Todorov's Otherness

Robert Wokler

WHILE KANT CLAIMED that his world had not yet witnessed a real age of enlightenment, critics of modernity who find that enlightenment has at last been attained regard it as just a false brilliant, not gold but pyrite, a lustrous yet sinister god that failed. The French Revolution, our iron cage of bureaucracy, totalitarian communism, and even the Holocaust have each been ascribed to the Enlightenment's insidious influence, shearing the crooked timbers of humanity with fresh principles drawn from pure reason and science. Skeptical postmodernists today continually decry the imperialist pretensions of a so-called Enlightenment Project, while political pluralists, nationalists, and religious zealots of all denominations find local and customary allegiances more stirring than cosmopolitan proclamations of the rights of man. In place of universal values, they promote contingency, uniqueness, and difference. Their sense of personal identity is marked by its intransitivity across cultures. They define themselves by their specific gravity, their contrast with otherness.

Perhaps more than any other social theorist in the world today, Tzvetan Todorov has in recent years made the multifarious categories of human diversity the central focus of his own philosophy. Like Edward Said in the United States, he inspects exotic cultures not only from the point of view of an outsider, but as an expatriate even among foreign observers, estranged from his own otherness. Like Anthony Pagden in England, he addresses this subject above all by way of European perceptions of worlds beyond Europe's frontiers, where explorers, conquerors, and missionaries have invoked moral taxonomies of race, empire, and religion to account for human disparities and to justify dominance. Among contemporary thinkers, in his command of both the history and philosophy of otherness, Todorov may be excelled only by Julia Kristeva and Sir Isaiah Berlin. With great aplomb he moves from the historiographical interpretation of texts to critical commentary on the current practice of anthropology. Like Claude Lévi-Strauss, he has tried to become a kind of astronomer among social scientists, gazing upon the objects of his research from a great distance. But even more than Lévi-Strauss he is attentive to the dilemmas of interpreting meanings from afar, of explaining beliefs he does not share, of capturing

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mythos through *logos*. No commentator today shows greater sensitivity to both the need for and the impossibility of treating otherness as an impartial spectator.

To my mind, most important of all has been Todorov's recognition that a commitment to an understanding of otherness lay at the heart of Enlightenment social philosophy and is not correctly described as a romantic response to the superficial rationalism of an allegedly predominant current of eighteenth-century European thought. As he has shown most particularly in his work, *La Réflexion française sur la diversité humaine* (On Human Diversity) (1989), our notions of exile and exoticism, of assimilation and disenchantment, were articulated or anticipated in the vast travel literature of the Enlightenment, both by circumnavigators of the world and by voyagers of the imagination, by fellow-travelers seduced by the mysteries of Persia or invigorated by the freshness of North America. From eighteenth-century writers such as Lahontan, Diderot, and Degérando, Todorov traces a fascination with otherness which lies at the heart of modern ethnology, while portraying as universalists not so much the *philosophes* of the mid-eighteenth century as the holistic philosophers of history who succeeded them—in France, most notably Condorcet, Saint-Simon, and Comte. For Montesquieu and Rousseau in particular he shows the utmost respect, preferring their richly textured conceptions of the varieties of otherness and our diverse ways of gazing upon it over the contorted objections of their critics, from Chateaubriand to Péguy.

Todorov's "Living Alone Together" complements his earlier reflections on the subject of otherness by way of a commentary on three of the most towering figures of Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment intellectual history—Rousseau, Smith, and Hegel—with particular reference to a seminal work by each author: for Rousseau, the *Discours sur l'inégalité* (Discourse on Inequality), for Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, for Hegel, the *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Phenomenology of Spirit). At the beginning of his essay, he puts forward two main propositions: first, that a recognition of the social dimension of human nature has been less characteristic of Western philosophy and psychology than have been various conceptions of human solitariness and the virtues of a contemplative life; and second, that ancient Greek notions of sympathy and sociality, including those of Plato and Aristotle, expressed a desire for companionship, or the attraction of like for like, rather than any affection for others different from oneself, whose origins Todorov traces to Rousseau's notion of *considération* in the *Discours sur l'inégalité*. At the end of his essay, he puts forward a case for the recognition of otherness within relationships that are more benign and more richly textured than Hegel's monotonous image of a struggle for power and prestige, whose

articulation in a variety of forms in Western philosophy Todorov finds as tiresome as the Hobbesian notion of a war of all against all.

To my mind, these propositions are at once profoundly misleading and at the same time compelling in their audacity and their genial warmth. Todorov's wholesale descriptions of the social uniformity espoused by ancient thinkers and the social antagonism deemed universal by their modern counterparts are no less monochrome and Procrustean than those doctrines themselves. His all too brief remarks on these broad themes do injustice to Plato, Aristotle, and Hegel alike, in failing to address their subtle and conflicting conceptions of the complementarity of classes, interests, or estates within a civil society; and they overlook as well the remarks upon human diversity and uniformity expressed by each of these authors, around which both Aristotle and Hegel framed some of their own major objections to Plato.

Neither is Todorov at all persuasive in portraying uniformity and antagonism as the two predominant axes of Western social philosophy, since there are further alternatives, quite apart from consideration of otherness, which could equally have claimed his attention. Why ignore the immense appeal among early modern political thinkers of Pufendorf's doctrine of *socialitas*, born out of need rather than love, which Kant would later term "unsocial sociability"? Why not mention ancient, medieval, or modern conceptions of cooperation, confraternity, or the division of labor, each giving rise to diverse notions of social recognition, civic harmony, or political hierarchy? What of the doctrines of *doux commerce*, which in the Enlightenment were to make competition and eventually capitalism seem so much more attractive to their adherents than primitive notions of spiritual or economic self-sufficiency? The theories of social relations which Todorov considers inadequate are too homogenous and too few in number to form a plausible background for the emergence of a fresh notion of a benign consideration of otherness, and in the scenario which he draws his praise of Rousseau and censure of Hegel are inspired by inaccurate assessments of the special significance of their contributions.

Todorov's injunction that we be drawn to others just on account of their difference from ourselves nevertheless embraces a captivating ethos of charity, curiosity, and humanity. It is not from our self-regarding preferences but out of our other-regarding interests, he supposes, that civilization ought properly to be formed. By virtue of his conception of the recognition of otherness the generous impulses which we are often counseled to restrain out of prudence can be let loose. This ideal of true enlightenment is stirred by a spirit of genuine magnanimity. Todorov envisages not only toleration of otherness but also engagement with it, such that even in the recognition of the impenetrability of other minds,

we find ourselves uplifted by our endeavor to enter into communion with them and enriched by our perception of their differences from us and their diversity among themselves. Acceptance of the transitivity of values across minds and cultures which must always remain disparate is perhaps the chief principle which Todorov draws from eighteenth-century philosophy. In that respect his is a salutary correction to the misbegotten caricatures of the Enlightenment Project prevalent among so-called postmodernist moral philosophers. As distinct from those who find that our fundamental differences render the idea of a community of mankind illusory, Todorov would have us recognize those differences as the foundation of a more variegated, but also deeper and more subtle, notion of community. It would have been better, however, for Todorov to make common cause with the Enlightenment in a quite different way, since his readings of Rousseau, Smith, and Hegel mistake the meaning of the passages he cites, misconstrue the relations between these three thinkers and misrepresent each of their philosophies as a whole.

In 1962, both in *Le Totémisme aujourd'hui* (Totemism) and in an essay which appeared in a commemorative collection simply entitled *Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, Lévi-Strauss contended that, by virtue of his remarkably modern perception of the passage from nature to culture, Rousseau had invented the human sciences. Todorov deems Rousseau equally revolutionary, holding him to be the first thinker to formulate a new concept of man as a being who needs others. But even if we grant the originality of Rousseau's approach to an understanding of human nature, and in particular the boldness of his argument in the *Discours sur l'inégalité*, it is difficult to lend much credence to such extravagant claims. In my view, Lévi-Strauss and Todorov are each too cursory in their treatment of a text they admire, too inattentive to many of its most remarkably innovative propositions about human nature, too reticent about the wide range of sources Rousseau consulted, imitated, or tried to surpass.

Their views about the significance of the radically new idea of human nature allegedly introduced by Rousseau in the *Discours sur l'inégalité* are, moreover, incompatible, since Lévi-Strauss envisages the passage from nature to culture as defining the essence of humanity in terms of its inner and outer limits, while Todorov perceives the same argument as one which places greatest emphasis on the recognition of human differences. Whereas Lévi-Strauss interprets Rousseau as offering a generic definition of human nature, marked by its fundamental transformation as it passes out of its original state, Todorov disaggregates and individuates the inhabitants of Rousseau's primeval world, identifying as crucial not mankind's wholesale metamorphosis from its original condition but rather the recognition of difference in primitive society. He

finds Rousseau captivating less for his illumination of the savage mind than for his grasp of the mutual consideration of others which his idea of sociability is alleged to have introduced.

Todorov's reading of the *Discours sur l'inégalité* and of Rousseau's perception of otherness there and elsewhere strikes me as highly confusing, mainly because of its manner of fragmenting arguments and perspectives in order to elicit such meanings as his interpretation superimposes upon them. In stressing the centrality of Rousseau's idea of sociability in the *Discours sur l'inégalité*, Todorov of course recognizes that Rousseau also subscribed earnestly to notions of solitude and self-sufficiency, which might appear to contradict his remarkable insight that man is a being who needs others. In his own lifetime, Rousseau's renown was indeed chiefly due to his personal and philosophical *unsociability*—his critique of civilization, his estrangement from society, his determination to avoid dependence, his love of botany, his reverie, his communion with Nature in preference to the company of other men. From the most conspicuous evidence of his life and works, the idea of *sociability* hardly seems the likeliest candidate for nomination to play the leading role in his philosophy.

Even with that not inconsiderable handicap, it might have been possible for Todorov to argue his case in the light of some of Rousseau's political writings, especially the *Contrat social* (The Social Contract), the *Lettre à d'Alembert* (Letter to d'Alembert), or the *Gouvernement de Pologne* (The Government of Poland). Rousseau's images of popular sovereignty and civic engagement, of political fraternity, public festivals, and the exercise of the general will, provide more promising illustrations of sociability than can be found in his *Discours sur l'inégalité*, perhaps the least civic and sociable of all the major works that bear the signature of a proud "citoyen de Genève." How Rousseau's notions of fraternity and solitude might be reconciled is one of the most central problems which has exercised his interpreters for more than two hundred years, but his main political writings do not come under Todorov's scrutiny here, conceivably because the social dimension that lies at the heart of most of them evokes images of an undifferentiated public sphere rather than one that takes account of otherness. The virtues of consolidation through collective self-rule, it would seem, are as unalloyed as is the sheer bliss of solitude. Uncharitable critics of Rousseau have even claimed that he passes from self-reliance to the rule of the general will without ever negotiating the complexities of difference.

If Rousseau's political writings would not have suited Todorov's purpose, neither would *Emile*. In some respects *Emile* might have seemed an ideal choice of text in which to situate the notion of sociability Todorov imputes to Rousseau, since he there portrays the attention that

comes to be shown to other persons as a centrally important element of a child's development, particularly when, at puberty, the stirring of a fresh need for otherness and the attribution of importance to sexual difference prompt adolescents to make themselves lovable in order that they might be loved themselves. But in *Emile* Rousseau develops such notions of sociability by pointing to the usefulness of children's *amour propre*, which they extrapolate to other beings only insofar as they perceive them as sharing their own cravings. There is in *Emile* no third sentiment of consideration lying half way between *amour de soi* and *amour propre*, such as Todorov describes as crucial to the argument of the *Discours sur l'inégalité*. *Amour propre* is not contrasted at all with *amour de soi* in *Emile*. Rousseau describes children as drawn to others through need and their own sense of pity as they mature, but in his study of the moral awakening and education of the individual he offers no account of the attractions of otherness for its own sake. The bond of marriage which consummates sex in love is portrayed less as respect for difference and otherness than as a symbiotic union with otherness which fulfills both partners in the formation of a single *personne morale*.

So how, then, does Todorov develop his thesis about the place of sociability in Rousseau's philosophy, particularly in the *Discours sur l'inégalité*? In this way. On the one hand, he disposes of the solitude to which Rousseau was drawn, by isolating it as an aspiration of his personal life alone, held to be contrary to a general rule that is prescribed in his works. On the other hand, he disposes of Rousseau's reflections on the essentially solitary condition of men and women in their original state, by reminding us that this condition, as depicted in the *Discours sur l'inégalité*, is a fiction, a hypothesis, which does not apply to the real humanity characteristic of our present state. Having thus disposed of two potentially troublesome features of the author's life and thought, Todorov then settles upon the passage of the *Discours sur l'inégalité* which he takes to be crucial, in which Rousseau describes the idea of *considération* that is introduced in primitive society, when persons come to gaze upon one another, to seek public esteem in each other's eyes, or, as Rousseau puts it in a later passage of the same text, when sociable man comes to live in the opinion of others. Here, at last, having negotiated a delicate path through treacherous channels, we find the linchpin of Todorov's interpretation of Rousseau.

But this reading of just a few selected passages of a text on the grounds that they above all else explain the essence of their author's meaning is no more persuasive than is their original isolation from the rest. In remarking upon the ways in which our forebears would have come to identify and consider one another in their most primitive societies, Rousseau does not append an account of mankind's real

existence to a purely speculative description of its remotest antiquity. His whole argument in the *Discours sur l'inégalité* is conjectural, at every stage based on abstraction from our present condition. The portrait he draws of incipient society, when savages would have come into close territorial proximity for the first time, perhaps on islands formed by volcanic eruptions, is thus no less a fiction than is his state of nature. Under such circumstances, Rousseau suggests, primitive men and women would have begun to identify and compare one another, whereas earlier, when still relatively scattered, they would have had no occasion to do so. Insofar as they would have come to place differential values upon each other through such comparisons, they would have begun to distribute public esteem unequally, and that above all must have been the way in which our natural differences must originally have become moral distinctions.

The passages from the second part of the *Discours sur l'inégalité* to which Todorov directs his readers' attention are indeed of crucial importance, not independently but because they illuminate the rest of the argument of a text from which he has extracted them. They point to the manner in which human nature might have come to be transfigured into human morality. Once our ancestors had begun to consider one another and to wish to be considered in turn, claims Rousseau, moral inequality would have been introduced, and with it the corruption of our species. The earliest evidence of our consideration of others, which Todorov takes to be central to Rousseau's philosophy, is described in the *Discours sur l'inégalité* as a fermentation that must have proved fatal to human innocence and happiness. Rousseau's reflections on the idea of sociability in this text are all directed *against* Pufendorf's concept of *socialitas*, or sociability, which he regarded as unnatural to mankind and as having generated our species' social history of the descent from innocence to vice; they do not embrace Pufendorf's idea or advance some alternative version of the same notion.

Contrary to both Pufendorf and Todorov, Rousseau denies that mankind is by nature sociable. Rather than having been implicit in our nature, the establishment of society had just been possible because of our uniquely human capacity to change and thereby make our exit from the state of nature. The first societies, he thought, had been created not by nature but by chance. It would have been far better for us all, he contends, if we had refrained from taking those dreadful steps which mark the advent of sociable man, who always lives outside himself, his very identity dependant on the consideration of others. Todorov's case would be much more convincing if, instead of concentrating upon the notion of *considération* in the *Discours sur l'inégalité*, he had addressed Rousseau's critique there of other philosophers, both for drawing

portraits of a state of nature whose limitations merely incorporated their understanding of civil society, and for mistakenly supposing that human nature must everywhere be the same.

The interpretation Todorov offers of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* is less fraught with such difficulties, if only because notions of sympathy for others and of a desire to please them and to gain their approbation do indeed comprise central ingredients of Smith's ethics. As often as not, Smith specifies the constituency of persons whose approbation we seek, rather than referring to "others" in general, but since he places even greater stress upon the human desire to merit praise than he does upon the desire to win it, Todorov is plainly right to note the importance of his conception of a purified sense of otherness, along lines not dissimilar to the account of a "generalized other" later adopted by George Herbert Mead. Smith's ideas of conscience and the impartial spectator were each conceived as setting a standard for the assessment of the character of moral agents and the motives for their actions, independently of their desire to please others, and the pains he took to refine such notions after the initial publication of his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* can be witnessed through many of the revisions of his work in its subsequent editions.

In stressing the consideration which others extend to us as a measure of our self-esteem, and in portraying a general notion of impartial otherness in assessing true character and merit, Todorov provides a welcome correction to accounts of Smith's moral philosophy which suppose that his attachment to natural liberty and his hostility to the political control of private initiative must have been underpinned by a philosophy of atomistic individualism. Smith had no patience for abstract notions of human nature and, as distinct from certain social contract theorists of his day, he subscribed to the view that it was social factors and social expectations which shaped the personality of individuals, and not individuals, calculating what they ought to do in a pre-political state of nature, who manufactured society. But in attempting to explain Smith's conception of otherness in his moral philosophy as a response to an idea he drew from Rousseau, Todorov puts forward a contextual account of Smith's meaning which is quite without foundation.

As Todorov himself remarks, there is no mention of Rousseau at all in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* and, bearing that vacuum in mind, the claim that Smith's account of the motivations of human action forms a response to Rousseau, if it is to carry conviction, needs to be far better supported with evidence than is supplied here. The absence of any specific reference to Rousseau, or indeed of any allusion to his writings in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, does not of itself render Todorov's interpretation of Smith's meaning absurd, and indeed his suggestion

that Smith managed to conflate Rousseau's ideas of *amour de soi* and *amour propre* offers a perceptive insight into a fundamental difference between the two thinkers. No Rousseauist distinction between *amour propre* and *amour de soi* is required in Smith's moral philosophy, since he believed that the partiality of persons which, like Rousseau, he took to be a fatal weakness that undermined cooperative endeavor, is naturally tempered, in a manner Rousseau did not believe had historically been the case, by individuals' acceptance of general rules of conduct concerning what is fit and proper. To have a sense of duty, which corrects the misrepresentations of self-love, according to Smith, requires no transfiguration of human nature, as it does for Rousseau, but rather stems from our experience, our perception of actions which are praised or blamed. A reading of Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* against the background of Rousseau's *Discours sur l'inégalité* may therefore have much to commend it, and it may even be the case, as other commentators have remarked before, that Smith had Rousseau's text in mind while drafting at least part of his work, notwithstanding his lack of any reference to it.

But the historical significance of the contrast between these two seminal contributions to eighteenth-century moral philosophy must not be exaggerated, since there is no good reason to suppose that even a single line of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* would have been rendered differently if Smith had never set eyes upon the *Discours sur l'inégalité.* Insofar as his remarks on self-love and duty form a commentary on the ideas of another thinker, they are mainly addressed not to any propositions of Rousseau but to the moral sense theory of Francis Hutcheson, whose lectures on the same subject in Edinburgh Smith had attended in the 1730s, before he took up his own chair of moral philosophy in Glasgow. Much of what would become the first edition of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* was drafted before Smith had ever heard of Rousseau, and none of his subsequent revisions turn upon matters his reading of Rousseau drew to his notice. As is plain, above all from the work's concluding part, Smith conceived his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* in large measure as a commentary on the doctrines of other moral philosophers, from Plato and Aristotle to Mandeville and Hutcheson. His greatest debt was to the Stoics, among ancient thinkers, and to Hume among the moderns, the ideas of Rousseau having played virtually no part in his intellectual formation.

Smith did indeed read the *Discours sur l'inégalité* very soon after its publication in 1755, and he commented upon it the following year in a letter to the *Edinburgh Review.* But he would have been at a loss to understand how Todorov could claim that his remarks were laudatory, or that he admired the work especially for its critique of Mandeville.

Smith interpreted Rousseau mainly as a *follower* of Mandeville, who had softened and improved upon the moral theory articulated in Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees*, particularly with reference to his idea of pity. Like Mandeville, according to Smith, Rousseau supposed that mankind had no appetite for society—a proposition Smith regarded as false in each of their formulations, in Mandeville's case because it led to the portrayal of society as established solely out of the vice of vanity to correct the misery of our natural state, in Rousseau's case because it idealized the rustic indolence of savage life. Smith was impressed by Rousseau's eloquent style, but not by the substance of any of his arguments. Since he judged the *Discours sur l'inégalité* to be a work of rhetoric, he suggested that no good purpose would be served by his offering an analysis of the text, instead presenting his readers with a few specimen translations, so that they might judge Rousseau's eloquence for themselves. Contrary to Todorov's contention, Smith never saw Rousseau as an ally in his own opposition to asocial theories, nor should he have done so, since he plainly interpreted Rousseau's work, quite in the spirit in which it had been composed, as a critique not of Mandeville but of society.

As distinct from his reading of both Rousseau and Smith, Todorov finds Hegel's conception of otherness defective, unappealing, and in need of revision. With the first major philosopher of the post-Enlightenment world, no owl of Minerva but only dusk would appear to have settled around the doctrines of benign sociability bequeathed by the eighteenth-century's preeminent thinkers. Through a commentary on Hegel's dialectic of the master and slave in the *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, he portrays a theory of the recognition of otherness as a life and death struggle which he describes as only a particular aspect of the human condition, and one, moreover, whose fractiousness we should endeavor to overcome.

With Hegel, as with Smith, we are offered an interpretation of a work which is held to be a commentary on Rousseau's *Discours sur l'inégalité* that transforms its argument in fresh directions, similarly without once referring to that text, nor to Rousseau himself or to Smith, as Todorov again remarks. But this juxtaposition of Hegel with Rousseau involves a fresh problem, in that it is twice removed from its original subject, since Todorov reads the master-slave dialectic through the prism of another interpretation, that of Alexandre Kojève in his *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel* (Introduction to the Reading of Hegel). As Todorov renders Kojève's rendering of Hegel, the crucial feature of this dialectic is the fact that the recognition which is sought by both master and slave can only be won by the imposition of each agent's will over the other, that is, through combat for pure prestige, in effect a struggle for power. Kojève's reading of the Hegelian account of the master-slave relation-

ship is deemed to parallel Rousseau's anthropological conjectures in the *Discours sur l'inégalité*, insofar as both Hegel and Rousseau appear to be describing the origins of human history by way of conflict and antagonism. Yet whereas Smith had attempted to develop an idea of sociability which conflated Rousseau's *amour propre* and *amour de soi*, Hegel, on the other hand, is portrayed as simply having failed to distinguish between these two notions of self-love. In turning his attention to a struggle for prestige which of necessity excludes any element of mutual recognition, he just forgot *amour de soi* altogether, leaving human history shaped, to its detriment, by each person's exercise of *amour propre* alone. This sense of insuperable tension at the heart of the master-slave dialectic yields an unsatisfactory image of the ways in which individuals seek the recognition of others, according to Todorov, since the true origin of our species lies, not in the struggle of adversaries, but in the bonds of love between man and woman, and even more particularly between parent and child, which involve the establishment of identities out of the solicitation of needs, above all of a child for its mother's affectionate gaze or regard.

Leaving aside the fact that Kojève's own manner of regarding Hegel may not have identified his meaning correctly, the main problem with Todorov's account of the master-slave dialectic is its misrepresentation of Kojève, and that in more ways than one. For Kojève, as well as more particularly for Hegel, the principal reason that the relation between master and slave leads inescapably to struggle is that it is impossible for a bond of subservience and command to give rise to respect. The mutual bondage of master and slave together—the slave dependant on his master's will, the master dependant on an inferior's labor—precludes mutual esteem, which can only be accorded between persons who are each truly human, which necessitates their respect for one another as equals, which in turn requires that both be free. Hegel's essential point about the relation between master and slave is not held to be that desire for recognition always engenders struggle but that wherever there is domination and subjection there can be no recognition. It is neither Hegel nor Kojève who makes an exorbitant claim with regard to the universality of rivalry but Todorov himself in imputing such a thesis to both men.

The reason that Hegel and Kojève are exempt from Todorov's charge is to my mind apparent from the dialectical character of the master-slave relation, which he overlooks. For in the light of the interpretation he deems to be brilliant, that relation contains within itself the seeds of its own transcendence, not by way of the master who can never obtain from his slave the recognition he seeks, but from the slave who through his labor can achieve a sense of self-respect denied to him by his master. In acquiring a power over nature, by transforming it on behalf of his

master, the slave comes to transform himself, thereby freeing himself from the tyranny of his own subjection, through his own self-realization ceasing to be a slave. The liberty of the master, on the other hand, always remains defective, since, by virtue of his being master, he can neither win nor be satisfied by his slave's esteem. Once liberated from his bondage, the slave does not seek to acquire his own slave. He recognizes others as his equals and accords them the respect which had been denied to him on account of his lack of freedom. How exactly slaves win their freedom from their masters in this way is not as clear in either Hegel or Kojève as it might be, and it has been remarked before that in slave societies masters may extend to other masters—at least those with whom they are not in conflict—the respect they cannot win from their slaves. But from the master-slave dialectic of the *Phänomenologie* there is no reason to regard Hegel as having been committed to the view that the desire for recognition must always lead to struggle.

If instead of speculating on an alternative notion of recognition around the relation between parent and child, Todorov had considered the treatment of this very subject in Hegel's *Philosophie des Rechts* (Philosophy of Right), he might have come to a more favorable judgment of the Hegelian conception of otherness. For in remarking upon the family in that work, Hegel is adamant that the relation between parent and child is wholly different in character from that of master and slave, and he condemns Roman law for having obscured the distinction. Such punishment as is rightly inflicted upon children is not designed to serve the interests of their parents, or even of justice, he argues, but to provide a form of discipline which is meant to render the children themselves more moral in curtailing their abuse of freedom in such a way that, as they mature, they will come to exercise that discipline upon themselves, that is, in learning self-restraint. In his account of the education of children, in particular, Hegel stresses the importance of meeting children's needs, rather than the requirements of their parents or of society, thus assisting them to overcome their own dissatisfaction with themselves, to fulfill their longing to grow up, to engage their potential freedom so that, when they come of age, they will be capable of managing their own destinies as husbands and wives, bearing responsibility for the enlightenment of their own children. No one could mistake Hegel's theory of education for Rousseau's, and minders of children in nurseries might well regard the toleration of infants' capriciousness, which Rousseau recommends, as less taxing, at least to themselves, than Hegel's promotion of discipline and cultivation of character. But though couched in a different language, the attentiveness of parents to their children which Hegel prescribes is no less motivated by concern for children's needs and for the blossoming of their freedom

than are the ministrations of Rousseau's ideal tutor. In life, if not in theory, at any rate, Hegel was much the better father.

While we know that it is impossible for us to enter other minds, we are not thereby freed from attempting to provide plausible interpretations of texts whose meaning we seek to convey. In construing the real sense or significance of authors whose original intentions it will always be beyond our powers to recover, we remain subject to the critical judgment of reflective readers, who are independently familiar with the works we address and will only be persuaded by what they take to be fresh light that is shed upon the character of old acquaintances. For all the rich attractions of his own, profoundly learned, respect for otherness, Todorov does not in this essay carry my conviction, because I too often find myself distracted by the peculiar opacity of his lens rather than feel drawn to gaze through it to the texts he sets out to illuminate.

Rousseau, Smith, and Hegel may indeed be compared closely with one another and contrasted from each other in significant ways which shed light upon their meaning, however scanty were Smith's references to Rousseau or Hegel's comments on either Smith or Rousseau. They are three of the most towering figures in European intellectual history of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and to confront their respective moral philosophies and the differences between them is to put a finger upon a central key to an understanding of the Enlightenment and modernity. But turning that key requires, to my mind, an assessment of long-established readings which are largely neglected here—of Rousseau as the Enlightenment's fiercest critic of modern society, wedded to nature and to ancient liberty; of Smith as the Enlightenment's stoutest defender of commercial society and of the moral refinements of civilization; of Hegel as the principal advocate of the modern state, in which both ancient liberty and commercial society could be at once embraced and transcended by a greater good. Todorov's vision of a world in which otherness promotes respect rather than rivalry seems profoundly attractive. But while I should like to follow him on his journey and would encourage others of good will to join as well, I would urge him to select a different route.

UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER