, Introduction).

The second conclusion to be drawn from Posner's list is that the majority of public intellectuals is affiliated with academic institutions, is mostly older, non-black American male, and left-leaning. The fact that almost half are Jewish, who account for less than 3% of the American population, is a curiosity that usually brings with it anti-Semitic comments. Should these statistical data be further analyzed? What is their significance beyond an ongoing cultural sexism and racism that systematically (because of historical antecedents) excludes women and people of color from the prominence routinely secured for white male academics? Although lists like the ones produced by Posner include black thinkers as public intellectuals, they are sparse and almost tokens. Despite whatever flaws one may find in Posner's list, he recounts what can be found in databases, and as such his list is typical rather than atypical; therefore, it deserves attention in terms of the statistical data it provides.

The third conclusion to be drawn from Posner's list is that however extensive or inclusive it may seem, it is very small considering (like him) the American population to be over 300 million and the European over 700 million. With a billion people at hand, only about 600 are considered public intellectual (dead and alive): 0.00006%. A very small minority has the power to affect public opinion, sway politicians to act or refrain from action, and drive funding for large projects that have long-term consequences. What does it take to enter this exclusive club of public intellectuals? Does one need to become a celebrity? What influence did the late Arthur Miller have on American culture? How different is it from Rushdie's case of freedom of speech? Questions like these motivate my review of other lists, examined later, as additional bellwethers

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of what counts nowadays as public intellectual activity. Every author writing about intellectuals has her or his own "list" of individuals. For example, Paul Johnson includes Rousseau, Shelley, Marx, Ibsen, Tolstoy, Hemingway, Brecht, Russell, Sartre, Wilson, Gollancz, Hellman, Orwell, Waugh, Connolly, and Chomsky with the intent of illustrating what he saw as their hypocrisy, poor personal judgments, and their "heartless tyranny of ideas" (1988, 342).

4.2 *Foreign Policy*'s 2012 and *Prospect Magazine*'s 2013 lists

An updated source for lists of public intellectuals comes annually from the publication *Foreign Policy*. Its latest list of "2012's Global Marketplace of Ideas and the Thinkers who Make Them" is quite informative. To begin with, it follows Posner's lead in thinking of a "marketplace of ideas;" second, its reach is global rather than the more limited Euro-American of Posner's list; and third, it is updated annually (see full list in the Appendix). The list of 100 "global thinkers" actually includes 126 names because at times there are multiple entries for a "position." Among the most familiar are Bill and Hillary Clinton, Bill and Melinda Gates, Barack Obama, and George Soros. Statistically speaking, unlike Posner's 13.2% women, here we find 28.5% (36 out of 126); unlike Posner's focus on the European-American axis, here we find individuals from the Arab world and Russia as well as from China and the Far East. True, Americans are still about 58% (73 out of 126), but this is a smaller percentage than Posner records (about 84%). Striking is the fact that only two – Jürgen Habermas and Martha Nussbaum, both philosophers – make both lists; and the philosopher Slavoj Žižek is absent from Posner's list but is on this list. *Foreign Policy*'s list includes 28 politicians, 12 activists, 14 artists (musicians and authors), and 20 businesspeople and directors of foundations. Obviously, just as there are omissions or odd inclusions in Posner's list, one can argue that including Warren Buffett's secretary in the list of "Global Thinkers" is a bit of a stretch, even though she alerted the billionaire to the fact that her marginal tax rate was higher than his (which prompted him to speak about it publicly and encourage tax legislation reform). Some politicians are "Global Thinkers" in the sense that they deal with foreign affairs – an emphasis in this list – and make statements about geo-political matters. But to include both the Israeli

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and the Turkish prime-minister as thinkers can be contested: what ideas have they promoted? The editors of *Foreign Policy* explain their choices in this way:

> It's particularly inspiring to have settled on a most heroic and unlikely pair as our top honorees for 2012: Burma's Aung San Suu Kyi and Thein Sein, the once-jailed dissident and the longtime general who joined hands to open up one of the world's most repressive dictatorships. It's also testament to the notion that individuals and their ideas can truly change the world, a theme that resonates in ways large and small throughout this year's list, from digital-age visionaries like Sebastian Thrun (whose robot cars may just make him the Henry Ford of a new era) to rare political leaders like Malawian President Joyce Banda, who is imagining a new Africa freed from toxic corruption. Still, many others on this year's list are there not necessarily for reinventing the world but for waging its ever-more complicated intellectual battles – think Paul Ryan budget austerity versus Paul Krugman stimulus. If you want to shape the global conversation, you have to be a part of it. Indeed, if there's one theme to this year's list, it's all about the perils and possibilities of free speech in this globalized age ... In an age when ideas, good and bad, travel the world at hyperspeed, we are proud to celebrate the brave thinking of those at the cutting edge of this global debate over freedom of expression. (*Foreign Policy* 2013)

The justification is in terms of "brave thinking" and in terms of being "part of the global conversation." It therefore makes sense, then, to include political leaders the actions of whose countries tip the balance of power in one direction or another, or who keep on setting political agendas – West Bank policies, for example – that are repressive; the reactions to them on behalf of freedom of speech or human rights seems to warrant their inclusion. The focus is on the "notion that individuals and their ideas can truly change the world." Yet it also includes those on two sides of the economic debate in the United States about austerity (Paul Ryan) and government intervention (Paul Krugman) who are indeed airing their differences in public and not in academic conferences. There are 44 academics among the 126 in the list (35%) as compared to Posner's close to 65% – almost half as many. Perhaps this shows the prejudices of academics as compared to the popular media when compiling lists. Including activists and bloggers in the list (12 of 126, 9.5%) reinforces my earlier comments about their inclusion in the ranks of public intellectuals. Since the main criterion is participation in (rather than intellectual contribution to) public conversations, it makes perfect sense to include them.

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It may be the case that billionaires in America have the power to undertake any project they find worthwhile – called "philanthro-capitalism" – and thereby eschew the public square altogether: they need not debate their priorities or justify their expenditures; it's their money after all, and they can do with it whatever they want. So, when the Gates Foundation decides to fight HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis in Africa, this decision becomes "agenda setting" and can change the public conversation about the issue; in fact, it can turn it into a public or global conversation when it was ignored before. In this sense, money rather than ideas, or more precisely, money-funded ideas, have more impact than ideas as such, no matter how superior they might be in some philosophical or moral sense. This is not to say that on humanitarian grounds African aid should be questioned because of its funding sources. Instead, it reminds us that there are economic factors that can influence the very terms of the public conversation. When this happens, what role do public intellectuals have? Should they become critics? Can their critique have any impact on the decision board members of the Gates Foundation, for example, will be making?

Such foundations are beholden only to their philanthropic donors and not to a public of sorts. They do conform, in the United States, to tax exemption provisions that bar them from engaging in political propaganda. That is all. Other than that, these foundations are free to choose whatever cause they deem worthwhile, regardless of public needs or popular sentiments. Does this mean, indirectly but most powerfully, that directors of foundations are the new class of philosophers-kings? On one level they certainly are, since they dictate the conditions and consequences of their ideas (broadly understood). On another level, they are not, because they debate no one and need not refer to anything more than their own whims, feelings, and personal inclinations, rational or not. But because nonprofit foundations have such a vast impact, $1.49 trillion in 2011 in the United States alone (Urban Institute, 2013), they cannot be ignored, and must be understood as part of the public arena, the public square. But what "intellectual activity" is being performed here? Is it undertaken indirectly because people are being made aware of issues that they would otherwise ignore? How similar or dissimilar is it to Socrates' ramblings? Is Bill Gates the Socrates or Zola of our day?

Between Posner's more "academic" list of public intellectuals, and *Foreign Policy*'s list of the "Global Marketplace of Ideas," there are other lists as well. One that struck me as useful for our discussion is the one put

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together by *Prospect Magazine*, which claims to have gathered more than 10,000 votes from over 100 countries. This list is of "World Thinkers" in 2013 and includes politicians and academics, philanthropists and journalists (see full list in the Appendix). Just as the *Foreign Affair*'s list of 100 turned out to be 126, so this list of 65 is in fact 67 individuals. Among them there are 13 women (19.4%), 43 academics (64%), three journalists and two activists, five novelists and three artists. What's fascinating is that of the "World Thinkers," 22 also appear on the *Foreign Affair*'s list – a much greater overlap than with Posner's list. Where the fulfillment of the criterion of engagement in public conversation in the previous list includes many more politicians, the present one has only two, and these two have academic credentials. Another interesting factor is that while George Soros, the Hungarian-born American billionaire, appears on both lists, the Gates couple appear on only one. Perhaps the difference is that the *Prospect*'s list is more concerned with the articulation of ideas, and therefore it makes sense for it to include Soros, who regularly writes books and columns (influenced by Karl Popper's ideas), while the Gateses seldom try their hand at intellectual authorship.

The main criterion used by the compilers of the *Prospect*'s list has been "credit for the currency of candidates' work – their influence over the past 12 months and their continuing significance for this year's biggest questions" (Ibid.). More specifically, the arguments for inclusion are stated in the following way:

> Among the new entries at the top are Peter Higgs – whose inclusion is a sign of public excitement about the discoveries emerging from the world's largest particle physics laboratory, Cern – and Slavoj Žižek, whose critique of global capitalism has gained more urgency in the wake of the financial crisis. The appearance of Steven Pinker and Daniel Kahneman, authors of two of the most successful recent "ideas books," further demonstrates the public appetite for serious, in-depth thinking in the age of the TED talk. The inclusion of Ashraf Ghani, Ali Allawi and Mohamed ElBaradei – from Afghanistan, Iraq and Egypt, respectively – reflects the importance of their work on fostering democracies across the Muslim world in the wake of foreign interventions and the Arab Spring. (Wolf 2013)

Unlike Posner or *Foreign Affairs*, *Prospect*'s editors admit to certain omissions, such as Stephen Hawking and Noam Chomsky, and provide their own self-reflective moment when they say:

> As always, the absences are as revealing as the familiar names at the top. The failure of environmental thinkers to win many votes may be a sign of

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> the faltering energy of the green movement. Despite the presence of climate scientists lower down the list, the movement seems to lack successors to influential public intellectuals such as Rachel Carson and James Lovelock. Serious thinkers about the internet and technology are also conspicuous by their absence. The highest-placed representative of Silicon Valley is the entrepreneur Elon Musk, but beyond journalist-critics such as Evgeny Morozov and Nicholas Carr, technology still awaits its heavyweight public intellectuals ... Most striking of all is the lack of women at the top of this year's list. The highest-placed woman in this year's poll, at number 15, is Arundhati Roy, who has become a prominent left-wing critic of inequalities and injustice in modern India since the publication of her novel *The God of Small Things* over a decade ago. (Ibid.)

The self-critical stance is admirable because it acknowledges ideological trends – a shift away from environmental concerns and the Internet – as well as the absence of women from the ranks of so-called credentialed public intellectuals. Unlike the self-congratulatory posture of Posner and *Foreign Affairs*, *Prospect* is concerned about what message might be read from its list of "World Thinkers 2013." Is it because *Public Affairs Magazine* is published by the American Council on Foreign Relations, while *Prospect Magazine* is a British publication? Do the British on the whole appreciate ideas more so than Americans, who are eager for the "bottom line" and "sound bites" as shortcuts to an in-depth conversation? Is there something about the value of intellectuals as public participants that is more welcomed in the United Kingdom when compared to the United States? Is thoughtfulness more of a European tradition, where critical engagement is a form of respect, rather than the American squabbling of television's "talking heads"?

4.3 Questionnaire and interviews

In addition to reviewing the lists of so-called *bona fide* or certified public intellectuals, I decided to reach out to a few academics that I know personally, and ask them to fill out a brief questionnaire. Of more than two dozen e-mail requests, only five responded in writing, and one talked to me on the telephone. I think that listening to what they have to say can enlighten us on a more personal level than simply drawing another list of favorite public intellectuals. In what follows I reproduce their responses, after a brief biographical note on each one of them (in alphabetical order).

Joseph Agassi **(JA)**: born in 1927, philosopher, professor emeritus at Tel Aviv University, Israel and York University, Canada. Among his many publications, *Faraday as a Natural* Philosopher (1971), *Science in Flux* (1975), *Towards A Rational Philosophical Anthropology* (1977), *Technology* (1985), *Liberal Nationalism for Israel* (1999), and *Science and Culture* (2003).

Stanley Aronowitz **(SA)**: born in 1933, sociologist, distinguished professor at the Graduate Center, City University of New York, U.S. Among his many publications, *The Crisis in Historical Materialism* (1981), *Science as Power* (1988), *The Knowledge Factory* (2000), *How Class Works* (2003), and *Taking It Big: C. Wright Mills and the Making of Political Intellectuals* (2012).

Henrik Berggren **(HB)**: born in 1957, author and freelance journalist, Sweden. Among his publications, *Tidens ungdom* (1995), *Är svensken människa* (Is the Swede Human?) with Lars Trähgårdh (2006), and *Underbara dagar framför oss* (a biography of Olof Palme) (2010).

Stanley Fish **(interview)**: born in 1938, literary theorist, Davidson-Kahn Distinguished University Professor of Humanities and a Professor of Law, Florida International University, U.S. Among his many publications, *John Skelton's Poetry* (1965), *Self-Consuming Artifacts: The Experience of Seventeenth-Century Literature* (1972), *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (1980), *Professional Correctness: Literary Studies and Political Change* (1999), *The Fugitive in Flight: Faith, Liberalism, and Law in a Classic TV Show* (2010), and *How to Write a Sentence: And How to Read One* (2011).

Steve Fuller **(SF)**: born in 1959, philosopher, Auguste Comte chair in social epistemology, University of Warwick, UK. Among his many publications, *Social Epistemology* (1988), *Kuhn vs. Popper* (2004), *The Intellectual* (2005), *Science vs Religion* (2007), *New Frontiers in Science and Technology Studies* (2007), and *The Sociology of Intellectual Life* (2009).

Dick Pels **(DP)**: born in 1948, sociologist, professor emeritus, Brunel University, UK, former director of the Research Foundation of GroenLinks, the Dutch Green Party. Among his many publication, *Property and Power in Social Theory* (1998), *The Intellectual as Stranger: Studies in Spokespersonship* (2000), *Unhastening Science: Autonomy and Reflexivity in the Social Theory of Knowledge* (2003), and *Media and the Restyling of Politics*, ed. with John Corner (2003).

Questionnaire

Would you consider yourself a "public intellectual"? If yes, why? If not, why not?

JA: My contribution to public life is mainly through my writing, in the learned press and in the Israeli political press.

SA: I am an intellectual with a very limited public. I give lectures, appear on radio and occasionally on TV and write comments on internet publications.

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But I do not reach a wider public beyond those with intrinsic interest in what I offer.

HB: It's hard to answer briefly because I think there are different tiers of "public intellectuals". On the one hand there are thinkers like Habermas or Foucault who – whatever we may think of their philosophies – bring a more totalistic, ambitious and specific way at looking at the world to the table. On the other, there are more subjective opinion-makers, brilliant but more pedestrian in their style, say Christopher Hitchens or Hans-Magnus Enzensberger. And then there are other categories too, historian/educators like Tony Judt and EP Thompson, mischief-makers like Žižek, etc.

But yes, if we look at the term "public intellectual" as something akin to "footballer" I would say I'm a public intellectual. It's just that I don't play in the Premier League, but rather a lower division here in the outskirts of Northern Europe.

I guess a "public intellectual" then is someone who speaks, writes and appears in the public sphere by virtue of his or her knowledge, ideas, perspectives and ability to express him/herself. These qualities have to be personal, that is, they can't be bestowed by belonging to some organization, having a certain position etc. However brilliant, I don't think that somebody who works for a think tank can be a public intellectual. Generally, I think Academia – because it is supposed to be disinterested and have truth as its mainstay – is the only professional field that can generate public intellectuals in an uncomplicated manner.

SF: Yes, because I deliberately try to inject some intellectual self-consciousness into public debates, using whatever media are appropriate to the specific intervention. There is also a sense of appropriateness to what needs to be said in a given context as well, which may involve promoting positions in which I do not completely believe (less because I believe the opposite but because my actual position may be more nuanced or unresolved) but the expression of which helps to move the collective discourse.

DP: Yes, certainly. Since I left academia after my professorship in sociology at Brunel University (UK) in 2002, I have worked seven years as a freelance political writer, publishing a number of books (in Dutch) about social-political themes such as populism and democracy, national identity, meritocracy, religion, European integration and "liberal paternalism". During those years I was asked many times to comment on current affairs on radio and TV. During the last three years before my retirement earlier this year, I have been employed as director of the research foundation or think tank of the Dutch Green Party, a job which brought me even closer to politics. But even as an academic sociologist I have written and discussed widely about issues of general public interest.

The Public Intellectual has been defined as Martyr, Prophet, Philosopher-King, Übermensch, Universal, Specific, Professional, Amateur, Celebrity,

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Organic, Spokesperson, Nomadic, Stranger, Legislator, Interpreter, Translator, Responsible, Reckless, Jester/Fool, and Liberal Ironist. Which of these would you feel most closely identified with? Why? Feel free to provide your own label.

JA: Stranger and liberal ironist, to some extent also as interpreter.

SA: Somewhere between organic and nomadic. I have close ties to labor militants, but range to education, science and technology and politics, ergo a nomad in a specialized world.

HB: I don't feel comfortable with any of the labels. Because I'm a historian I feel more like an Educator, I want to make people reflect on themselves and society in a historical perspective. Sometimes that means being a Liberal Ironist (reminding people that there's nothing new under the moon), other times it entails a certain amount of Prophesy (invading Afghanistan has generally been a bad idea), other times being a Moralist (we have to stop this craziness).

But that's me. I'm just not much for jumping up on bandwagons. I can see that there is a need for that too – "speaking truth to power" as they say. But I'm more into trying to make people think. Sometimes I feel like a university professor who doesn't have a university; which is probably very different from how Sartre and Camus felt about themselves.

SF: The only two labels from this list that I don't especially like are "interpreter" and "spokesperson". The former underplays the directive role that the intellectual has played in public deliberation, which has meant that it is often her own texts that come under scrutiny. The latter underplays the autonomy of the intellectual that often makes her appear politically unreliable or at least "ahead" of those for whom she claims to speak. Other labels that I have used for the public intellectual are "immunizer" and "agent of distributive justice".

DP: My book title *The Intellectual as Stranger* (2000) gives the best approximation. But public intellectuals may well be spokespersons for other groups, translators or go-betweens between academic, journalistic and political vocabularies, and even journalists – a professional identity which I never spurned.

Is the label "public intellectual" self-generated, or does it depend on others considering you so?

JA: Either way is fine, and the best is the description of one's ability to capture public attention to some extent. It is important that the influence of public intellectuals is at times good and at times bad.

SA: Mostly others. I am considered by others a public intellectual because they are members of one of my publics. The public(s) are fragmented.

HB: Both, I think. That is, I think the "public intellectual" has to present himself to the public with a certain amount of swagger: I have something important to say, so you better listen up people. But you have to deliver something which

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at least is recognized and respected by parts of the public as intellectual discourse.

SF: It requires public recognition, and more specifically publication or some media-based support. Even in our social media saturated world, it's hard to talk about someone being a public intellectual if their Facebook/twitter account isn't being followed by many people. There is more to being a public intellectual than simply the exercise of free speech!

DP: Both, I think. It is quite an effort to learn to write for a broader audience, without footnotes, in a more accessible, entertaining, and personal style.

Who would you list as living "public intellectuals" in 2013?

JA: No answer.

SA: Noam Chomsky, Jeremy Scahill, Bill Fletcher, Tariq Ali, Tom Hayden, Chris Hedges, Bill Moyers, Rick Wolff, Paul Krugman, Joseph Stiglitz, Henry Giroux, Diane Ravitch, Kathryn Vanden Heuvel, Sean Wilentz, Gloria Steinem, Naomi Wolf, David Harvey, Frances Piven, Cornel West, Slavoi Žižek, William Kristol.

HB: They tend to die off, don't they? Hitchens, Judt...

I checked a list on the net of influential thinkers 2013 but found that I'm skeptical of calling many of them "public intellectuals". But then I analyze why I find that the ground is sliding under me. But off the cuff: Žižek, Jared Diamond, Martha Nussbaum, Amartya Sen, Michael Sandel definitely make the grade. Writers like David Grossman and Hilary Mantel are brilliant and they do write commentary, but I can't help feeling that they are artists more than intellectuals. I have great problems with seeing natural scientists (Higgs, Weinberg) as "public intellectuals". The exception, I guess, is evolutionary biologists like Pinker and perhaps Dawkins, because they write about the human condition. Some economists, if their writing is broad enough, are public intellectuals, perhaps Paul Krugman. I guess I'm prejudiced: I see philosophers, historians, essayists, people who take a grand perspective rather than speak from a specialized field, as having more public intellectual-potential than other groups. But I'm not sure this is a defendable position.

SF: There are many, including old school types like Habermas and Bauman who write as if the Second World War ended only yesterday. There are also the one-man 60s-nostalgia tribute bands: Chomsky, Žižek, David Harvey and, to a lesser extent, Immanuel Wallerstein. More interesting philosophical figures include Peter Sloterdijk, John Gray and even those Francophone "charlatans" Bernard Henri-Levy and the novelist Michel Houellebecq. Some of the most challenging public intellectuals are scientists: Richard Dawkins, Steven Pinker, Freeman Dyson. Among social scientists, economists are most likely to be public intellectuals: Jeffrey Sachs, Paul Krugman, Joseph Stiglitz, Amartya Sen and (if you include economic historians) Niall Ferguson.

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I also think certain science fiction writers can be considered public intellectuals, such as Neal Stephenson and China Mieville. Silicon Valley – both its friends and foes – is a late-breaking hotbed for public intellectual life, including Kevin Kelly, Peter Thiel, Chris Anderson, Jaron Lanier, Clay Shirky, Evgeny Morozov. Dramatists and film-makers are easily overlooked as public intellectuals but nowadays especially the latter can make very powerful statements. And here I mean everyone from David Cronenberg to Quentin Tarantino, Oliver Stone, Michael Moore, Adam Curtis, and Errol Morris. Finally many public intellectuals are rather niche-marketed, such as (in the US) Judith Butler and Cornel West. There are also public intellectuals whose target audience is clearly nation-based, very often carried by idiomatic features of the national language, in which the intellectuals can express themselves especially well. Here academics can play an important journalistic function (e.g. Ilkka Niiniuluoto in Finland and Dick Pels in the Netherlands).

DP: There are many: among those who I admire most are Ian Buruma, Timothy Garton Ash, the late Christopher Hitchins, Ulrich Beck, Jürgen Habermas, Bruno Latour, Robert Reich, Robert Stiglitz and other regular contributors to journals such as NYRB, websites such as Social Europe, Open Democracy etc.

Who would you list as the standard-bearers of past (dead) "public intellectuals"?

JA: No answer.

SA: Norman Mailer, Alex Cockburn, Gore Vidal, Betty Friedan, Jean-Paul Sartre, Eric Hobsbawm, Paulo Freire, William Buckley, Norman Thomas, WEB DuBois, Stokely Carmichael, Paul Robeson, Richard Rorty, Howard Zinn.

HB: They would have to be French, no? Zola, Benda, Aron, Weil, Malraux, Camus, Sartre, Beauvoir...

SF: Well, I would go back very far – maybe to Socrates and Jesus. Certainly Peter Abelard, Erasmus, Milton, Voltaire, Goethe, Emerson, Emile Zola, Thomas Henry Huxley, Ibsen, Shaw, Bertrand Russell, Walter Lippmann, John Dewey, Reinhold Niebuhr, Jean-Paul Sartre, Raymond Aron.

DP: Except from the usual suspects such as Zola, Benda, Koestler; Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, Alvin Gouldner, and (why not) John Lennon.

Is there anything specific one must DO or accomplish to be considered "public intellectual"? If yes, how have you accomplished it?

JA: By persisting in publishing in the learned press some very simple vulgarizations of ideas – good or bad – that matter. And by seeking the valuable in the overall valueless.

SA: Speak to wide audiences in any possible medium. And speak about any issues aside from one's "specialty" e.g. Chomsky a distinguished linguist speaks

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about politics in and outside the US, West appears everywhere on many topics. Intermittently I have done so, less so lately.

HB: Well, I think some body of work – an important book, a series of groundbreaking articles – is necessary. In my case, I was the cultural editor of large morning paper here in Sweden without regarding myself as a "public intellectual". But in the last ten years I've published two books (one essay on Swedish political culture and one major biography of Olof Palme, our assassinated Prime Minister) which I think have made me into one.

SF: You must adopt and develop one or more unpopular positions that would be nonstarters in the hands of anyone else, but which you – as public intellectual – at least manage to keep alive in the conversation, ideally leaving a significant trace in the long term. At least I use that as a standard operating principle in my public intellectual life.

DP: See above about writing and speaking skills. I have also had to learn how to speak "without footnotes", in a more popular if not populist manner, in public lectures and for the media.

What public sphere must be the precondition for the effective function of "public intellectuals"?

JA: Any.

SA: We currently have a seriously fragmented and specialized public sphere. Serious cultural issues, except what are termed "social" issues such as abortion or race relations, receive little notice in the more ubiquitous media. Labor is almost completely shut out except strikes; many art forms are restricted to specific constituencies; once a major novel or musical composition received mainstream notice and a big readership. Today only genre fiction has a "mass" audience, but rarely beyond a few hundred thousand readers. However, football, and the World Series have tens of millions of viewers. Perhaps film still qualifies as a popular medium but not nearly as many viewers as fifty years ago.

HB: Academia, obviously. And media – there has to be newspapers, magazines, television shows etc. with intellectual ambitions. The downfall of print media may affect and perhaps kill off the notion of the "public intellectual", though personally I don't think that will happen.

SF: Well, the size of the public should ideally correspond to the size of the polity. This is why academia and journalism have been the two natural homes of public intellectual life in the modern era. Each, in its own way, claims to be the home of "universal discourse". In this respect, the differentiation – or perhaps better put, fragmentation – of the public sphere by developments in information and communication technologies poses a serious threat the very idea of the public sphere and hence public intellectuals. After all, if the realm of human communication turns into relatively closed, albeit overlapping,

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"niches" or "markets", then public intellectual life can easily turn into a species of public relations.

DP: A democratic political arena with checks and balances, permanent open and civilized debate, a democratic and pluralist media sphere including a sizeable public broadcasting system, and a multifaceted civil space containing many physical venues, platforms, theaters etc. where citizens can debate public issues.

Obviously not all academics are intellectuals and vice versa; but is every intellectual necessarily (by definition) also a public intellectual?

JA: Oh, no. Some genuine intellectuals, indeed many traditional scholars, have never aimed at influencing anyone and never made any public appearance.

SA: No. But every intellectual has the capacity to become a public intellectual. However, the path is skewed to those who have elite credentials and elite institutional affiliations. Sometimes, by accident, someone overcomes the media and popular prejudices, but not often.

HB: No, I think you can be an intellectual (university professor, magazine editor, in some kind of more instrumental position) without striving to be public.

SF: To be honest, I don't really know what it means to be an "intellectual" unless one is (at least trying to be) a "public intellectual". I take the two expressions to be synonymous. I realize that there is a more general use of the term "intellectual" for a style of thinking that approaches ordinary problems in a cerebral, abstract and analytical manner. But presumably, that's not what we're talking about.

DP: Not all intellectuals are necessarily academics, I would say. But in order to become a public intellectual an intellectual professional has to step out of his or her more restricted field (e.g. medicine or music) and appeal to/become visible to a wider audience and comment on the political issues of the day.

What advice would you give young intellectuals on their aspired (if they do) switch to become public intellectuals?

JA: Listen to criticism, try to accept it, but not as a matter of course and not always. Criticism from established viewpoints allegedly helping you join the establishment are always suspect as this is not a worthy aim.

SA: Start by being top rung in one field and branch out thereafter. Speak everywhere and about everything. Study all the time current events and link your analysis to concepts that are, relatively speaking, trans-historical, that is, have philosophical significance.

HB: They have to cast off institutional loyalties. They don't have to quit their jobs, but they must be willing to meet the public as a subjective individual, without the support of their titles, positions. And they must be prepared to go

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against the institutional structures that support them if necessary. Other than that, have a wealthy family...

SF: Develop your ideas in multiple media. Don't just master, say, academic writing – but learn to write about the same thing at different lengths for different audiences. Also learn to speak spontaneously about intellectual matters. And increasingly I recommend that aspiring public intellectuals take media courses, to master the art of video and audio production. As far as reading is concerned, one book that I always recommend, especially given my earlier remark about public relations, is Edward Bernays' *Propaganda*, a very intelligent book that among other things attempted to put forward an ethic of public relations in the 1920s, the dawn of mass advertising. The question that readers should pose of this book is what, if any, is the difference between the attitude toward products and clients that Bernays adopts and the attitude toward ideas and audiences that should be adopted by public intellectuals.

DP: Respect and use your academic background and baggage but translate it into a different, more popular and concise language. I have never had the feeling that I needed to sacrifice important content when writing more popularly. Abstraction is not wrong, but always provides examples. Dare to be personal in your writing and thinking.

And, finally, Stanley Fish has agreed to talk to me on the telephone (September 17, 2013) rather than complete the questionnaire. I paraphrase his responses since I didn't record the conversation. The most striking thing he said was that one doesn't set a goal to become a public intellectual, the way plumbers and electricians do. It's something "mysterious" that emerges quite unexpectedly. The designation is conferred by others without any set of certification that one must receive, like university degrees. It's true that some "desire" to become public intellectuals, but mostly people like himself are "surprised" to find out one day that they are considered public intellectuals. Fish recalled that in 1995 he was approached by an editor from *The New York Times* to write an op-ed piece, which he did, and which then led to many more assignments, including a regular column for the *NYT*'s web edition. He doesn't know, nor was he told by the editor who recommended him. It just happened, and the rest is history.

As for the qualities that make one a public intellectual, Fish was clear that they must include a "wide range of knowledge," "felicity of expression," "wit," perhaps an "acerbic" style, and some "name recognition." Therefore the likes of Malcolm Gladwell, Christopher Hitchens, Terry Eagleton, Steven Pinker, and Henry Gates, Jr., all qualify: they write broadly and in depth on topics that range beyond their own expertise.

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What they bring to the public arena is "academic brilliance that is directed at a specific topic" of interest to a general audience. Another example is Noam Chomsky, the linguist who has become known as a political commentator. Bernard-Henri Levy is considered by Fish as being in an entirely different category of "celebrity and sex symbol" in comparison to the other academics he mentioned earlier.

When asked about any kind of public payment for the services of public intellectuals (the topic of the next chapter), Fish was quick to remind me that since these individuals don't go through any process of certification, and since there is no national "certification system," it would be foolish to think of having any standards according to which they should be considered public intellectuals first, and second, the terms of their payment. For him, they ought to have sources of income already in place, such as university or journalistic positions. The so-called mystery of the designation is the basic premise on which Fish's view of public intellectuals, including himself, continues to rest: if there is no process by which to be accredited as a public intellectual, how can one fully appreciate its monetary value?

Fish's notion of the mystery that accompanies the designation of public intellectuals lends some credence for the need to set "lists" in place, whether annually (as we have seen earlier), every decade (as the U.S. Census Bureau does), or once in a century. If we count celebrities only, then an annual popularity test is relatively easy to put together; if we, on the other hand, are looking for ideas (promoted by individuals), then we should worry if their value expires within a year. If we are asking public intellectuals to simply (admittedly not a simple task) engage the public, then the louder the better, the more provocative and outrageous, and the more reactions it may get. But if we ask them, by contrast, to ferment ideas and undertake to educate and enlighten an entire generation, then the more thoughtful and nuanced the presentation, the more long-lasting its impact might be. So when we expect social, political, and moral critiques and lessons from public intellectuals, these expectations are different from daily (or hourly) commentary on this or that event. It may be difficult to separate these expectations. It may be impossible to articulate what we want from public intellectuals. The next chapter tries to narrow this question in order to figure out how we should (or shouldn't) provide public support to fulfill our expectations.

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5
Intellectual Welfare

Abstract: *This concluding chapter suggests that intellectuals should be paid for their work as public intellectuals. In order to set a framework within which payment for services rendered can be justified, particular benchmarks should be set to qualify intellectuals for their public engagement. Counterarguments to this proposal are entertained as well.*

Sassower, Raphael. *The Price of Public Intellectuals*.
Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
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This book began with Socrates' and Plato's views on the function of public intellectuals, whether as gadflies or philosopher-kings. It is only proper to end the book with Socrates' famous trial, and his own ideas about how he should be rewarded, once found guilty of all the charges. He sets the stage for his proposal by reminding his jurors that "I tried to persuade each one of you not to think more of practical advantages than of his mental and moral well-being, or in general to think more of advantage than of well-being in the case of the state or of anything else" (*Apology* 36c). This means that he devoted his time for individual instruction about balancing one's life and for the state as a whole. "What do I deserve for behaving in this way?" is posed as a rhetorical question, having completely ignored the original charges that were brought against him. He is clear in thinking that he "deserves" something in return for his efforts, no matter how others have viewed them. His answer is: "Some reward, gentlemen, if I am bound to suggest what I really deserve, and what is more, a reward which would be appropriate for myself" (Ibid. 36d). Nobody asked him if he deserved a reward at all; instead, his jurors thought he deserved to die. Not only is a "reward" suggested, it should be one that is "appropriate" for his condition.

So, he continues: "Well, what is appropriate for a poor man who is a public benefactor and who requires leisure for giving you moral encouragement?" (Ibid.) First, he states that he is "poor," second that he is a "public benefactor," and third that in order to do his job – a job no one asked him to perform, but instead asked him to refrain from doing – he needs "leisure." This leads Socrates to the obvious conclusion that: "Nothing could be more appropriate for such a person than free maintenance at the state's expense" (Ibid.). The clincher is the demand for state maintenance, one that is more warranted than the kind given to a "victor in the races at Olympia," because unlike the "success" the victor brings, he gives them "the reality." "So if I am to suggest an appropriate penalty which is strictly in accordance with justice, I suggest free maintenance by the state" (Ibid. 36e–37a). By now the terms of his proposals have changed, even though the spirit has remained the same: "reward" is replaced with "penalty," while "appropriate" is replaced with "strictly in accordance with justice." From a plea for free maintenance based on his poverty, Socrates shifts to a claim for justice, namely, that he really deserves to be maintained by the state because of all the benefits he brings to its inhabitants.

Ancient Athens had lavished rewards on its athletes and generals in the form of lands, slaves, and stipends. Should gadflies, like Socrates,

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be granted those rewards as well? Do they "deserve" them? Socrates thought so, but then he also thought that being a gadfly was his ordained mission sanctioned by the gods. Can this Socratic model of state support be translated into the 21st century? What may seem outrageous on one level can be considered quite reasonable on another. As we recall, the last century Jeremiad, Benda, was lamenting the disappearance of the "clerks," those who would sustain a universal posture and warn their fellow citizens of their failings. He was worried about "the impossibility of leading the life of a 'clerk' in the world of to-day." Because of this he stated: "One of the gravest responsibilities of the modern State is that is has not maintained (but could it do it?) a class of men exempt from civic duties, men whose sole function is to maintain non-practical values" (2007/1928, 159–160). Benda's proposal about a century ago is to exempt certain people from all "civic duties," such as military service and jury service so they could fully devote their time to "maintain non-practical values." He must have had in mind the clergy (hence his term "clerk") who have been maintained by parishioners and the state (as is done through taxation in some European countries) so that they could live the life of the mind, think deep thoughts, and carry on a spiritual existence that would inform the public at large. Thus, Benda's model is akin to the traditional models of church institutions.

A more recent justification for the need of a Socratic or Bendist model has been provided by Pels in terms of the modern state. According to Pels: "The establishment needs 'its' outsiders in order not to become transfixed in sluggish routine and oligarchic self-indulgence." So, there is a certain gadfly-like effect that is being reintroduced, needing to awaken the "sluggish" horse by the little gadfly that annoys it. Moreover, "That is why liberal democracy is obliged to love its strangers, to include and subsidize rather than to extradite them, in order to be able to permanently and dynamically 'undermine itself'" (2000, 226). It's not simply supporting or not convicting the "strangers" in Pels' terminology, but liberal democracies should feel "obliged to love" them. The expectation of love is definitely more demanding than tolerating them; it's also accompanied by a requirement to "subsidize" them, reward them in Socrates' sense. For good measure, Pels reminds us that "extradition" was a dictatorial strategy to get rid of dissidents. Underlying Pels' model – a combination of Socrates and Benda – is a deep belief in the dynamic forces, critique and self-reflection, that keep liberal democracies healthy. Pels appeals here to a deeper appreciation of the role of public intellectuals to

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shake up a complacent state and make full use of the dialectical-critical contributions of the mind. Any stagnation, even of a highly progressive state, brings with it corruption and decay; it contains the seeds of its own destruction.

In light of this, it's reasonable to argue that communism found its eventual demise in Eastern Europe not because it became less popular, but because it refused to reinvent itself and cherish its internal critics. When they became dissidents and exiled, they took with them a critical opposition that could have reformed state communism into its more humanistic variant. By contrast, democratic capitalism in the West (using outrageous generalities again) were always already under siege from their citizens-critics. These states have shown great resilience because of their ongoing transformations into welfare states that retain some capitalist principles with regulatory supervision of representative democracy. I don't mean to imply that welfare states are perfect or that they shouldn't continue to be vigilant about their own failures. But instead of seeing the "anointed" as being destructive of social cohesion and outright scoundrels whose sense of reality is skewed (Sowell 2009), I suggest seeing public intellectuals as those who have built-in mechanisms for critically reevaluating themselves in ways that were absent in communist regimes.

Can public intellectuals become the guardians of their communities? (Johnson 1988, 1). Assuming that they can, and that, as seen in the previous chapter, a number of them gain public attention and even become celebrities, what should be done to bolster this critical activity? Assuming that Fish is correct in representing the general consensus among his peers that there isn't a process of certification intellectuals can undergo in order to become public intellectuals, can we outline a framework to counter this situation? Etzioni agrees with Fish that to be a public intellectual isn't "a regular job or vocation," but one that carries "only a temporary social accreditation" (Etzioni and Bowditch 2006, 4). This role is a phase in their lives, one they enter and leave depending on all kinds of circumstances. He therefore suggests (following Paul Lazarsfeld) that public intellectuals should focus their attention on "opinion leaders" who mediate between the media and the public (Ibid. 5), or are "second order intellectuals" in Drezner's sense (2008). In this way they can exert a great deal of influence with easy access to those in power.

Perhaps we can start with small steps and then think about more radical reforms. First, we can suggest that 1% of any public institution's budget should be designated for public debates; some can be among novelists

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and poets, others among economists and philosophers. Incidentally, there is already a model for this in the "Percent for Art" policies that some states have adopted in setting aside a percent (commonly 1%) of public construction funding in some urban centers and public institutions (NASAA 2013). This would mean that a city with an annual budget of $100 million (middle-sized city of about 300,000) would set aside $1 million for such forums. If these were set weekly (about 50 per year), $20,000 would be available to market these events and pay four participants as much as $4,000 each. Some would be repeat guests and thus supplement their wages (or even earn enough if traveling around the country), while others would do this only once. To ensure that there are willing participants, we can start by focusing on academic institutions that would require all full-time faculty members to dedicate 5% of their professional time to such public forums.

Second, we could require all publicly funded media outlets from radio and television stations to print publications to devote 5% of their time or space for public forums and debates that are more open-ended and not exclusively devoted to the latest crisis or scandal. This would encourage editors and managers to ask academics – already giving 5% of their time for public service – to contribute their knowledge and expertise and share them in accessible forms with their audiences. We could stretch this idea and ask, not demand or require, privately owned media outlets to follow suit. Hopefully, this experiment would become so successful that private media outlets will jump on the bandwagon for competitive reasons, rather than because they were "asked" or "ordered" to do so.

Third, we could suggest that every politician – from the local city council member and mayor all the way to state and federal representatives – would have on their staffs, in addition to media handlers and public relation experts, intellectuals. This may mean that some big ideas would have to be translated into a different vocabulary, but why not? Once again, even if only a fraction of politicians were aided by thinking academics it may become a competitive advantage other politicians will want to emulate. Would that not be a great new world of politics? Admittedly, high-profile politicians already employ academic experts on their staffs. But what is different in this proposal is not only having like-minded experts who bolster an ideological outlook or agenda, but also naysayer and critics who may change the terms of the debate, transform the debate completely, or suggest focusing on issues ignored by the campaign. You don't have to be a billionaire to do so.

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Fourth, just as we have named fellowships to which academics and independent thinkers and artists can apply, there should be a government-sponsored fellowship for public intellectuals. It can set criteria for the award and expect certain activities that would benefit the community, from small to large scale. The amount should be substantial enough – say, $100,000 annually in 2013 dollars – and the fellowship should be for five years. This would not tempt those who are already earning more than that, but entice younger scholars to take a break from their research to become public intellectuals. Conditions for recipients should include a monthly public engagement and at least four annual television or radio interviews, all free of charge. They may return to their positions or apply for another such grant. If $1 billion were set aside annually by the U.S. government (which is less than some aircrafts cost), this would allow 10,000 academics to become public intellectuals every year. Given the relatively modest lists we have looked at in the previous chapter, this would make a big numerical difference to our public discourse.

But, do we really want such changes to our public entertainment? Is the price worth it? What will we get in return? Will we be able to quantify, and measure, the activities of public intellectuals? Moreover, why not let the "marketplace of ideas," as Posner is fond of calling it, operate on its own? If the market wants more intellectuals, it will pay for them and attract more. If the public isn't interested in intellectual debates, it will change the channel or buy different media products. Why turn into a "Nanny State," where a paternalistic impulse suggests that we should impose more intellectual products on a reluctant public (Harsanyi 2007; Thaler and Sunstein 2008)? Isn't ignorance bliss, after all? Or as Oscar Wilde has Lady Bracknell offhandedly refer to the "Influence of a Permanent Income on Thought," shouldn't we worry about who pays and what the price is (Wilde 1990/1895)? If proper British breeding and wealth are the conditions for the transference of thought, then we might be quite cautious given their horrific imperialistic ambitions. So, who will be chosen as public intellectuals? Will they be predominantly from the so-called left (as many suggest)? Do we need to ensure that next to Cornel West, the African-American leftist theologian, we set Thomas Sowell, also an African-American but a conservative economist who favors the Hoover Institute at Stanford? Will that be a fair representation of public sentiments? Should public intellectuals become spokespeople of the population and its various constituencies? Should they be apologists

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or critics? Is their role to be gadflies and annoy the sluggish republic, or make it feel good about its choices?

Questions like these are bound to undermine even the few suggestions offered earlier. They all undermine the very idea, selfish for Socrates, more altruistic for Benda and Pels, that the state ought to pay for the services of public intellectuals. They also bring to mind Johnson's concern with public intellectuals as dangerous, deserving "public skepticism" rather than accolades or support (1988, 342). If they are indeed scoundrels whose personal lives are disgraceful and their predictions unreliable, why not shun them altogether? Besides, as we reconsider the problematic notion of speaking truth to power, we must consider what this activity accomplishes and in whose interest it's being practiced. Are we after fairness and justice or about revealing facts that people in power (politicians and captains of industry alike) may wish us not to know? Is there an inherent ethical dimension to the activities of public intellectuals even in the postmodern age? Some would argue that the elephant in every room is a moral ideal, while others shy away from appealing to universal moral principles. What about the public itself: Is it homogeneous or heterogeneous? Does the public have a uniform interest in knowing more rather than less? Can we whet the public appetite to listen to the critiques of public intellectuals? If yes, how can we do it most effectively? I hope some of the discussion in this book helps elucidate these issues.

The iconic legacy of the Indian Mahatma Gandhi and the American Martin Luther King, Jr. in terms of nonviolent civil disobedience resonate with us more that Niccolo Machiavelli's might makes right; why? Was it their personal courage as compared to Machiavelli's subservient position as an advisor to those in power? Did their personal example come close to Plato's philosopher-king? What about pastors, such as William Sloan Coffin, Jr., who railed against the immorality of the Vietnam War in theological terms, and lawyers, such as Clearance Darrow of the *Scopes Trial* (1925) and Don Barrett's crusade against tobacco giants? All of their crusades brought about some social change; all sacrificed on behalf of their communities; and all are remembered for their victories. What about the many who have for years fought injustice and failed miserably? What if an institutional support isn't available for one's battle-cry, for one's outrage against the power elites, as Mills called them?

We might find ourselves, as Fish claims, inadvertently and mysteriously joining the ranks of public intellectuals as guardians of some values if not the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Likewise,

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we might be more aware of Sartre's injunction that public intellectuals be the conscience of their age. Intellectual welfare should be promoted by any democratically inclined state, just like any other welfare program that helps individuals as part of the community as a whole, from education to defense. Shouldn't our collective intelligence be part of national security?

While political leaders bend to the pressures of their respective war cultures, while constituents remain disenfranchised from political decision-making, and while intellectuals remain beholden to citation indexes, "Rome" is burning! This Rome isn't a historical anecdote or an anomaly used to make a point, but instead can be found in our backyards. Our cultures are burning down, our values have vanished before our eyes, and as intellectuals we have the responsibility to bear witness and speak out. Although shunned by some popular media outlets, intellectuals should think of their education as a privilege paid for to some extent by the public, and should therefore seek opportunities to be responsible gadflies. Hopefully their contributions will be appreciated enough by an informed and thirsty public that would pay handily for these activities, as annoying as they may be perceived at times. If not now, when? And if not I, who then?

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Appendix: Lists of Public Intellectuals

Foreign Policy's list of 100 global thinkers of 2012

The list includes 126 names because at times there are multiple entries for a "position":

1) Aung San Suu Kyi (Member of parliament, Burma); 1) Thein Sein (President, Burma); 2) Moncef Marzouki (President, Tunisia); 3) Bill Clinton (Former president, New York); 3) Hillary Clinton (Former secretary of state, Washington); 4) Sebastian Thrun (Computer scientist, Palo Alto, Calif.); 5) Bill Gates (Co-chair, Gates Foundation, Seattle); 5) Melinda Gates (Co-chair, Gates Foundation, Seattle); 6) Malala Yousafzai (Student, Pakistan); 7) Barack Obama (President, Washington); 8) Paul Ryan (Congressman, Washington); 9) Chen Guangcheng (Legal activist, New York); 10) David Blankenhorn (Activist, New York); 10) Narayana Kocherlakota (Economist, Minneapolis); 10) Richard A. Muller (Physicist, Berkeley, Calif.); 11) James Hansen (Director, Goddard Institute for Space Studies, New York); 12) Angela Merkel (Chancellor, Germany); 13) Ehud Barak (Defense minister, Israel); 13) Benjamin Netanyahu (Prime minister, Israel); 14) Meir Dagan (Former Mossad director, Israel); 14) Yuval Diskin (Former Shin Bet chief, Israel); 15) Ben Bernanke (Chairman, Federal Reserve, Washington); 15) Scott Sumner (Economist, Waltham, Mass.); 16) Maria Alyokhina (Musician, Russia); 16) Yekaterina Samutsevich

(Musician, Russia); 16) Nadezhda Tolokonnikova (Musician, Russia); 17) Abraham Karem (Aeronautical engineer, Lake Forest, Calif.); 17) William Mcraven (Commander, U.S. Special Operations Command, Tampa, Fla.); 18) Ahlem Belhadj (President, Tunisian Association of Democratic Women, Tunisia); 19) Rima Dali (Activist, Syria); 19) Bassel Khartabil (Activist, Syria); 20) Mario Draghi (President, European Central Bank, Germany); 21) George Soros (Philanthropist, investor, New York); 22) Joyce Banda (President, Malawi); 23) Ed Morse (Economist, New York); 24) Thomas Piketty (Economist, France); 24) Emmanuel Saez (Economist, Berkeley, Calif.); 25) Nadim Matta (President, Rapid Results Institute, Stamford, Conn.); 26) Ai Weiwei (Artist, China); 27) Christine Lagarde (Managing director, International Monetary Fund); 28) Ahmet Davutoglu (Foreign minister, Turkey); 28) Recep Tayyip Erdogan (Prime minister, Turkey); 29) Willem Buiter (Economist, Britain); 30) Elon Musk (Entrepreneur, Los Angeles); 31) Marissa Mayer (President and CEO, Yahoo!, Silicon Valley, Calif.); 31) Sheryl Sandberg (COO, Facebook, Silicon Valley, Calif.); 32) Anne-Marie Slaughter (Political scientist, Princeton, N.J.); 33) Salman Rushdie (Writer, New York); 34) Paul Krugman (Economist, Princeton, N.J.); 35) Nouriel Roubini (Economist, New York); 36) Shai Reshef (Founder, University of the People, Pasadena, Calif.); 37) Daphne Koller (Computer scientist, Palo Alto, Calif.); 37) Andrew Ng (Computer scientist, Palo Alto, Calif.); 38) Dick Cheney (Former vice president, Washington); 38) Liz Cheney (Director of Keep America Safe, Washington); 39) Condolezza Rice (Former secretary of state, Palo Alto, Calif.); 40) Eugene Kaspersky (Computer security expert, Russia); 41) Sima Samar (Chair, Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, Afghanistan); 42) Debbie Bosanek (Administrative assistant, Omaha, Neb.); 42) Warren Buffett (Investor, Omaha, Neb.); 43) Charles Murray (Author, Burkittsville, Md.); 44) Andrew Marshall (Military futurist, Washington); 45) Alexey Navalny (Activist blogger, Russia); 46) Thomas Mann (Political scientist, Washington); 46) Norman Ornstein (Political scientist, Washington); 47) Mohammad Fahad-Qahtani (Activist, Saudi Arabia); 48) Abdulhadial Al-Khawaja (Activist, Bahrain); 48) Maryam Al-Khawaja (Activist, Bahrain); 48) Zainab Al-Khawaja (Activist, Bahrain); 48) Nabeel Rajab (Activist, Bahrain); 49) Haruki Murakami (Novelist, Japan); 50) Robert Kagan (Author, Washington); 51) Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (Finance minister, Nigeria); 52) Martin Feldstein (Economist, Cambridge, Mass.) 53) Mohamed El-Erian (CEO, Pimco,

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Newport Beach, Calif.); 54) Yu Jianrong (Director, Center for the Study of Social Problems, China); 55) Michael Sandel (Political philosopher, Cambridge, Mass.); 56) John Brennan (White House counterterrorism advisor, Washington); 57) Jameel Jaffer (Director, ACLU Center for Democracy, New York); 58) Bjorn Lomborg (Director, Copenhagen Consensus Center, Czech Republic); 59) Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani (Emir, Qatar); 60) Hew Strachan (Military historian, Britain); 61) Husain Haqqani (Former Pakistani official, Washington); 61) Farahnz Ispahani (Former Pakistani official, Washington);62) Esther Duflo (Economist, Cambridge, Mass.); 63) Kiyoshi Kurokawa (Doctor, Japan); 64) Daron Acemoglu (Economist, Cambridge, Mass.); 64) James Robinson (Political scientist, Cambridge, Mass.); 65) Paul Romer (Economist, New York); 66) Alexander MacGillivray (General counsel, Twitter, San Francisco); 67) Ruchir Sharma (Managing director, Morgan Stanley, New York); 68) Chinua Achebe (Author, Providence, Rhode Island); 69) Ma Jun (Environmentalist, China); 70) Yevgenia Chirikova (Environmentalist, Russia); 71) Rand Paul (Senator, Washington); 72) Sri Mulyani Indrawati (Managing director, World Bank, Washington); 73) Wang Jisi (Dean, School of International Studies, Peking University, China); 74) Raj Chetty (Economist, Cambridge, Mass.); 75) Asghar Farhadi (Filmmaker, Iran); 76) Adela Navarro Bello (Journalist, Mexico); 77) Nitish Kumar (Chief minister, Bihar, India); 78) Roger Dingledine (Founder, Tor Project, Walpole, Mass.); 78) Nick Mathewson (Founder, Tor Project, Walpole, Mass.); 78) Paul Syverson (Founder, Tor Project, Walpole, Mass.); 79) Eliot Cohen (Political scientist, Washington); 80) Raghuram Rajan (Economist, India); 81) Patrice Martin (Director, IDEO.org, San Francisco); 81) Jocelyn Wyatt (Director, IDEO.org, San Francisco); 82) Robert D. Kaplan (Chief geopolitical analyst, Stratfor, Stockbridge, Mass.); 83) Kai-Fu Lee (CEO and chairman, Innovation Works, China); 84) Beth Noveck (Law professor, New York); 85) Radoslaw Sikorski (Foreign minister, Poland); 86) Pankaj Mishra (Writer, Britain); 87) Tariq Ramadan (Scholar, Britain); 88) Jürgen Habermas (Philosopher, Germany); 89) Ricken Patel (Executive director, Avaaz, New York); 90) Vivek Wadhwa (Entrepreneur, Menlo Park, Calif.); 91) danah boyd (Social media researcher, New York); 92) Slavoj Žižek (Philosopher, Slovenia); 93) Martha Nussbaum (Law and ethics professor, Chicago); 94) John Coates (Neuroscientist, Britain); 95) Jonathan Zittrain (Law professor, Cambridge, Mass.); 96) Luigi Zingales (Economist, Chicago); 97) Viviane Reding (Vice president, European Commission, Belgium);

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98) Jonathan Haidt (Psychologist, New York); 99) Peter Beinart (Journalist, New York); 100) Sana Saleem (Blogger, Pakistan).

Prospect Magazine's list of "World Thinkers" of 2013

This list includes 67 names:

1) Richard Dawkins (Evolutionary biologist, Oxford); 2) Ashraf Ghani (Director, Afghan Transition Coordination Committee); 3) Steven Pinker (Cognitive scientist, Harvard); 4) Ali Allawi (Politician, Iraq); 5) Paul Krugman (Economist, Princeton); 6) Slavoj Žižek (Philosopher, Slovenia); 7) Amartya Sen (Economist, Harvard and Oxford); 8) Peter Higgs (Physicist, Edinburgh); 9) Mohamed ElBaradei (Politician, Egypt); 10) Daniel Kahneman (Psychologist, Israel); 11) Steven Weinberg (Physicist, U.S.); 12) Jared Diamond (Biologist, U.S.); 13) Oliver Sacks (Neurologist and author, UK); 14) Ai Weiwei (Artist, China and now U.S.); 15) Arundhati Roy (Writer); 16) Nate Silver (Statistician); 17) Asgar Farhadi (Filmmaker); 18) Ha-Joon Chang (Economist); 19) Martha Nussbaum (Philosopher); 20) Elon Musk (Businessman); 21) Michael Sandel (Philosopher); 22) Niall Ferguson (Historian); 23) Hans Rosling (Statistician); 24) Anne Applebaum (Journalist); 25) Craig Venter (Biologist); 26) Shinya Yamanaka (Biologist); 27) Jonathan Haidt (Psychologist); 28) George Soros (Philanthropist); 29) Francis Fukuyama (Political scientist); 30) James Robinson and Daron Acemoglu (Political scientist and economist); 31) Mario Draghi (Economist); 32) Ramachandra Guha (Historian); 33) Hilary Mantel (Novelist); 34) Sebastian Thrun (Computer scientist); 35) Zadie Smith (Novelist); 36) Hernando de Soto (Economist); 36) Raghuram Rajan (Economist); 38) James Hansen (Climate scientist); 39) Christine Lagarde (Economist); 40) Roberto Unger (Philosopher); 41) Moisés Naím (Political scientist); 42) David Grossman (Novelist); 43) Andrew Solomon (Writer); 44) Esther Duflo (Economist); 45) Eric Schmidt (Businessman); 46) Wang Hui (Political scientist); 47) Fernando Savater (Philosopher); 48) Alexei Navalny (Activist); 49) Katherine Boo (Journalist); 50) Anne-Marie Slaughter (Political scientist); 51) Paul Collier (Development economist); 52) Margaret Chan (Health policy expert); 53) Sheryl Sandberg (Businesswoman); 54) Chen Guangcheng (Activist); 55) Robert Shiller (Economist); 56) Ivan Krastev (Political scientist); 56) Nicholas Stern

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(Economist); 58) Theda Skocpol (Sociologist); 59) Carmen Reinhart (Economist); 59) Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (Economist); 61) Jeremy Grantham (Investment strategist); 62) Thomas Piketty and Emmanuel Saez (Economists); 63) Jessica Tuchman Mathews (Political scientist); 64) Robert Silvers (Editor); 65) Jean Pisani-Ferry (Economist).

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