Knowledge as ideology: Lycée philosophy classes and the category of the intellectual
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"Tout ce que nous voyons cache quelque chose d'autre : nous voyons toujours voir ce qui est caché."
[Each thing we see hides something else we'd rather see.]
—René Magritte

"Un intellectuel, c'est quelqu'un qui entend le mot 'pipe' et pense à Magritte."
[An intellectual is someone who hears the word 'pipe' and thinks of Magritte.]
— Alan Patrick Hebert

Introduction

The argument of this paper will be that the category of "the intellectual" becomes problematic, for

social analysis, in light of a serious theorization of ideologies of knowledge (that is, "knowledge

ideologies" or "epistemic ideologies"). At least since the 1980s, the term has appeared in a scattering

of places,[1] but has never received adequate theoretical elaboration. I will thus begin by offering some

guiding theses on ideologies of knowledge, in lieu of a more detailed examination which will have to

wait for another occasion. I will then consider an empirical case, that of the French institution of

teaching philosophy in lycées, that offers an exemplary study in this domain. Finally, in light of this

case, I will come back to reconsider "the intellectual" as an analytic category, arguing that we are not,

unfortunately, in a position to discard "the intellectual" altogether, since its underlying epistemic

ideology continues to shape our practice and, arguably, furnishes the continuing conditions of

possibility for social research.

Ideologies of Knowledge

Since the early 1990s, an extensive body of research on "language ideologies" has emerged in

linguistic anthropology (Woolard and Schieffelin 1994, Schieffelin, Woolard and Kroskrity 1998; cf.

Keane's concept of "semiotic ideologies" [2003:419]). At its most basic, the idea is simply that

language is not only a medium but also an object of ideological processes: there are ideologies *about*

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[1] For instance, "knowledge ideology" and various cognates appear in Boyer 2003:540, Fleischman 1998:987, Guyer 1998:220 quoting Marglin, Fox and Feld 1994:35, Chicago Cultural Studies Group 1992:552, Markley 1991:344, Luttrell 1989:34, Tompkins 1987:170, and Beehler 1987:88. (JSTOR facilitates such searches.)

language, its nature and its use, and these ideologies structure communicative practice as well as social life more broadly.

Knowledge, it seems to me, is a similarly ideologized phenomenon. This may, at first glance, be a disconcerting claim, since knowledge and ideology are typically conceptualized as two radically different epistemic species. At the extreme, they are cast as purely opposed types: if knowledge would be seen as essentially true (the view of many philosophers), ideology would seen as intrinsically false (as in simplistic Marxist critiques of bourgeois worldviews). At the other extreme, they are collapsed into each other, such that all knowledge is reduced to ideology (seldom the other way around).[2] And of course, if one could survey the contorted set of academic fields that have concerned themselves with these questions – everything from Anglo-American philosophical epistemology,[3] to science studies and history and philosophy of science,[4] to sociology of knowledge,[5] to anthropological studies of cultural logics,[6] to structuralist and post-structuralist critiques of 'the subject',[7] to cite only a few examples from the post-war period – then, depending on context, the two terms would align according to a host of other distinctions. Studies of ideology, for instance, tend to be associated with historical and social inquiry, while studies of knowledge have frequently become purely conceptual or cognitivist inquiries. From these research traditions we might distill two overarching theoretical questions. Analyses of ideology have forced us above all to ask: what is the relation between knowledge and its *context*, in particular its social context? Studies of knowledge,

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[2] Jonathan Culler makes such a move: "Reading and understanding preserve or reproduce a content or meaning, maintain its identity, while misunderstanding and misreading distort it; they produce or introduce a difference. But one can argue that in fact the transformation or modification of meaning that characterizes misunderstanding is also at work in what we call understanding... We can thus say, in a formulation more valid than its converse, that *understanding is a special case of misunderstanding*" (1982:176, my emphasis). Terry Eagleton, on the other hand, makes the more surprising gesture in the opposite direction, towards ascribing genuine knowledge of the world to even seemingly false ideologies, remarking that "simply on the basis of the persistence and durability of such doctrines, we can generally assume that they encode, in however mystified a way, genuine needs and desires" (1991:12).

[3] Goldman, Gettier, Sosa, Lewis

[4] Popper, Kuhn, Latour, Knorr-Cetina

[5] Starting with Mannheim but diverging through Bourdieu, Randall Collins, Gouldner

[6] Mary Douglas, Marilyn Strathern

[7] Levi-Strauss, Althusser, perhaps Lacan, Derrida's Of Grammatology, Foucault, perhaps Deleuze

on the other hand, have long posed the complementary question: what is the relation between knowledge and its *object*?

The trick is not to unduly privilege one of these questions over the other, and so I want to advance a particular view of the relation between knowledge and ideology, and more broadly between knowledge, object, and context, that perhaps differs from some other such views in circulation among scholars. For instance, I do not advocate a generic Foucauldian claim that 'knowledge' is inextricable from a regime of power, where power is taken as a pervasive, if heterogeneous, feature of social life.[8] Nor do I wish to subscribe directly to a "perspectival" theory of knowledge, whose roots run from Lukacs and Mannheim through to more recent feminist "standpoint epistemologies" and to Bourdieu's field theory, and which amount to a more or less direct mapping between knowledge and social position (whether this is construed in terms of class, gender, or some other cultural status). Both of these options seem to me, when asserted in general, to offer too deterministic, too rigid a view of the relation between knowledge and the social order. It is not just that this relation assumes many different forms; the problem is also that there can be greater or lesser degrees of *autonomy* between social and epistemic orders. This issue is easily muddled by a theoretical failure to distinguish the general from the particular: of course, human knowledge *in general* could not exist without human social interaction *in general*, but does this mean that a particular form of knowledge is necessarily inseparable from its particular social context of emergence? In this light, what are we to make of, say, Foucault's claim that "We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth" (1980:93)? Graff has cogently argued that Foucault slips between a strong claim that any knowledge form is inseparable from a given social form, and a weaker claim that "though truth and knowledge may always be institutionally *constituted,* they are not institutionally *specific*" (1984:501). In

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[8] Foucault (1972; cf. 1977, 1980, 1990) has much to offer sociology of knowledge, but it is not my intention here to survey these contributions in any detail (cf. Kennedy 1979, Shiner 1982, Goldstein 1984, Peters 2003).

this latter view, there is what I view as a necessary acknowledgement that knowledge is (at least sometimes) recontextualizable, transposable, in short *portable* and exchangeable to some degree across social and cultural structures and boundaries.

And the deeper issue raised by the question of portability is the general problem of epistemic *form*. If one could rightly complain that Marxian and Bourdieuian approaches to knowledge often do not attend sufficiently to the specificity of knowledge forms (a complaint that Boyer [2005], for instance, answers by supplementing a sociological approach with a detailed tropological analysis), then such a critique could not be made against Foucault, whose *Archaeology of Knowledge* portrays a vast panorama of historically specific forms of knowledge. Yet an inescapable difficulty with Foucault, setting aside the validity of individual formulations like the one mentioned above, is the general rejection of ontology and epistemology in the name of genealogy and a critique of 'the subject.' Foucault is right, of course, to historicize ontological claims (this is his genealogical project; cf. Peters 2003) and to critique the 'subject' (especially the Cartesian subject presumed to be a transcendent individual knower). But the validity of these critiques do not mean that we are free of all general questions about the nature of knowledge and the world. In fact, even the assertion that all forms of knowledge are entirely historically specific (or, for that matter, fully perspectivally limited) tends to become self-refuting, by making precisely the kind of universal claim about knowledge it purports to critique. In hopes, then, of proposing an approach to knowledge that avoids some of these pitfalls, I would like to propose a detour through some traditional epistemological questions (whose absence in anthropology Wilson [2004] has recently lamented) that will lead us to a theory of epistemic ideology. For purposes of this essay, I will not be attempting a literature review in anthropology of knowledge (Crick 1982); rather, I will try to bring out my position through a (perhaps rather contrived) critique of a central tradition in philosophical epistemology.

What is knowledge? The time-worn and widely criticized philosophical definition is "justified true belief" (Gettier 1966, Goldman 1967, Lewis 1996); for anthropological purposes it suffers from three major problems centered especially around the term "belief." First, the definition reduces knowledge to *propositional* knowledge, "knowing-that," thus occluding other knowledge types like practical "know-how" (knowledge embodied in routinized dispositions), affective states (knowledge embodied in emotion and sentiment), and phenomenological acquaintance (conferred, for instance, by sensory experience or artistic representation). Second, insofar as "belief" is construed as a mental state of the individual, we are beckoned towards an egocentric rather than sociocentric theory of knowledge (Silverstein 2004:622). A long tradition in philosophy of conceptualizing mental states as fundamentally private and individual, rather than public and social, tends to inhibit us from examining the way that knowledge is semiotically structured. Third, since a belief is an isolated, singular entity, we are led to think of knowledge as an unordered aggregate of isolated epistemic pieces (propositions) instead of as a coordinated, though not necessarily total epistemic system.

Of course, anthropologists have scarcely been in the habit of taking this traditional definition as a starting point for research. Even many philosophers no longer accept it. But I suspect that, confronted with it, many anthropologists would be inclined to tinker with the notion of "belief" while rejecting the qualifications "true" and "justified." After all, it is easy to give a sociocentric gloss to "belief," adapting it to a collective "worldview" or "ideological formation" (Kearney 1975, Mannheim and Hill 1994) — and easy, too, to reject truth and justification as the baggage of an ethnographically inhibiting Western rationalism. (Wilson [2004:14] claims that Barth [2002:2] makes such a rejection, though I am not sure this is a fair reading.) It seems to me, however, that we do better to reject "belief," as explained above, and to retain the latter terms, though they do need a bit of explanation. Truth need not be understood narrowly as transparent correspondence between a linguistic proposition and physical reality, but simply as a term for the relation between knowledge

and world — without specifying the exact nature of the relation or which emergent dimension of the world is in question.[9] After all, there are social and psychological and physical worlds, and multiple possible truthful relations between the world and the epistemic order (itself part of the world, of course). As we can learn from art and literary critics (e.g., Berger 1974, Barthes 1986, Shaw 1999), "realism" takes many forms. Cubism has its truth (based on diagrammaticity, Berger has argued) no less than photographic verisimilitude, and for that matter, as Heilbroner (1980) has observed, both positivist and dialectical approaches to social science have their epistemological merits. We could thus adopt a pluralistic view of truth, as a polymorphous attribute of many possible epistemic relations. As the philosopher Joseph A. Leighton once wrote in an open-ended, relational vein, "truth is mind organizing itself by grasping the interrelationships of things" (1914:23). But this pluralistic realism, I would emphasize, is quite different from an agnostic cultural relativism which brackets questions of truth altogether, and even more different from an outright opposition to epistemology as such (the likes of which one might detect, for instance, in Foucault's insistence on seeing truth as the child of power relations, and never vice versa).[10]

As for "justification," this is the term that I would reformulate as "epistemic ideology." The epistemological literature has often treated modes of justification as universal and transcontextually valid, dividing them into categories such as perception, memory, consciousness, reason, and testimony (e.g., Steup 2005, Audi 2003). Of course, the human capacity for knowledge is in part grounded in our universally shared cognitive capacities. But this philosophical list is apt to mislead us about the social ontology of knowledge formation, insofar as it seems to propose "testimony" as our only "social" source of knowledge, in opposition to our other more "individual" mental faculties.

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[9] The argument in this essay is meant to be compatible with a critical realist ontology (Steinmetz 1998).

[10] A constant danger for semiotics and hence for linguistic anthropology too is to retreat into a semiotic idealism (Freundlieb 1988), bracketing the question of what, exactly, is the causal relation between semiosis and its nonsemiotic referents. The tendency to focus on "acts of reference" over "referents" can if anything further obscure this question (for a partial clarification on the topic, see Silverstein 2005:10-12).

Now, of course, scholars from the likes of anthropology, sociology, and science studies have long been aware that our epistemic faculties are all socially and historically formed, even perception and reason. Our shared cognitive potential can only ever realize itself in socially *specific* fashions, according to socially specific forms of justification; there are, we find, no universal *a priori* epistemic norms (Blum 1999). Let me note in passing that some knowledges are more parochial than others; the context specificity of knowledge is an empirical question, and it is misleading to assume a narrow context-dependency, as standpoint epistemologists are wont to do. But the central point here is that when it comes to making knowledge in a given social situation, this knowledge-making is not merely passively guided by local epistemic norms. Rather, knowledge-making is mediated by *active ideologies of knowledge*, the focus of explicit and implicit ideological labor.

What is the nature of these ideologies of knowlege? Barth has advocated studying the "criteria of *validity* that govern knowledge in any particular tradition," and he suggests that these criteria arise from local social organization as well as "conventions of representation" and "constraints that arise from the properties of the medium" (2002:3). What Barth does not consider is that criteria of epistemic validity are not only externally determined by circumstance, but are also internally determined by developed ideological formations specifically devoted to regimenting knowledge. These ideological formations are, of course, themselves the products of more or less developed "epistemic cultures" (Knorr 1999), specialized, "expert" interventions, and so on. In other words, knowledge ideologies are always at some level "processes of struggle, rather than achieved conditions" (Verdery 1991:11) — though this does not prevent epistemic norms from being relatively stable in relation to many of their contexts of use.[11]

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[11] This socially, historically specific approach to knowledge is an idea that one gets from science studies, but we have to reject the oft-accompanying tendency to reduce knowledge in general to Western scientific knowledge — as when Knorr (1999) writes as if most cultures are *not* "epistemic cultures," or Fuller (2002 [1988]) treats the social dimension of epistemology as reducible to the governance of scientific research. Foucault, again, offers a model for a historicized approach to knowledge, but where he analytically transmutes knowledge into Power/Knowledge, I would try to see instead an image of one knowledge *structuring* others.

Three other basic points should come out here. First of all, knowledge ideologies encompass not only local norms of inquiry and justification, but also local *ontologies* of knowledge and of the social order. One might say: knowledge ideology involves constitutive as well as regulative norms, description as well as prescription. Second, though local knowledge is always regimented and "justified" by local epistemic ideology, such ideologies are generally distinct from the knowledge they regiment. And third, knowledge ideology is not the sole province of academic epistemologists; but rather is a central element of practice in general. Although a hasty reading of Bourdieu (1977) might suggest that practice is primarily constrained by habits of the body, the habitus has always an epistemological dimension (not, of course, usually labeled as such).

According to the theory of knowledge thus advocated, knowledge is defined as the semiotic premise and product of interaction with the world, justified and regimented according to some sociohistorically specific epistemic ideology. All knowledge is semiotic, in this definition, insofar as it assumes some type of meaningful (or functional, conceptual) form or pattern in relation to some object (cf. Peirce 1955).[12] And all knowledge is "ideological," according to this definition; yet not *intrinsically* so, but only insofar as its production is unavoidably mediated by ideological processes. Ideology, here, should be construed as a *socially efficacious knowledge formation*, itself both an epistemic process and an epistemic product. Here, ideology is not the antithesis of knowledge but the way in which knowledge is socially organized and regimented. Knowledge and ideology thus have their truth, but also their falsehood; when it is the world that is contradictory and polymorphic, then a true knowledge of the world will also be contradictory. Thus the reason, in my view, for speaking of 'epistemic ideology' instead of Knorr's (1999) 'epistemic culture' is that (as other scholars have pointed out, e.g. Barth 2002,) 'culture' lacks the associations with authority, politicization, and concealment that 'ideology' tends to evoke.

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[12] To avoid foreclosing particular knowledge forms, I want to leave this definition as open as possible. I am inspired here by Boyer's working definition of knowledge as "habituated semiotic order" (2003:512n1).

Let me make some conceptual clarifications. First of all, this theory of knowledge ideology is premised on a theory of nested, relational epistemic orders (the theoretical analog in linguistic anthropology is the nested indexical order, Silverstein 2003). After all, a knowledge ideology must itself be known; it is, to be precise, a form of *meta-knowledge*, or knowledge *about* knowledge. Nothing prevents this kind of ideologization from varying within an epistemic order.[13] But at any rate, the point is that, *in order to know, one must first know how to know*; one domain of knowledge presupposes others, and these presupposed other knowledges are necessarily prior to any particular act of knowing. That is, I want to assert something like the Durkheimian priority of the social, against individualist epistemologies in which knowledge is personally constructed "from the bottom up," starting with sense perception or innate grammar or the like.

Second, one of the functions of a theory of epistemic ideologies is to articulate the relationship between epistemic *statics* and *dynamics* — that is, roughly, the relation between knowledge as an object and knowing as an activity. Barth has proposed that knowledge comes *before and after* action: beforehand as action's premise, afterwards as its product (2002:1; cf. Sewell 1992). This is a useful analytic, but only in cases of relatively non-cognitive action on the basis of relatively objectified knowledge. It elides the fact that knowing itself is an activity, sometimes a very lively one. And it is epistemic ideology, I would propose, which governs the relation of knowing to knowledge — which determines how knowledge can be objectified or, conversely, practically appropriated.

Third, an essential component of any epistemic ideology, in good dialectical fashion, is to define the opposite of knowledge: to define ignorance and error and falsehood, and to set limits (tacitly or explicitly) on inquiry and action. In order to know, one must also learn what *not* to know, what isn't the case or can't be known. As Weiner has pointed out, "along with what we learn as a

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[13] In Latour and Woolgar's famous study of microbiology labs, for instance, bench work and paper-writing are governed by different epistemic ideologies, even though the knowledge produced by benchwork furnishes the material for subsequent paper-writing (1986[1979]).

corpus of propositions we also absorb the *techniques of nescience* that configure the limits of that corpus and its vehicles of representation" (2002:15). And as we have learned from Bourdieu and others (1991; cf. Boyer 2003, Fuller 2002, Foucault 1980), knowledge-making always entails various forms of censorship, both covert and overt. Indeed, all knowledge entails ignorance in the sense that, given the practical limits of life, no individual — or collectivity — can learn everything, and thus must opt to specialize; knowledge too has its opportunity costs, and specialization is not reserved for licensed specialists. At this abstract level, knowledge always obscures as much as it reveals (cf. Culler 1982) — as in Magritte's remark with which I began, "tout ce que nous voyons cache quelque chose d'autre." And sometimes, moreover, power resides in this obscurity, in what is obscured or ignored rather than known (Graeber 2006) — though this obscurity is always defined in relation to the epistemic order.

Finally, I want to observe that knowledge often relates to *possible* worlds, not only to the actual world. Don Brenneis has argued that culture works in part by constructing an elaborate *noetic space*, an "imaginative space teeming with alternatives to the actual" (n.d.:3, quoting Amsterdam and Bruner 2000; cf. Brenneis 2005). This space is, of course, an *epistemic* medium, since imagination is an essentially epistemic activity – the faculty that produces knowledge of possibilities, we might say. In fact, we might reinterpret the notion of "false ideology" as knowledge of a possible world that is *substituted* and unconsciously *mistaken* for the actual world. We might observe here, also, that fantasy and desire, those social institutions and mental operations so tightly entangled in our relations with non-actual possibilities, become highly relevant analytic categories for knowledge production. Freud argued long ago that the pursuit of knowledge had a deeply libidinal origin (1989 [1930]), and Zizek (1989) has more recently insisted that *ideological fantasy* is central to the workings of capitalism. Knowledge, thus, involves fantasies of the possible as much as a priori certainties about the actual state of affairs.

In this light, then, what is the point of a theory of knowledge ideologies? It may be useful, for one thing, as a synthesizing concept for a number of related questions in sociology and anthropology of knowledge. On the one hand, there are epistemological and even ontological questions — what is the relation between knowledge and its object, or even between knowledge and the real? On the other hand, there are sociological questions about the relationship between knowledge, individuals and social groups, legitimation and authority, and social and political orders more generally. And then there are a number of boundary issues between the epistemological and the sociological: topics like learning and teaching, secrecy and censorship, the socially governed semiotics of knowledge and the social organization of inquiry. The concept of knowledge ideology draws these together, by insisting that knowledge-making, that is the ongoing reconstitution of a socially situated relation between semiosis and objects in the world, is inevitably mediated by ideologies *about* that very knowledge. Naturally, there have been many other efforts to theorize along these lines: we might look to Annelise Riles's studies of the "aesthetics" of knowledge-making (2000, cf. Strathern 1991), or Foucault's studies of "games of truth" (Peters 2003), or semioticians' examinations of documents (Hull 2003) or of myths and mythologies (Barthes 1972). But all too often truth and the real are nowhere to be found in these ways of studying knowledge; knowledge ideology — a term that still strikes me as paradoxical — is a term that aims to remind us that ideologically mediated knowledge is still *knowledge*. Having said all this by way of introduction, let us turn to the French lycée philosophy class, an apt test case.

French philosophy through the eyes of the intellectual bureaucracy
I confess I was surprised when I first learned that philosophy was taught in French lycées — the subject is certainly not taught in U.S. high schools. It turns out that philosophy has been a required course almost continuously since the days of the First Empire in the early 19th century. Today,

general pedagogical guidelines are provided by the national Ministry of Education, though the exact details of implementation are left up to the professor. It is taught between 3 and 8 hours a week in the general (i.e., non-technical) lycées, examining ancient, medieval, modern, and contemporary philosophical texts in terms of five organizing themes: "the subject," "culture," "reason and the real," "politics," and "morals" (Gaudemar 2003). Here, in lieu of an actual ethnographic examination of these courses, I aim to consider the knowledge ideologies articulated in the official documents: the national syllabus for philosophy classes (the *Programme de philosophie en classe terminale des séries générales*, Gaudemar 2003), a report by the Inspector General about the national exam (the *agrégation*) that selects lycée philosophy teachers (*Mission d'information et de réfléxion sur l'agrégation de philosophie*, Pessel 2001), and a recent summary article published in the Ministry's in-house journal ("L'enseignement scolaire de la philosophie en France," Sherringham 2006). Needless to say, such a textual analysis is limited, since it cannot consider either the documents' contexts of production or the inevitable deviance between the official prescriptions and actual classroom practice. Yet, as we will see, there is much to examine in these documents about the intertwining of knowledge, personhood, language, social hierarchy, educational structure and national essence.

Dialectics of philosophy as a discipline

The lycée philosophy class, we are told, has a double objective: to introduce students to philosophy, but also to improve their minds and characters. It is worth quoting the first sentences in full:

> L'enseignement de la philosophie en classes terminales a pour objectif de favoriser l'accès de chaque élève à l'exercice réfléchi du jugement, et de lui offrir une culture philosophique initiale. Ces deux finalités sont substantiellement unies. Une culture n'est proprement philosophique que dans la mesure où elle se trouve constamment investie dans la position des problèmes et dans l'essai méthodique de leurs formulations et de leurs solutions possibles ; l'exercice du jugement n'a de valeur que pour autant qu'il s'applique à des contenus déterminés et qu'il est éclairé par les acquis de la culture. (Gaudemar 2003:I.1).

[The purpose of teaching philosophy in senior year is to help the students to use judgement reflectively, and to introduce them to philosophical culture. These two aims are substantially united. A culture is properly philosophical only to the extent that it finds itself constantly invested in the terrain of problems and in the methodical testing of their formulations and possible solutions; the use of judgement only has value inasmuch as it applies itself to determinate contents and insofar as it is enlightened by the culture's teachings.]

The exercise of judgement, as we will see momentarily, is just one dimension of the more general project of character formation that the philosophy class is meant to catalyze. But briefly I would like to draw attention to the conceptual implications of the rhetoric here. The rhetoric of these documents, in my view, articulates what we could call an ideological fantasy: an officially instituted image of the world, but perhaps of a possible world to which the actual world can never measure up. According to the fantasy articulated here, judgement *in general* is mediated by philosophical knowledge in particular, knowledge in general mediated by philosophical technique. There is a "substantial unity" between the external culture and the internal mental faculty; in a fairly dialectical process, the individual is supposed to interiorize culture, while the culture is constantly remade through philosophical inquiry. Note that "problems" and "determinate contents" occur here as mediating terms; the heart of the philosophical process is centered on problems and problematization (cf. Schwartz 1998). It is, in fact, the *process* of working through problems that makes a culture "properly philosophical": the (disciplinary) culture of philosophy is defined above all by this working through, which is evidently continuous — and, one gathers, ceaseless and unfinishable. It is no coincidence that philosophy is here defined formally and processually, rather than in terms of its content: for it is just when it comes to content that philosophy becomes suddenly dependent on other types of knowledge.

The lycée philosophy class, says the program, aims to build upon the knowledge previously acquired in other courses ("repose elle-même sur la formation scolaire antérieure" [Gaudemar 2003]); tacitly, here, there is a hint of a disciplinary claim to jurisdiction over other forms of knowledge. Or at any rate, the assumption is that other knowledges can be appropriated for

philosophical aims. But we have to situate such tacit claims in terms of the broader history of relations between philosophy and other fields: these relations, which have often been tense, are in fact a crucial theme of this set of documents, and have often been emphasized in sociological research on French philosophy (Soulié 1998, Fabiani 1988, Bourdieu and Passeron 1967). In Pessel's (2003) report on the agrégation, these tensions are particularly apparent. He explicitly states that philosophy (particularly at the university level) depends on other fields for its "contents"; without its relations to other fields, philosophy would be "extraordinarily limited" and reduced exclusively to a study of "subjectivity" (15). Already, he laments, philosophy often reduces its focus to "une histoire de la philosophie mal comprise" [a poorly construed history of philosophy] (15), as a result of which—

> On parlera d'un tableau qu'on n'a jamais vu, d'une musique qu'on n'a jamais entendue, d'une passion qu'on n'a peut-être jamais éprouvée, et aussi de savoirs qu'on ne maîtrise pas, pour peu que, par chance, un grand auteur nous souffle ce que nous avons à en dire. C'est ainsi que très souvent le réel n'est convoqué qu'à travers des médiations exclusivement philosophiques. Au point qu'on pourrait croire que certains étudiants choisissent de faire de la philosophie pour fuir le réel plutôt que pour le comprendre. (16)

> [One will talk about a table that one has never seen, about music that one has never heard, about a passion that one has perhaps never experienced, and also about knowledges that one does not command, if, by chance, a great author breathes in our ear what we have to say about them. It is thus that, very often, the real is only summoned by way of exclusively philosophical mediations. To the point that one could believe that certain students choose to do philosophy in order to flee the real rather than to understand it.]

In the programme — which governs the teaching of lycée students — the aim is to assert the "substantial unity" of philosophy with reflective judgement in general. In Pessel's report — which deals with the preparation and qualifications of lycée teachers, philosophy specialists — the fear is, on the contrary, that this unity is taken too far, that the real is exclusively and therefore *excessively* mediated by philosophy. As if the dialectical unity envisioned by the programme is ultimately undesirable because in the last analysis it obscures "the real," as if the programme cannot be satisfactorily taken to its logical conclusion. We might read these two documents as jointly stating:

knowledge is to be philosophically mediated — but not too much! If, in my analytical terms, we can

interpret the documents as unfolding articulations of knowledge ideology, we might particularly

observe here a *tension* between positive and negative definitions of philosophical knowledge: the

boundary between good and bad philosophical practice is subjected to constant strain and

renegotiation. This ongoing recalibration is all the more complicated in view of the fact that, for

Pessel, the alternative to "exclusively philosophical mediations" is not an *unmediated* relation to the

real but rather a rich engagement with other disciplines and knowledges. The limits of philosophical

knowledge thus require a constant work of boundary maintenance.

Nonetheless, this disciplinary context is not invoked when it comes to the ultimate

justification for lycée philosophy teaching. Rather, philosophy is justified in terms of its constitutive

place in the French national polity:

> L'enseignement de la philosophie n'a pas sa fin en lui-même. Il ne s'agit pas seulement ni d'abord de donner aux élèves la maîtrise d'un domaine disciplinaire particulier en vue d'une éventuelle spécialisation dans l'enseignement supérieur. Au travers de la maîtrise de la philosophie, ce qui est visé c'est la liberté de penser, liberté constitutive de la formation de l'homme et du citoyen, et contribuant à fonder l'idéal français de la République... La République dépasse l'enseignement de la philosophie, mais son contenu et ses conditions de possibilité demeurent en même temps pleinement philosophiques. Le premier trait du modèle français est donc de reposer sur l'union intime d'un enseignement scolaire et d'un régime politique qui suppose des citoyens "éclairés" et des hommes libres. (Sherringham 2006:62)

> [Philosophy teaching is not an end in itself. It is not only, and not first of all, about teaching students to master a particular disciplinary domain in view of an eventual academic specialization. Throughout philosophical education, the aim is freedom of thought, the constitutive freedom of the formation of man and citizen, contributing to founding the French ideal of the Republic... The Republic surpasses the teaching of philosophy, but its content and its conditions of possibility remain fully philosophical. The first trait of the French model [of philosophy teaching] is, thus, that it rests upon an intimate union of schooling with a political regime, one which presupposes enlightened citizens and free men.]

Here there is an explicit *antidisciplinarity*: philosophy teaching is not about disciplinary specialization,

because it is founded on the principle of a general "freedom to think." This is, first of all, a claim

about the articulation between the epistemic order and the order of persons (Rancière 2004), or

what we could call, with Valenza (2003), the division of intellectual labor.[14] The division of

intellectual labor is, of course, organized according to different principles in different contexts, and

in this passage Sherringham distinguishes between two such principles. While academic work is

(often) organized through specialization and compartmentalization (Abbott 2001, Gumport and

Snydman 2002, Strober 2006), here the student body-cum-French citizenry is supposed to be

organized on a principle of homogeneous enlightenment. In other words, everyone is supposed to

be equally intellectually prepared to be a citizen. Sherringham poses this epistemic homogeneity over

and against disciplinary specialization as the organizing principle of the classroom.

This principle of homogeneous enlightenment, of course, constitutes the foundational

freedom of the Republic — a Republic claimed, somewhat flamboyantly, to be philosophical in

essence. Philosophy classroom and republic alike are to be based on freedom of thought: the

classroom is thought to *model* the polity, as well as bring it into existence.[15] I will not attempt here to

assess the empirical success of this state project — though it is interesting to note that this

ostensibly egalitarian politics differs greatly from the politics of specialized "expert governance" that

seems so omnipresent in many analyses of French society (Rabinow 1989, 1996; Holmes 2002). Still,

what I want to emphasize here is simply that a crucial element of this ideology of knowledge is the

normative model of knowledge distribution. In other words, the programme for philosophy classes attempts

to dictate, not only ontological questions about what knowledge is, but also political questions about

how knowledge will be distributed. Knowledge ideologies, we might propose, crucially have to

answer the question: who will know? And in the case at hand, it seems that there is a deep-set

contradiction in the answer to this question. On one level, disciplinary knowledge specialization is

disavowed in favor of a national freedom of thought; but on a deeper level, this antidisciplinarity

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[14] Note that the "division of intellectual labor" is a category that blurs together what Radcliffe-Brown (1965:11)
distinguished as "organization" and "social structure": the former being the organization of tasks, the latter the
arrangement of persons.
[15] In linguistic jargon, the nation and the philosophy classroom are indexical icons of each other.

serves precisely to legitimate philosophy as a discipline above all others, insofar as it casts philosophy as not merely a specialized field but rather as the underlying logic of the polity. We can see, thus, that internal contradictions, far from impinging upon knowledge ideologies, may in fact facilitate their functioning. Contradictions, to cite an old Marxian lesson, can be productive. Although in this case, the presence of contradictions is an interesting paradox in itself, since, as I will show later, wholeness and coherence are two of the uppermost discursive values articulated in this set of documents.

Philosophical character formation

The ideological work of the lycée philosophy class, according to the programme, is to link philosophical knowledge with personal intellectual development. The details of this personal development are, in fact, subject to especially detailed scrutiny in the official documents. To begin with, the students are supposed to obtain a certain set of intellectual virtues:

> Cet enseignement vise... à développer chez les élèves l'aptitude à l'analyse, le goût des notions exactes et le sens de la responsabilité intellectuelle. Il contribue ainsi à former des esprits autonomes, avertis de la complexité du réel et capables de mettre en oeuvre une conscience critique du monde contemporain. (Gaudemar 2003:I.1)

> [This teaching aims... to develop in the students an aptitude for analysis, a taste for exact notions, and a sense of intellectual responsibility. It also contributes to the formation of autonomous minds, warned of the complexity of the real and capable of putting to work a critical consciousness of the contemporary world.]

These virtues are not to be taken as self-evident, I would remind my academic audience! They are the peculiar virtues of a particular social milieu. It is interesting, actually, that they are presented without justification, as if they *were* self-evident in their value. After all, they are so specific to intellectual practice ("analysis," "exact notions," "critical consciousness," "complexity") that one could plausibly interpret "intellectual responsibility" as responsibility to the specifically philosophical subculture. It seems to me that the interesting ideological work here is entirely implicit. First, the

project of virtue formation proposed contains an important self-contradiction. The aim is the "formation of autonomous minds" and "critical consciousness," but this formation is envisaged *as a social institution* and as a set of codified *norms*. Sherringham terms French philosophy teaching "une pédagogie de la liberté" [a pedagogy of freedom], but he immediately points out that it involves "un mélange assez unique de liberté et de contrainte" [a rather unique mix of freedom and constraint] (2006:64). The intellectual freedom advocated so unproblematically in the programme, in other words, is in fact supposed to be *authoritatively created within officially dictated limits*. Furthermore, the whole list of virtues can be read as containing an implied counter-factual claim: that if philosophy *weren't* taught, students might *not* develop either a taste for exact notions or a sense of intellectual responsibility or a critical consciousness — that without philosophy, in other words, students might wind up intellectually deficient. The valorization of intellectual virtues entails the tacit denigration of their opposites — analytical clumsiness, conceptual vagueness, intellectual dereliction of duty, mental slavishness, uncritical unconsciousness, belief in a simple reality. In other words, the work of this passage is also to stake a specifically philosophical claim to virtue: students are to be intellectually virtuous insofar as they are philosophically disciplined.

As the programme goes on, it informs us not only of the virtues of philosophy for students but also of the specific methods appropriate to philosophizing. The programme enjoins a certain relation to philosophical knowledge: it is not to be either an encyclopedic survey of philosophical problems or a systematic study of the history of philosophy (Gaudemar II.2, cf. Sherringham 2006:63). Both these tasks are viewed as beyond the scope of an "un enseignement élémentaire" [an elementary teaching] (Sherringham 2006:63). Instead, the student is supposed to construct a "réflexion philosophique" [philosophical reflection] in which s/he "[assume] de manière personnelle et entière la responsabilité de la construction et du détail de son propos" [personally and entirely

assumes the responsibility for the construction and the details of his words] (Gaudemar 2006:III).

Or as Sherringham explains it, referring to the teacher:

> "Il lui est demandé de s'approprier personnellement le contenu de son enseignement et de manifester de façon exemplaire cette réflexion personnelle, cette personnalisation de la pensée, qui est aussi exigée de ses élèves. Mais l'appropriation personnelle dont le maître donne l'exemple à travers la leçon de philosophie n'a rien à voir avec la boursouflure de la subjectivité individuelle du professeur qui se donnerait en pâture ou en spectacle à ses élèves. Ce n'est pas l'énoncé d'une opinion personnelle qui s'exprimerait à la première personne. Ce n'est pas non plus l'exposé, même brillant, des systèmes philosophiques. Au contraire, c'est à travers la recherche obstinée de l'universel, l'intégration de la position des problèmes par les grands auteurs de la tradition philosophique et le refus des opinions individuelles que se construit progressivement le cours de philosophie. L'enseignement de la philosophie en terminale repose sur l'intériorisation universalisante de son contenu par le professeur qui est ainsi appelé à devenir véritablement un 'maître.'" (Sherringham 2006:63-4)

> [He is asked to personally appropriate the content of his teaching and to show, in an exemplary way, this personal reflection, this personalization of thought, which is required of the students as well. But personal appropriation, for which the teacher [maître] sets the example throughout the philosophy lesson, has nothing to do with the pomposity of the professor's individual subjectivity, fed to the students as spectacle. It is not the expression of a personal opinion put in the first person. Neither is it the exposition, even brilliant, of philosophical systems. Rather, it is through the stubborn search for the universal, the integration of the terrain of problems by the great authors of the philosophical tradition, and the refusal of individual opinions, that the philosophy class gradually takes shape. Philosophy teaching in senior year depends on the universalizing interiorization of its content by the professor, who is thus called to truly become a "master."]

This is in part a restatement of the dialectical process described earlier, in which the individual's knowledge is supposed to be mediated by the philosophical tradition. Here it is defined more explicitly against other modes of knowing that, for classroom purposes anyway, are denigrated. Philosophical knowing is meant to be neither purely subjective (personal opinion) nor purely objective (exposition of philosophical systems). Rather, it is supposed to be a "universalizing interiorization" — that is, the individual is supposed to *give up* his or her personal (implicitly pre-philosophical) opinions, while striving to reach universal conclusions by reflecting personally on philosophical problems. The intellectual precursors of this procedure are partly philosophical — a Hegelian influence is apparent, in both style and content — but it is interesting to point out that T.S. Eliot, in his essay on "Tradition and the Individual Talent," argued that poets employ much the

same method: "The progress of the artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality" (1920:§9). It is evident, at any rate, that this ideology of knowledge is structured by Romantic tropes of interiority and exteriority (Boyer 2005:ch. 2). It is shaped, too, by an evidently *relational* ontology of knowledge, contrary to the global trend towards objectification, or rather commodification, of knowledge which Lyotard (1984:4) and others claim to have identified.

But the important new twist, in this passage, is the introduction of a fundamental epistemic hierarchy at the root of the philosophical process. The teacher, philosophizing before the class, is to "truly become a *master*" ('maître' in French means both 'master' and 'schoolteacher'), and thus fundamentally to possess a philosophical authority (and responsibility, Sherringham points out) which the students lack. However, this asymmetrical hierarchy, in Sherringham's eyes, is not altogether a successful project. First he remarks, of the professor's attempt at mastery, that "cette haute ambition n'est pas toujours atteinte par le professeur ni perçue par les élèves, mais elle demeure l'idéal fondateur du cours de philosophie" (2006:64) [this high ambition is not always attained by the professor nor perceived by the students, though it remains the founding ideal of the philosophy course]. Second, he argues that "[une] pédagogie of liberté... repose sur deux piliers: la leçon pour le professeur, et la dissertation pour l'élève" [a pedagogy of freedom rests on two pillars: the lesson for the professor, and the dissertation for the student] (ibid).

The upshot of these comments is twofold. First, the intended project of hierarchy is often *unrealized*, a practical *failure*, since the professor often cannot live up to the professorial ideal or the students are not able to comprehend it. Second, there is a fundamental epistemic *symmetry* coupled to the asymmetrical hierarchy. This symmetry rests on a pair of discourse genres (Hanks 1987), the professor's (oral) lesson and the student's (written) dissertation, which are both equally supposed to catalyze the process of philosophical reflection. I will turn to this linguistic dimension of knowledge ideologies in a moment. I want to point out, however, that the trope of philosophical mastery, and

of its embodiment in a particular person, the true "master," continues to structure knowledge

ideology in the philosophy classroom. And "mastery" is a trope with distinctively authoritarian

implications, conjuring also images of domination and, in Hegelian terms, "bondage." The rhetoric

of mastery should not be taken lightly, I would suggest, since it sensitizes us to the ways in which the

division of intellectual labor can crystallize around social oppositions between types of persons, one

superior, the other inferior. In this case, it would seem that students are taught to recognize their

masters at the same time as they are suppposed to learn to be co-equal citizens of the Republic. If

the programme is a scheme for constructing French personhood through philosophical inquiry, then

it is one that dictates, not only specific character traits like a taste for exact notions, but also the

contradictory kinds of social relations, authoritarian as well as egalitarian, that these French persons

are to embrace.

Ideologies of philosophical language

The philosophy programme is designed not so much to dictate specific classroom pedagogy as to set

the bounds within which lycée teachers will plan their courses. It sets these bounds by proposing a

certain set of discursive objects to populate the semiotic world of the philosophy class. These are

classified, broadly, as "notions," "auteurs," "textes," and "repères" [reference points]. They are

accompanied by a set of discourse genres to be used in the classroom: the "leçon" for the teacher,

and the "dissertation" and "explication de texte" for the students. Here I want to consider some

prescriptions for the shape of this semiotic world, for the correct use of these discourse genres, and

for the skills and norms that philosophical discourse is supposed to inculcate. I hope, thus, to give a

better sense of the official vision for the semiotic realization of philosophical knowledge through

discourse. Since knowledge is necessarily realized through semiosis, knowledge ideologies entail

language ideologies (metapragmatic norms and discourses, Silverstein 1993) as part of their

functioning, and it is this linguistic dimension of the overall knowledge ideology that I will consider here more explicitly. In particular, I will examine (1) the discursive values of systematicity and organic wholeness; (2) textualism and notions of texts; (3) linguistic mediation of language and thought; and (4) discursive skills and norms.

Philosophical language ideologies Part 1: Organic holism and systematicity

The bulk of the programme is devoted to specifying how the notions, authors and repères will work together. To begin with, while the notions define a field of problems, the authors furnish the texts to be studied ("Les notions définissent les champs de problèmes abordés dans l'enseignement, et les auteurs fournissent les textes, en nombre limité, qui font l'objet d'une étude suivie"). The hope is that the programme will furnish the basis for a complex organic whole, whose parts are multiply interconnected:

> "Ces deux éléments seront traités conjointement, de manière à respecter l'unité et la cohérence du programme. C'est dans leur étude que seront acquises et développées les compétences définies au titre III ci-dessous. Les notions peuvent être interrogées à la faveur du commentaire d'une œuvre ; le commentaire d'une œuvre peut à son tour être développé à partir d'une interrogation sur une notion ou sur un ensemble de notions, qu'il permet aussi d'appréhender dans certains moments historiques et culturels de leur élaboration. Le professeur déterminera la démarche qui lui paraîtra le mieux correspondre aux exigences de son cours et aux besoins de ses élèves." (Gaudemar 2003:I.2)

> [These two elements will be treated conjointly, in such a way as to respect the unity and coherence of the programme. It is through their study that the competences defined in section III, below, will be acquired and developed. Notions can be interrogated[16] in light of the commentary on a work; the commentary on a work can, in turn, be developed from an interrogation of a notion or a set of notions, which can thus be apprehended in their particular historical and cultural moments of elaboration. The teacher will determine the approach that seems to him to best correspond to the requirements of his course and to the needs of his students.]

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[16] In my view, "interroger" would be better translated as "to examine," but it has already entered academic English as "to interrogate," so I will leave it.

There is to be, in short, a cascade of interconnections between the field of problems, the interrogation of a set of notions, and the commentary of a work — the hope being that the professor will pragmatically manage these interconnections so that, in practice, they cohere. And this coherence is not supposed to be merely externally imposed by the professor, but also discovered within the subject matter. As the programme states, "Les notions retenues doivent constituer un ensemble suffisamment cohérent et homogène pour que leur traitement fasse toujours ressortir leurs liens organiques de dépendance et d'association" [The notions retained [i.e., in the programme] should constitute a sufficiently coherent and homogeneous set so that their treatment can bring out their organic links of dependence and of association] (Gaudemar 2003:II.1). The links between notions are already there, organically, we are told: the professor need only bring them to light. As for the texts and authors:

> "Pour que cette étude soit pleinement instructive, les oeuvres retenues feront l'objet d'un commentaire suivi, soit dans leur intégralité, soit au travers de parties significatives, pourvu que celles-ci aient une certaine ampleur, forment un tout et présentent un caractère de continuité" (Gaudemar II.2)
>
> [So that this study [of texts] will be fully instructive, the works retained [in the programme] will be subjected to a linear commentary, either in their entirety, or in terms of their significant parts, on the condition that these parts obtain a certain amplitude, form a whole, and show a continuous character.]

In other words, the commentary on a text is also obliged to search for unity in its object — whether this whole is coextensive with the text itself, or is constructed from a continuous and significant set of its parts. There is, in short, an intense valuation of holism, coherence, and systematicity in this vision of philosophical practice. As I have tried to illustrate here, these values repeat themselves at every level of the programme: at the level of overall pedagogy, at the level of concepts, at the level of texts, even at the level of individual discursive performances by students and teachers. To modify Gal and Irvine's (2000:38) terms slightly, this is a process of fractal recursivity, wherein a property

(wholeness) that applies to a whole intellectual system is repeated at every other level of discursive

categorization. As it happens, in Sherringham's article, these values are stated quite explicitly:

> "L'enseignement de la philosophie en France a donc tous les traits d'un véritable modèle : la cohérence interne, le caractère systématique, la dépendance réciproque de ses éléments constitutifs, l'équilibre de ses composantes internes et externes." (2003:65)

> [Philosophy teaching in France thus has all the traits of a true model: internal coherence, a systematic character, a reciprocal dependence between its constitutive elements, an equilibrium of its internal and external components.]

No explicit justification of these values — systematicity and coherence — is ever given in these

documents. It is simply taken for granted that they are abstract intellectual values that are supposed

to be realized in the philosophy program. We can still ask, however, what ideological work these

values are doing. For now, I will suggest two possible answers. First, the intense valuation of

philosophy as a system is in part a tacit defense of the autonomy of philosophy as a discipline. And

second, the emphatic focus on discursive practice as unified and systematic works as a way of

regimenting philosophical language and differentiating it from other, less systematic kinds of

language.

Philosophical language ideologies Part 2: Textualism

The valuation of systematicity is coupled to what we could call *textualism*, by which I mean a faith in

text-mediated knowledge, one which (here as in other academic contexts) almost becomes a tacit

claim that textually derived knowledge is, actually, the *most authentic* form of knowledge. Such a claim

is illustrated in the programme's comments on authors:

> "L'étude d'oeuvres des auteurs majeurs est un élément constitutif de toute culture philosophique. Il ne s'agit pas, au travers d'un survol historique, de recueillir une information factuelle sur des doctrines ou des courants d'idées, mais bien d'enrichir la réflexion de l'élève sur les problèmes philosophiques par une connaissance directe de leurs formulations et de leurs développements les plus authentiques." (Gaudemar II.2)

> [The study of the works of the major authors is a constitutive element of every philosophical culture. It does not involve, by way of a historical survey, a summary of the facts about

doctrines or about currents of ideas, but rather an enrichment of the student's reflections on philosophical problems, through a direct knowledge of their formulations and their most authentic developments.]

Again, the ideological force of this passage is clearer if it is read, as it were, inside-out, as a pair of counter-factual claims. The first sentence would thus read: a culture is *not philosophical* if it does not involve the study of the texts of "major authors." The unproblematized category of "major authors," here, invokes the traditional intellectual hierarchy of the philosophical tradition. The second sentence would then implicitly argue that, *without* the study of the works of "major authors," the students' reflections might remain *impoverished*. In other words, the message is that the path to philosophical enlightenment necessarily traverses the heights of the past philosophical masters and their "works." This engagement, moreover, with past texts is supposed to lead to "direct" knowledge of the "most authentic developments" of these past masters. Such knowledge is "direct," of course, only insofar as cultural codes of interpretation and the influence of social institutions are left out of the picture. According to the ideological fantasy of the philosophy class, philosophical knowledge is supposed to be authentic as well as systematic: a waterfall of interrogations and problematizations, catalyzed by the great philosophical works, led by the teacher, will lead to authentic reflection on the part of the student. We could add authenticity to the list of discursive values begun above. But I must point out, again, that this supposedly authentic knowledge is only produced as authentic through considerable bureaucratic mediation; the illusion of direct knowledge of philosophical texts only occurs through the regimentation of the philosophical discipline. In William Mazzarella's terms, this is a "fantasy of immediacy" – and, as he points out, "mediation is the social condition of the fantasy of immediation" (n.d.:17); in Gal and Irvine's terms, this is a kind of ideological erasure. The irony is that, in spite of the value of authenticity and direct knowledge, there is an intense emphasis on fiddling and adjusting and recalibrating the discursive forms through which this "direct" philosophical knowledge is to be produced.

Philosophical language ideologies Part 3: Linguistic mediation of thought and culture via terms and texts

I now want to explore in more detail the management of linguistic forms and practices in the programme. As exemplary cases, I will take first the statement on repères and then the guidelines for the explication de texte. The repères — such as "abstrait/concret" or "médiat/immédiat" — are defined thus:

> "Chacun de ces repères présente deux caractéristiques: il s'agit, d'une part, de distinctions lexicales opératoires en philosophie, dont la conaissance précise est supposée par la pratique et la mise en forme d'une pensée rigoureuse, et, d'autre part, de distinctions conceptuelles accréditées dans la tradition et, à ce titre, constitutives d'une culture philosophique élémentaire." (Gaudemar 2003:II.1.2)

> [Each of these repères presents two characteristics: it is about, on the one hand, lexical distinctions operating in philosophy, a precise knowledge of which is presupposed by the practice and forms of rigorous thinking, and, on the other hand, about conceptual distinctions accredited within the tradition which are, consequently, constitutive of an elementary philosophical culture.]

Here we have a statement of language ideology at its most explicit. Pairs of opposing lexemes are taken as the bearers of philosophical culture: they are the condensations of philosophical tradition, but also the means of philosophy's ongoing reproduction in the present. In neo-Peircean terms, we might say that the repères are cast as both presupposing and entailing indexes of "philosophical culture" (cf. Silverstein 2003). And, since the repères also embody *conceptual* distinctions crucial to "rigorous thinking," we can observe that they function, within this ideology, as boundary objects between culture, language, and thought. The working assumption, of course, is that "culture," "language," and "thought" are conceptually distinct, but united through philosophical practice. However, the precise nature of the relation between thought, language, and philosophical culture seems always in these documents a bit unstable, a source of some anxiety, and thus is subject to especially careful attention.

These ideological machinations continue in the guidelines for writing an explication de texte (textual study):

> "L'explication s'attache à dégager les enjeux philosophiques et la démarche caractéristique d'un texte de longueur restreinte. En interrogeant de manière systématique la lettre de ce texte, elle précise le sens et la fonction conceptuelle des termes employés, met en évidence les éléments implicites du propos et décompose les moments de l'argumentation, sans jamais séparer l'analyse formelle d'un souci de compréhension de fond, portant sur le problème traité et sur l'intérêt philosophique de la position construite et assumée par l'auteur."
> (Gaudemar 2003:III)

> [The explication attempts to bring out the philosophical stakes and reasoning characteristic of a relatively short text. By systematically interrogating the letter of this text, it specifies the sense and conceptual function of the terms employed, makes apparent the implicit elements of the language, and decomposes the moments of the argument, without ever separating the formal analysis from a concern for the meaning, focusing on the problem treated and the philosophical interest of the position constructed and assumed by the author.]

This is a piece of metapragmatic discourse, a discourse that governs other discourses; let me try to articulate its logic. First of all, this discourse marks a text as an object of protracted philosophical labor, as the raw material of philosophizing. An explication works, we are told, "by systematically interrogating the letter of this text." The crucial phrase is "the letter" of the text: "the letter" works as a metonym for the superficial linguistic forms printed on the page — the printed *signifiers*, in Saussurean terms (de Saussure 1986:65-69). The insistent language of "bringing out," "interrogating," "making apparent the implicit," and "decomposing" suggests that this textual "surface" is not transparently clear and perspicuous in itself. Textual signifiers are not self-interpreting, but acquire meaning only through interpretive labor. In this respect, the underlying ideology of language here is not strictly Saussurean, but is rather one in which the link between (printed) signifiers and (conceptual) signifieds can only come into existence through interpretation. The first move of this metapragmatic discourse is hence to constitute texts as objects that become meaningful *only through interpretation*: to constitute a seemingly necessary relationship between text and interpretive method.

Next, a number of different types of interpretation are articulated. To begin with, the explication calls for a lexical examination of the "terms employed": individual lexemes are taken as

bearers of meaning and "conceptual function." Polysemy, I should explain, is viewed in the programme as an omnipresent threat. Students are expected to specify which sense of a word is at play in a philosophical text, to avoid any ambiguity or misinterpretation (see below). At this lexical level, then, the goal of the explication is to place each term within its linguistic context (its semantic paradigm), and within the functional realm of concepts. This implies a view of language in which, interestingly, the "sense" of a word is viewed as *different* from its "conceptual function." More broadly, there is a highly lexeme-centric view of language here: the text is viewed as an aggregate of *individual terms*, each demanding its own intellectual investigation. It is as if each word concealed a world of possible intellectual investigation.

However, a second crucial dimension of interpretation is the examination of the "philosophical stakes," the "philosophical interest," and the "problem treated" within the text. I would gloss these as the problem of the text's *philosophical intentionality* (Duranti 1999): the text has an implicit philosopical topic (the 'problem treated') directed towards some broader philosophical aim (its 'stakes' or 'interest'). This underlying intentionality is taken as *implicit* within the text, not necessarily obvious but susceptible to interpretation. Insofar as the philosophical interest and stakes of a text are determined by broader philosophical traditions and norms, they have to be at least tacitly examined in terms of their philosophical *context*. The "terrain of problems" mentioned earlier is one way in which this context is formulated in spatial terms. Here, interpretation focuses on "the position constructed and assumed by the author." In contrast to an analysis centered on lexical relations, this is a study of the pragmatics of philosophical *performance*. The text is interpreted as embodying an author's position, as a repository of the traces of philosophical practice.

There is also a third dimension of interpretation centered around textual *form*, a "formal analysis." This consists in a "decomposition of the moments of the argument" and an exposition of the "reasoning" and its "implicit elements." We note, however, that this is supposed to proceed

"without ever separating the formal analysis from a concern for the meaning." To all the other unities characteristic of this official form of philosophical inquiry, we can thus add the unity of *form and content*.[17] Taking this in concert with the other modes of interpretation just mentioned, it seems to me that, at an implicit global level, the text is viewed as a *multidimensional* repository of meaning and pragmatic traces, one whose formal structure is the bearer of conceptual function, whose surface linguistic forms embody concepts but also philosophical culture and history and tradition.

Lastly, we must acknowledge that, ultimately, this whole metadiscourse deals as much with regimenting the student-teacher relation as it deals with constituting the text and its interpretive modes. Bureaucratic attention is directed as much toward the "narrating event" of the student's performance as the "narrated event" of the philosophical text. The explication de texte is a moment in which the student becomes the bearer of certain scholastic skills and the subject of intellectual norms, and is judged by the professor.

Philosophical language ideologies Part IV: Discursive skills and norms

The last section of the programme is devoted to an explicit examination of these norms and skills:

> "Dissertation et explication de texte... reposent d'abord sur l'acquisition d'un certain nombre de normes générales du travail intellectuel, telles que l'obligation d'exprimer ses idées sous la forme la plus simple et la plus nuancée possible, celle de n'introduire que des termes dont on est en mesure de justifier l'emploi, celle de préciser parmi les sens d'un mot celui qui est pertinent pour le raisonnement que l'on conduit, etc. Les deux exercices permettent de former et de vérifier l'aptitude de l'élève à utiliser les concepts élaborés et les réflexions développées, ainsi qu'à transposer dans un travail philosophique personnel et vivant les connaissances acquises par l'étude des notions et des oeuvres." (Gaudemar 2003:III)

> [The dissertation and explication de texte... depend firstly on the acquisition of a certain number of general norms of intellectual work, such as the obligation to express one's ideas in the most simple and nuanced form possible, to only introduce terms insofar as one can justify their employment, to specify among the senses of a word which one is pertinent to one's reasoning, etc. The two exercises allow the formation and verification of the student's aptitude for using elaborated concepts and developed reflections, as well as for transposing

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[17] This complex distinction [Ingarden 1960] has a history running from Aristotle, Kant and Hegel through to modern literary theory and linguistics, and its ideological functions would be well worth examining, but I cannot do that here.

the knowledge acquired by the study of notions and works into a lively, personal philosophical labor.]

These intellectual norms are all norms of intellectual *language* — as if linguistic sloppiness meant intellectual transgression. I especially want to emphasize that this is a highly *moralized* view of language use, insofar as there is an "obligation" for language to be "justified," "nuanced," and "pertinent." These norms are voiced, moreover, as general intellectual imperatives with no particular origins or history, as if they were universal intellectual laws.[18] And as in my earlier example, these norms rest on a highly lexeme-centric approach to language, one in which individual words matter greatly. One might see this passage a set of lexical taboos. They aim to stamp out polyphony by specifying which sense of a word is pertinent; to suppress unclarity by expressing ideas as simply and carefully as possible; and to make language (so it seems to me) part of a moral order in which one only employs terms "insofar as one can *justify* their employment." It is as if philosophers assume that language (or to be precise, scholastic language use) is always potentially *unruly, confusing, ambiguous, unjustified*, and that it thus must be tightly controlled.

These intellectual norms are closely coupled to an emphasis on evaluating the student's skills (as I will gloss 'aptitudes' and 'capacities'). To write an explication de texte one must have "acquired" these skills; and the genre's function is not just to teach the skills, but to permit the teacher to *verify* the student's aptitude for using them. Interestingly, part of this aptitude is to make one's acquired knowledge into a "lively, *personal* philosophical labor." In this ideology of knowledge, it is not just that, as detailed above, students must have an direct, authentic knowledge *of* texts; they must also make their *own* texts be authentic and personal. Personalization is the (ostensible) norm.

A paragraph later, there is a more extensive list of the skills to learn. They:

"...consistent principalement à introduire à un problème, à mener ou analyser un raisonnement, à apprécier la valeur d'un argument, à exposer et discuter une thèse pertinente

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[18] This is a form of "nomic" calibration, in Silverstein's (1993) sense: the programme indexes a normative realm construed as ontologically distinct from its own bureaucratic machinations.

par rapport à un problème bien défini, à rechercher un exemple illustrant un concept ou une difficulté, à établir ou restituer une transition entre deux idées, à élaborer une conclusion." (Gaudemar 2003:III)

[...consist principally in being able to introduce a problem, to organize or analyze reasoning, to appreciate the value of an argument, to summarize and discuss a pertinent thesis in relation to a well defined problem, to find an example illustrating a concept or a difficulty, to establish or restore a transition between two ideas, to elaborate a conclusion.]

Here again, the skills in question are essentially discursive. I will not repeat my analysis of the linguistic and epistemic ideologies at work here, except to note that this list of skills seems to be designed to satisfy them, by making it possible for students to produce a 'nuanced' and well-ordered, well-interconnected, *systematic* text. Rather, I want to draw attention to the way in which this list of skills articulates with the broader context of the philosophy course. In her analysis of "skills" as part of the rhetoric of liberal arts colleges marketing in the U.S., Bonnie Urciuoli connects them to the demands of a flexible workforce in the contemporary corporate world, as well as the increasing academic practice of *assessment* and auditing (2003, cf. Strathern 2000). Skills would thus be linked to a commodification of knowledge and a changing mode of class reproduction through higher education. In this French context, there have in fact been debates over democratization and the teaching of philosophy in the "professional" lycées (Séré and Forstmann 2007), and of course there is a well-known sociological argument that the French educational system reproduces class stratification (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). Such topics are not discussed in these documents devoted to creating co-equal citizens. But even within these documents we can discern an instrumentalist view of philosophy: teachers are supposed to demonstrate "le bénéfice aux élèves, non seulement pour l'amélioration de leurs résultats scolaires, mais plus généralement, pour la maîtrise de leur propre pensée et pour son éxpression la plus claire et convaincante" [the benefit to students, not only for the improvement of their school scores, but more generally for the mastery of their own thought and for its clearest and most convincing expression] (Gaudemar 2003:III). Philosophy thus serves as a means for students to obtain better communicational skills. (The subtle

implication is that thought without philosophy is neither clear nor convincing, but I will let this pass.)

But the deeper importance of "skills" in this knowledge ideology is that it indicates how persons articulate with the epistemic order. A particular image of the student, we might say an ideological fantasy of the student, is constructed in these passages. The student is supposed to become the *bearer of skills* and the *subject of norms*: in short, is expected to become a disciplined, regularized, skilled person. At the same time, the student is supposed to become something like an *individual, authentic, critical intellectual*: responsible for rigorously constructing their own ideas on the basis of a direct engagement with fundamental concepts and great philosophical texts. Yet underlying these two (rather divergent) dimensions of student personhood is a more basic structural alignment: the students are supposed to be constituted by and through the epistemic order of philosophy, through philosophical knowledge and philosophical ways of knowing. I referred earlier to the division of intellectual labor, and to the fact that knowledge ideologies must in part serve to specify the social organization of knowers. Here we can expand upon that observation. It is not just that knowledge ideology specifies a social structure by which knowers are organized; knowledge ideology also specifies the place of knowledge in the social constitution of subjectivity. If it is part of the appointed task of lycée philosophy teaching to make students into skilled, normed workers, and simultaneously critical intellectuals, then this indicates to us that an official ideology of knowledge is also a project of creating personhood.

Philosophy as knowledge ideology

In the above discussion, my aim has been to show the functionality of a concept of knowledge ideology for social analysis. Needless to say, a knowledge ideology is not something that is directly observable; I would claim that the concept has afforded us at least a *coherent* analysis of the texts at

hand, but, to be clear, this analysis has demanded that we *posit* an underlying knowledge ideology and interpret the texts as articulations thereof. In other words, knowledge ideology is an analytic category and not a local cultural category, and its utility can only be assessed by examining the analysis that results. I might add, though, that I view the exercise in part as useful for generating analytic claims that can function later as ethnographic hypotheses, ones which I hope to examine in later fieldwork.

Let me briefly compare my initial theoretical exposition of knowledge ideologies with the results of the analysis at hand. Although I did not explicitly force the analysis into the terms proposed by the theory, it seems to me that a number of these terms find support in the empirical case. Certainly, we can observe, in the dialectical process of philosophical inquiry proposed for the lycée classroom, the organization of a certain mode of truth: philosophical truth is constituted through a textually informed personal reflection on great philosophical problems.[19] We can observe multiple, multiply interlinked epistemic orders: of the text, of the concept ('notion'), of the classroom order, of the student work, of the functioning of knowledge within the French nation: in short, as the syllabus says itself, there is a complex epistemic system. This epistemic system comes alive through an elaborate regulation of the relation between epistemic statics and dynamics — between forms of knowledge (objectified in texts) and practices of knowing (the skills developed in the explication de texte, for instance). There are tensions between positive definitions of knowledge and negative specifications of its boundaries and limits: I have considered in particular the questions of philosophy's relations to other disciplines and of its over-reliance on the philosophical masters (as expressed by Pessel, or by Foucault in the footnote above). Finally, I would point out again what has run throughout the analysis: that the bureaucratic knowledge embodied in the programme does not

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[19] Here I am perversely tempted to cite Foucault as a way of counteracting the (American) reader's own potential Foucauldian inclinations: while a simple reading of Foucault would have us view all knowledge as an expression of power, here I would suggest that this definition of truth actually *forecloses* a more politically engaged form of philosophy. Foucault in 1970 said "La philosophie ne doit pas consister simplement en un commentaire des textes 'canoniques et scolastiques', mais être 'une réflexion sur le monde contemporain, donc nécessairement sur la politique'" (cited in Soulié 1998). The philosophy programme might thus be viewed as an *antipolitics*, a way of discouraging political reflection.

bear directly on any actual situation, but rather refers to a space of administrative possibility: it is an authoritative fantasy about what *might* take place in the philosophy classroom. All these themes of the initial theoretical section seem to me helpful in guiding analysis of these particular documents.

On the other hand, some new considerations about knowledge ideologies have emerged from the analysis. I have tried to show that knowledge seems to play an active role in legitimating the social order, and in particular the national polity; while contradictions within knowledge ideologies seem to ease, not inhibit, their functioning. I have given the examination of language ideology and semiotic regimentation a greater place within knowledge ideologies than it initially had. And finally, I have tried to emphasize the importance of considering local forms of subjectivity and social organization in relation to knowledge ideology. The most interesting theoretical implication of the analysis, in my view, is that it shows the centrality of the ideological articulation between knowledge and personhood. Such an articulation, I would argue, is always in part ideological fantasy. It is from this perspective that I would now like to briefly examine the notion of 'the intellectual' as a category of analysis for social research.

Critique of the concept of "intellectuals"

The theoretical function of a theory of knowledge ideologies, I said before, is partly to help synthesize a set of other topics in sociology of knowledge. But it may also lead us to reformulate some of our existing theoretical categories. The category of 'the intellectual' serves as a convenient case in point. Unfortunately, as the paper is already long, I will not be able to give the category the historical examination it deserves.[20] Rather, I will consider just a few recent moments in the theory of this category.

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[20] It is not entirely clear to me that an examination of the supposed "literature on intellectuals" would lead us to conclude that the category has ever been entirely conceptually coherent: compare the series of disparate historical snapshots of

To begin with, a consideration that has apparently given scholars pause, when it comes to defining intellectuals, is an oft-cited claim by Zygmunt Bauman that definitions of the intellectual "are all self-definitions... their authors are the members of the same rare species they attempt to define" (1987:8). This has been cited as a reason to avoid having to give a very precise definition of the intellectual (Boyer and Lomnitz 2005:106-7, Verdery 1991:15-16; cf. Karabel 1996:207). The argument, as Bauman develops it, is that what matters about such definitions is not their precise content but rather their performative effect of "draw[ing] the boundary of their own identity" and "split[ting] the territory into two sides: here and there, in and out, us and them" (8). Now, I find it remarkable that scholars have so wholeheartedly accepted Bauman's argument, since, in spite of its grain of truth, it contains a blatant falsehood. Definitions of the intellectual are in point of fact *not* all self-definitions, for the reason that "the intellectual" is often defined in popular discourse as the *other* rather than the self. Consider for instance the purely anecdotal, but for present purposes quite conclusive evidence offered by this conversation, which took place by online chat (Aug. 20, 2007):

> A: "i am trying to write about why 'intellectuals' are a bad category for social scientists"
> B: "oh, the reasons [sic] for that is that "pretentious fucks" is far more accurate."

I might also mention French organic farmers of my acquaintance who refused to listen to certain radio stations, deriding them as "too intellectual"; or the well-known stereotype of an American populist distrust of intellectuals (Gitlin 2000). All of these phenomena entail non-scholastic but perfectly functional working definitions of the intellectual. The point is thus that the intellectual is a social type subject to characterization and definition by those who do not claim it as their identity, not to mention those who explicitly *disclaim* it as their identity.[21] Bauman's underlying and still valid

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intellectuals offered by, say, Benda 1969 [1928], Radin 1927, Breines 1986, Konrád and Szelényi 1979, Boyer 2005, Fuller 2005, etc.

[21] It is unclear whether Bauman construes "definition" as if it were an intrisically scholastic speech act. He writes ambiguously that "the specifically intellectual form of the operation – self-definition – masks its universal content, which is the reproduction and reinforcement of a given social configuration..." (1987:9). His paradigm of a definition, implicit in the passage just preceding this quote, would seem to be the formal *enumeration of properties* — an undoubtedly rather

point, however, is that definitions of intellectuals are performative and not merely descriptive. In his view, the term intellectuals was at first an early-twentieth-century "rallying call, sounded over the closely guarded frontiers of professions and artistic *genres*; a call to resuscitate the tradition... of 'men of knowledge'" (1987:1). In other words, the term was meant to *overcome the highly-specialized division of intellectual labor* — by tacitly reconstituting a new division of intellectual labor, one less differentiated but nonetheless crucial to the project of claiming power through knowledge.

Before coming back to consider this implications of this sort of project, let us dwell slightly longer on the definitional question, by considering the following comments made by Boyer and Lomnitz in a recent review of the literature:

> "There is indeed no accepted point of departure for the analysis of intellectuals as social actors... The intellectual has been variously deployed over the course of the twentieth century to anchor lexically a sphere of social identification containing anyone from those who should speak truth to power, to "men of ideas" and guardians of national traditions and cultural knowledge, to a historically emergent technocratic class, to those cultural elites inhabiting fields of knowledge production and authorization, to a languishing breed of public person in an era of privatization and academic compartmentalization" (2005:106; I omit a long list of references).

Boyer and Lomnitz describe this as a list of definitions "of the intellectual's function or essence"; I would point out that this list is made up of rather heterogeneous elements. Some items invoke a social position, others a political role, others an epistemic posture, others a national function. Boyer and Lomnitz, however, distance themselves from any such categorical definition, orienting themselves instead towards studies of "intellectualism," which they define as an "intense practical investment in modes and forms of mental activity" (2005:107) in some historically and socially mediated fashion. In other words, they hope to shift the emphasis from intellectuals as a social category towards intellectual praxis. They observe, rightly, that this move will allow them to "appreciate intellectualism in its full idiosyncrasy of social and historical forms while remaining

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academic exercise. Whatever Bauman's position may be, I assume here that "definition" is a rather ubiquitous, not a specifically "intellectual" speech act.

cognizant of the particular social and phenomenological dispositions that do distinguish intellectuals more broadly as social actors" (107). But they admit, somewhat bashfully, that "the... tension between the intellectual as category of analysis and as category of social distinction is a constant companion of this project" (107).

Rather than envisioning a tension between categories of analysis and of social distinction, I think we would do better to refocus our analyses *on* the mode of production of social distinction. What worries me here, in turning to study intellectual *practices*, in turning to study forms of mental activity, is that the dimension of social distinction and legitimation – in short, the realm of politics – may fall into the background.[22] Of course, Boyer and Lomnitz's article deals primarily with intellectuals' role as agents and architects of nationalism, and they in no way advocate a depoliticized analysis of intellectual activity. But what remains less clear are the politics undergirding the very existence of intellectuals as a category: that is, the *politics of the division of intellectual labor.*

From the perspective of a theory of knowledge ideologies, the very link between knowledge and personhood is what cries out to be investigated. Boyer elsewhere defines intellectuals as "social actors who have a specialized attention to knowledge, one that I define as the *phenomenology of expertise*" (2005:43) — this phenomenology being "an extension of the division and specialization of labor that allows some social actors to develop a specialized relationship to epistemic form" (44). What I would add here is that the division of labor is itself the product of a knowledge ideology in which certain persons are constru(ct)ed as specialized knowers and knowledge-bearers. I would suggest, thus, that to study intellectuals is not only to study the phenomenology and poetics of knowing, but also to study the way in which knowledge comes to be embodied in a certain set of persons through an ideological, and ultimately political project. The division of labor often has been

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[22] More accurately, the risk is that the politics of distinction will be foregrounded as an mode of reflexively understanding one's own ethnographic activity, but backgrounded at the level of analytical engagement with one's ethnographic object.

construed as society's skeleton (Smith 1991 [1776], Durkheim 1984 [1893]) when it is rather, or at least also, an ideological project and fantasy.[23]

In short, the trouble with defining intellectuals in terms of practice or phenomenology is that we too easily look past the ideological project that establishes and defines them *as* intellectuals. It is not the case, logically, that knowledge *must* be lodged differentially in any set of individuals. Contra Bauman, we need not view the intellectual as a *specialized* social identity, differentially defined against other social types. And if we do, I want to suggest, certain empirical cases will become especially inaccessible to our analysis. In particular, what about cases in which knowledge is *generalized* rather than specialized, when intellectual labor is *integrated* rather than divided?

In a problematic way, I think that the lycée philosophy class represents such a case. According to the bureaucratic documents I have examined above, its project is not to create a set of philosophical *specialists* but rather to promote "la liberté de penser, liberté constitutive de la formation de l'homme et du citoyen" [freedom of thought, the constitutive freedom of the formation of man and citizen] (Sherringham 2006:62). It is all too easy to argue that this universalizing project is disingenuous, that it in fact conceals a number of exclusions. After all, not everyone is a man or a citizen, and not everyone in French lycées receives the same degree of philosophical education, and moreover, as I have already said, philosophy teaching is subordinated to a maître and to a bureaucratic regime. Nonetheless, it strikes me as an analytic error to dismiss the ostensibly egalitarian project of the philosophy classroom, and treat only its partially disavowed hierarchical workings as real. I think instead we have to accept that, among other things, the philosophy classroom is an effort *to make everyone an intellectual*;[24] and it is just this type of ideological

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[23] Like the notion of a unified language critiqued by Bakhtin, the division of labor is "never something given but always in essence posited" (1981:270).

[24] Importantly, philosophy teaching is viewed not only as a French but also as a universal, or potentially universalizable ideal. Sherringham clearly believes that philosophy should be taught in all nations: he ends by writing about how French philosophy teaching may serve a source of inspiration for other countries seeking to improve their systems of education (2006:66-67).

project that is hard to analyze in terms of the intellectual as an *exclusive* social category. The philosophical lycée student is not a member of a specialized intellectual group nor even an adherent to a rallying cry for intellectual unity; but rather, supposedly, a coequal member of a constitutively philosophical polity. Again, this project is surely not all that sucessful in practice, not only because of external circumstances, but also partly because of its own structural limits and self-contradictions. And yet it seems to me that unless we distance ourselves from theorizing "the intellectual" as a *particular* social identity, we will prevent ourselves from comprehending the impulse towards a *universal* intellectualism.[25]

A broader point here is that we ought to suspend our faith in "the intellectual" as a generally applicable analytic category, so as to be able to analyze its underlying ideological presuppositions, residing in the knowledge ideologies that *institute* such contingent linkages between knowledge and personhood. And yet, having said this, it seems to me that such an epistemic ideology will continue to structure our scholarly practice whether or not we ostensibly call it into question. To the extent that today's scholarly system is premised on a narrow specialization of intellectual labor, on a system of embodiment of knowledge in particular socially accredited persons, it is surely either futile or self-undermining to critique this specialization at the level of pure theory.

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[25] I think one could also argue that underlying many theories of intellectuals is an ontology of the social as a differentiated field of individual or class struggle — as inherently torn and antagonistic. Such an ontology may be problematic in some analytic contexts.

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