

Introduction

PETER E. GORDON AND WARREN BRECKMAN

In November, 1917, the German sociologist Max Weber delivered a now-famous lecture, “Science as a Vocation,” before an assembly of students and faculty at the University of Munich. “The fate of our times,” he declared, “is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by the ‘disenchantment of the world.’”¹ Weber intended this remark as a global characterization of a modern society in which the natural sciences and bureaucratic rationality had conspired to undermine confidence in religious values and traditional sources of meaning. But we may also take his words as a more general verdict on the condition of modern European thought at the dawn of the twentieth century, when intellectuals from across the continent looked upon the wreckage of the First World War as a turning point in civilization, as a violent end to the nineteenth century and a grim foretaste of the world to come. Weber himself remained in a posture of ambivalence: He feared that the higher ideals of the Enlightenment were “irretrievably lost” and that only the imperative of “economic compulsion” would prevail.² He clung to the ideal of objectivity in social research even while he acknowledged that questions of ultimate significance demanded a species of personal decision exceeding the bounds of rational debate.³ When we survey the

1 Max Weber, “Wissenschaft als Beruf,” translated as “Science as a Vocation” in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. and trans. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946), 142.

2 Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the “Spirit” of Capitalism*, ed. and trans. Peter Baehr and Gordon C. Wells (London: Penguin, 2002), 121.

3 For an excellent general portrait of Max Weber, see Fritz Ringer, *Max Weber: An Intellectual Biography* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004); for Weber’s intellectual reception, see Joshua Derman, *Max Weber in Politics and Social Thought: From Charisma to Canonization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); for the classic analysis of Weber and German political history, see Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Max Weber and German Politics, 1890–1920* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990); and for a recent study of Weber’s classic work on the “Protestant Ethic,” see Peter Ghosh, *Max Weber and the Protestant Ethic: Twin Histories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

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intellectual history of twentieth-century Europe a similar ambivalence confronts us at almost every turn.⁴

In the years leading up to the Great War, many intellectuals retained their confidence in the natural sciences and in science as a paradigm for human inquiry. The sociologist Émile Durkheim inherited from Comtean positivism the strong belief that science would eventually supersede religion and that the modern division of labor would lead to a new era of individualism in which social solidarity could be achieved on the basis of purely secular ideals.⁵ The 1905 Law of Separation in France seemed to validate this secularist confidence even while it also reinforced the political chasm between modernists and traditionalists that had yawned wide in France in the wake of the Dreyfus Affair. Elsewhere in pre-war Europe intellectuals expressed themselves with similar optimism regarding the future for scientific progress. In philosophy, dominant movements such as neo-Kantianism and phenomenology subscribed to rationalist principles that harmonized well with the high-minded liberalism of the modern research university. In 1911 the founder of phenomenology Edmund Husserl combated what he saw as the relativistic threats of both psychologism and historicism and extolled the ideal of philosophy as a “rigorous science.”⁶ And in the closing years of the nineteenth century, the Viennese physician Sigmund Freud promoted psychoanalysis as a rational science of the irrational. In the clinical setting even the darkest powers of sexual desire could be drawn into the light; patients suffering from hysteria or other neuroses were promised if not a complete cure then at least the possibility of a livable truce among the warring factions of the psyche.⁷

4 For a general portrait of European intellectual history in the years of transition from the nineteenth century to the interwar years, see the classic survey by H. Stuart Hughes, *Consciousness and Society: The Reorientation of European Social Thought, 1890–1930* (New York: Vintage, 1961).

5 Steven Lukes, *Emile Durkheim: His Life and Work. A Historical and Critical Study* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1973).

6 For the classic historical introduction to phenomenology, see Herbert Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction*, 2 vols. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971); and for a biographical survey of Husserl’s life and work, see Maurice Natanson, *Edmund Husserl: Philosopher of Infinite Tasks* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974).

7 The classic biography is Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life for Our Time* (New York: Norton, 1988). More recent biographies include Joel Whitebook, *Freud: An Intellectual Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); and Élisabeth Roudinesco, *Freud: In His Time and Ours*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016). For a general account of the rise of psychoanalysis, see William J. McGrath, *Freud’s Discovery of Psychoanalysis: The Politics of Hysteria* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986); and for a methodological reflection on Freud’s biography and the general history of

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With the outbreak of the War in 1914 much of this late-bourgeois optimism in science and technology was shattered. Many intellectuals and artists shared the dark vision of the Irish poet William Butler Yeats, whose 1919 poem “The Second Coming” portrayed the postwar landscape as a secular apocalypse:

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
 Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
 The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
 The ceremony of innocence is drowned.

Between 1918 and 1923, the German writer Oswald Spengler published his bestselling work *The Decline of the West*, a dramatic and speculative inquiry into the philosophy of history that warned of a tragic future awaiting the “Faustian” spirit of Western civilization.⁸ Freud himself, despite his understanding of psychoanalysis as a modern science, also permitted himself to speculate in a more tragic key: In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1919) he introduced the notion of a “death drive” that stood in seemingly irresolvable conflict with the creative power of the libido or “eros.” The new emphasis on the irrational became a prominent theme in social and political theory as well. Even before the war Georges Sorel had published his *Reflections on Violence*, a theory of mass-mobilization that emphasized the role of emotion-laden beliefs or “myths” in collective actions such as the mass-strike. Among Sorel’s disciples was Benito Mussolini, who came to power as the leader of the Italian Fascist party in 1922. The rise of European fascism in the 1920s and 1930s had many causes, but it clearly signals the loss of confidence in rational deliberation and the gradual dissolution of liberal-parliamentary forms of government after the catastrophe of the Great War.⁹

The interwar years were a time of intellectual disorientation and experimentation in which many philosophers struggled to resist pessimistic feelings

psychoanalysis, see John Toews, “Historicizing Psychoanalysis: Freud in His Time and for Our Time,” *The Journal of Modern History*, 63(3) (September 1991), 504–545. An accessible history is Stephen A. Mitchell and Margaret J. Black, *Freud and Beyond: A History of Modern Psychoanalytic Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 2016); Freud’s own controversial views of this history are recorded in Sigmund Freud, *The History of the Psychoanalytic Movement and Other Papers* (New York: Collier Books, 1963). Also see Eli Zaretsky, *Political Freud: A History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

8 For Spengler in comparative perspective, see Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

9 Zeev Sternhell, Mario Sznajder, and Maia Ashéri, *The Birth of Fascist Ideology: From Cultural Rebellion to Political Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); and Ernst Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism: Action Française, Italian Fascism, National Socialism* (New York: New American Library, 1969).

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of civilizational decline and yearned for new or long-forgotten modes of “re-enchancement.”¹⁰ Even before the war, in his last major work of sociology, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912), Durkheim had turned in the direction of comparative ethnography and introduced the startling notion that all societies whether modern or “primitive” adhere to certain categories of the “sacred,” a suggestion that would inspire students such as Marcel Mauss to turn a nostalgic eye toward ritual celebrations such as the Native American “potlatch” that seemed to promise an alternative to the rationalized forms of capitalist exchange.¹¹ A related interest in the “sacred” and irrational character of the social bond would inspire the circle of French intellectuals, including Georges Bataille and Roger Callois, that briefly formed in the later 1930s under the fanciful name of the “Collège de Sociologie.”¹² The years leading up to and following World War I also saw an explosion of new movements in both philosophy and theology. In his 1907 *Creative Evolution*, the French philosopher Henri Bergson introduced the notion of an *élan vital*, a mystical or intuitive “vital force” that was to become a major theme in the European movement of *vitalism* or *Lebensphilosophie* that also included thinkers such as the sociologist Georg Simmel and the philosopher Max Scheler.¹³ In the school of phenomenology as well, the 1920s was an era of rebellion against the rationalist and scientific ambitions of its founder Edmund Husserl. By 1927, Martin Heidegger, Husserl’s most prominent student, had emerged as the exponent of a new style of “existential” phenomenology that called

10 For general portraits of European intellectual history in the first portion of the twentieth century, see H. Stuart Hughes, *The Obstructed Path: French Social Thought in the Years of Desperation, 1930–1960* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1987); on interwar Germany, see Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001); and Peter E. Gordon, *Continental Divide: Heidegger, Cassirer, Davos* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

11 The definitive biographical study is Marcel Fournier, *Marcel Mauss: A Biography*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015); for a superb collection of critical essays, see Wendy James and N. J. Allen (eds.), *Marcel Mauss: A Centenary Tribute* (New York: Berghahn Books, 1998); and for a later assessment by the doyen of French structuralist anthropology, see Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss* (London: Routledge, 1987 [1950]).

12 See Michele H. Richman, *Sacred Revolutions: Durkheim and the Collège de Sociologie* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002); also see Frank Pearce, “Introduction: The Collège de Sociologie and French Social Thought,” *Economy and Society*, 32(1) (February 2003), 1–6.

13 On Bergson’s philosophy, see Frédéric Worms and Camille Riquier (eds.), *Lire Bergson*, 2nd edn. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2013); also see Giuseppe Bianco, *Après Bergson: Portrait de groupe avec philosophe* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2015). For German *Lebensphilosophie* and the natural sciences in Germany, see Anne Harrington, *Reenchanted Science: Holism in German Culture from Wilhelm II to Hitler* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

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philosophers to turn away from the erroneous path of post-Cartesian reason and return to the long-forgotten understanding of “Being.” In the coming years, and notwithstanding his shameful record of political enthusiasm for Nazism, Heidegger would emerge as one of the most consequential philosophers of the twentieth century.¹⁴

Alongside existentialism and vitalism, however, the yearning for new kinds of experience and meaning beyond the constraints of modern rationalism also helps to explain the emergence of new trends in modern theology in the years following the War. In 1918 Karl Barth published the first edition of his *Epistle to the Romans*, an explosive challenge to the forms of liberal Protestantism that had remained dominant throughout the nineteenth century. Barth was only the most prominent among the Protestant thinkers of the twentieth century who found new inspiration in Søren Kierkegaard’s rebellion against Kantian-liberal and establishment Protestantism and sought to affirm the absolute reality of God in an otherwise godless age.¹⁵ Jewish philosophers such as Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Buber spoke to a similar yearning; Christian intellectuals such as Gabriel Marcel and Paul Tillich interlaced their theologies with existentialism; and beginning in the 1920s many Catholic intellectuals followed the example of Jacques Maritain in a so-called “*renouveau catholique*” that broke with the anti-modernist tendencies of nineteenth-century Roman Catholicism and led to a revival of Thomism.¹⁶

In European politics and in the sciences, the first decades of the twentieth century were a time of revolution and dramatic innovation. The Bolshevik revolution in Russia brought to power a regime that claimed to follow the

- 14 For a judicious introduction, see Mark Wrathall, *How to Read Heidegger* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006); excellent and relatively accessible interpretative essays are collected in Charles Guignon (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); for an assessment of Heidegger’s political record, see Tom Rockmore, *On Heidegger’s Nazism and Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); also see Hans Sluga, *Heidegger’s Crisis: Philosophy and Politics in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).
- 15 Bruce L. McCormack, *Karl Barth’s Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development, 1909–1936* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997); also see Gary Dorrien, *The Barthian Revolt in Modern Theology: Theology without Weapons* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000).
- 16 Peter E. Gordon, *Rosenzweig and Heidegger: Between Judaism and German Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Paul R. Mendes-Flohr, *From Mysticism to Dialogue: Martin Buber’s Transformation of German Social Thought* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989); Stephen Schloesser, *Jazz Age Catholicism: Mystic Modernism in Postwar Paris, 1919–1933* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005); on Maritain’s inspirational role in modernist aesthetics, see Rajesh Heynicks and Jan de Maeyer (eds.), *The Maritain Factor: Taking Religion into Interwar Modernism* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2010).

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explicit doctrines of Marxism as modified by V. I. Lenin, whose theory of the party vanguard furnished a justification for one-party rule and had already set the Soviet Union on a path toward dictatorship by the end of the 1920s. Meanwhile in Western Europe, aborted attempts at revolution (such as in Munich in 1918–1919) briefly awakened the utopian hopes of left-wing intellectuals who thereafter would spend the interwar era locked in theoretical and practical disputes over the respective merits of revolution versus political reform. Revolution was also on the horizon in the physical sciences. Just as Charles Darwin's theories had dramatically transformed our understanding of evolution and natural selection in the nineteenth century, so too Albert Einstein would transform our understanding of the nature of space and time in the twentieth century. In 1905 Einstein published his paper "On the Electrodynamics of Moving Bodies," in which he introduced the theory of special relativity that dramatically revised longstanding principles of Newtonian physics. This was complemented some years later by the theory of general relativity that transformed our understanding of gravity and presaged astronomical discoveries of the later twentieth century such as black holes and the cosmic microwave background radiation that confirmed the "Big Bang" theory of the origin of the universe.¹⁷

British intellectual life in the 1920s and 1930s remained more or less immune from the disorientation and political radicalism that dominated public discussion on the European Continent. But in London, a small group of intellectuals known as the "Bloomsbury Circle" nourished progressive thinking about diverse topics including feminism, literature, and economics.¹⁸ In 1929 the novelist Virginia Woolf published "A Room of One's Own," a central text in early-twentieth-century feminism; and in 1936 John Maynard Keynes published his magnum opus, *A General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money*, a major challenge to neoclassical economics and a foundational text in the development of the modern welfare state. Meanwhile, in academic circles England also served as the site for the emergence of a revolutionary new style of "analytic philosophy." Building on the achievements of Rudolf Carnap and the "Vienna Circle" of logical

¹⁷ For a general account of Einstein's achievements, see Abraham Pais, "Subtle is the Lord . . .": *The Science and the Life of Albert Einstein* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982); for a broader perspective, see Helge Kragh, *Quantum Generations: A History of Physics in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

¹⁸ For a general portrait of the Bloomsbury group, see Leon Edel, *Bloomsbury: A House of Lions* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1979); for a collection of memoirs and criticism, see S. P. Rosenbaum, *The Bloomsbury Group: A Collection of Memoirs and Commentary* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).

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positivism, Ludwig Wittgenstein wrote a pathbreaking work, the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921) that captured the attention of both Bertrand Russell and Alfred North Whitehead at the University of Cambridge.¹⁹ It was through the combined efforts of Wittgenstein and philosophers at Cambridge that the new species of “analytic philosophy” was born and spread to Anglophone countries and eventually to Europe in the decades following World War II.²⁰ Over the course of the decades, as it came to dominate the Anglophone philosophical profession, analytic philosophy took on an increasingly academic character and assumed a posture of political neutrality.²¹

From the 1920s until the end of World War II, political theorists and cultural critics on the European Continent were drawn increasingly away from the “consensus” politics of liberal democracy and toward the political extremes.²² On the right, many thinkers such as the Italian philosopher Giovanni Gentile and the German legal theorist Carl Schmitt turned against democratic pieties and affirmed the unity of the people and the primacy of the absolutist state.²³ For Gentile the terms “state” and “individual” belonged in a “necessary synthesis,” while for Schmitt the state must always defend its unity: the essence of “the political” was the distinction between friend and enemy in which there always lurked the possibility of war. On the left, advocates of communist revolution in the West struggled with the question as to why the proletariat had not come to power as Marx had predicted. In reflecting on this problem, more sophisticated intellectuals were drawn into theoretical debates concerning the nature of working-class consciousness and

19 The classic portrait of Wittgenstein is Ray Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius* (London: Penguin, 1991); for a brilliant if historically inventive novel that portrays Wittgenstein and his circle in Cambridge see Bruce Duffy, *The World as I Found It* (New York: New York Review Books, 2010). For an engaging if impressionistic cultural portrait of intellectual movements before World War I, see Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973).

20 For a philosophical history that emphasizes its Austrian roots see Michael Dummett, *Origins of Analytic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996).

21 Thomas L. Akehurst, “British Analytic Philosophy: The Politics of an Apolitical Culture,” *History of Political Thought*, 30(4) (2009), 678–692. For a general overview of post-1945 intellectual life in Great Britain, see Stefan Collini, *Absent Minds: Intellectuals in Britain* (London: Oxford University Press, 2006).

22 Sandrine Sanos, *The Aesthetics of Hate: Far-Right Intellectuals, Antisemitism, and Gender in 1930s France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012). For a synthesis of fascism in Europe, see Robert Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (New York: Vintage, 2005); for a classic critique of the intellectual romance with communism during the 1940s and 1950s, see Raymond Aron, *The Opium of the Intellectuals* (New York: Routledge, 2001 [1955]).

23 John P. McCormick, *Carl Schmitt's Critique of Liberalism: Against Politics as Technology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

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the possibility that it had become denatured in bourgeois society. Founding theorists in the tradition of “Western Marxism” such as Antonio Gramsci in Italy and the Hungarian-born Georg (or György) Lukács developed subtle and even rarefied philosophical answers to this problem that often drew them away from the frequently dogmatic slogans that were favored among Marxist ideologues in the Soviet sphere.²⁴ The philosophers and cultural theorists associated with the Institute for Social Research, or “Frankfurt School,” including Theodor W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, and Walter Benjamin, developed an especially sophisticated social-theoretical critique of modern capitalist society that married Marxism with psychoanalysis to explain both the social-structural and the psychological aspects of social domination.²⁵

During World War II many intellectuals and artists were compelled to flee the Continent, some because they were known to oppose or suspected of opposing the rising forces of fascism and others because they feared capture by regimes that now identified them as “racial” enemies. These intellectuals comprised what has been called the great intellectual migration that brought new talent from Europe to America. Others fled to Great Britain or Palestine, and to Central and South America. Many swore never to return to Europe or, after the war, would make only occasional visits back to the countries in which they had suffered persecution and where friends or even members of their immediate family had been murdered. Among those who left the Continent were novelists such as Thomas and Heinrich Mann, political theorists and philosophers such as Hannah Arendt and Hans Jonas, and composers and writers such as Arnold Schoenberg, Kurt Weill, and Berthold Brecht.²⁶ The core members of the Frankfurt School emigrated to

24 See Andrew Arato and Paul Breines, *The Young Lukács and the Origins of Western Marxism* (New York: Seabury Press, 1979); and James Joll, *Antonio Gramsci* (New York: Viking Press, 1977). For a general overview, see Perry Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism* (London: Verso, 1976); also see Martin Jay, *Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a Concept from Lukács to Habermas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

25 Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923–1950* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

26 On the intellectual migration to Los Angeles, see Ehrhard Bahr, *Weimar on the Pacific: German Exile Culture in Los Angeles and the Crisis of Modernism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); for the classic edited collection, see Bernard Bailyn and Donald Fleming (eds.), *The Intellectual Migration: Europe and America 1930–1960* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969); also see H. Stuart Hughes, *The Sea Change: The Migration of Social Thought 1930–1965* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975). On Hannah Arendt, see Elisabeth Young-Bruhl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*, 2nd edn. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004); and for a comprehensive philosophical analysis, see Seyla Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).

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New York and Los Angeles; Walter Benjamin, who had remained in France during the 1930s, sought escape but died in 1940 at the Spanish border. The political philosopher Leo Strauss found refuge at the University of Cambridge before eventually emigrating to the United States. The great literary historian and philologist Erich Auerbach fled Germany to Istanbul.

The painful memory of discrimination and persecution in Europe left many intellectuals with a strong need to comprehend the nature of fascist rule. Some who inclined to Marxist historical categories clung to the explanation that fascism represented the final phase of capitalism in crisis; others such as Hannah Arendt identified traits shared in common by both Nazism and Stalinism and analyzed the general phenomenon of “totalitarianism.”²⁷ Conservative political philosophers tended to see Nazism as an upsurge of mass-society or an expression of a modern and merely “technical” approach to politics that ignored the wisdom of tradition. The British political philosopher Isaiah Berlin spoke of a contrast between “negative” and “positive” liberty, and warned of the overzealous attempt by political philosophers since the Enlightenment to impose a single standard of value upon the diversity of human nature.²⁸ After the war, European intellectuals and academics who had been either reluctant or enthusiastic supporters of the fascist regimes or who had remained silent were now seen as collaborators.²⁹ Martin Heidegger underwent a short period of scrutiny during the postwar Allied occupation but, despite his record of zealous support of Nazism, managed to revive his philosophical career and enjoyed a new prestige, especially in France.³⁰ The pro-fascist and anti-Semitic novelist Louis-Ferdinand Céline fled France to Denmark after the war and was convicted in absentia for collaboration, but later returned to France and continued to write fiction. The German novelist Ernst Jünger went through a similar process of rehabilitation and in the postwar years was celebrated for his fiction despite continued controversies regarding his affinities with the ideologies of the “conservative revolution.”³¹

27 Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1951).

28 Joshua Cherniss, *A Mind and Its Time: The Development of Isaiah Berlin's Political Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); and Michael Ignatieff, *Isaiah Berlin: A Life* (New York: Metropolitan, 1998).

29 For a fascinating reconstruction of the controversy surrounding the French author Robert Brasillach, see Alice Kaplan, *The Collaborator: The Trial and Execution of Robert Brasillach* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

30 Ethan Kleinberg, *Generation Existential: Heidegger's Philosophy in France, 1927–1961* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007); for the reception of Carl Schmitt's work see Jan Werner Müller, *A Dangerous Mind: Carl Schmitt in Post-War European Thought* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

31 Elliott Y. Neaman, *A Dubious Past: Ernst Jünger and the Politics of Literature after Nazism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

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Such instances of intellectual complicity with fascism were widespread; but it is no less instructive to recall cases of heroism and resistance, by authors such as Albert Camus and Samuel Beckett, both of whom were active members of the French Resistance. Beckett's play, "Waiting for Godot," originally composed in French and premiered on the French stage in 1953, is widely esteemed as one of the finest specimens of European modernism – in 1969 Beckett would receive the Nobel Prize for Literature. But its great abstraction often leaves readers with the impression that the play has little political content, whereas in fact Beckett was a deeply *engagée* author who remained throughout his life thoroughly committed to the causes of political freedom and human rights.³²

The rebirth of European democracy after World War II brought renewed legitimacy and prestige to the "public intellectual," a species of institutionally unaffiliated writer or critic who claimed to speak for ostensibly universal ideas.³³ The nineteenth-century prototype of the public intellectual was Émile Zola, the novelist who came to political prominence during the Dreyfus Affair. After the Great War, the French novelist Julien Benda assumed a similar role in *La Trahison des Clercs* (*The Treason of the Intellectuals*, published in 1927) in which he asserted that public intellectuals should not betray their true commitment to universal and eternal norms by embracing the temporary idols of nationalism. Intellectual life in *fin-de-siècle* Europe was often found in *La Bohème* or "bohemia," the counter-cultural sphere made famous by Giacomo Puccini in his 1896 opera. As the historian Jerrold Seigel observed, bohemia and bourgeois society emerged simultaneously but in opposition to one another.³⁴ Intellectuals unattached to the research university often felt themselves drawn to the romantic ideal of the outsider's society, and typically convened in small groups of like-minded writers and critics such as the "Bloomsbury" group in London, the George Circle in Germany, or the Collège de Sociologie in Paris.

After 1945, however, public intellectuals gained new importance. In part because so many career academics in the universities had compromised themselves during the era of fascism, those individuals who could plausibly claim to have participated in the resistance, such as Albert Camus and Jean-

32 Emilie Morin, *Beckett's Political Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

33 Benjamin Aldes Wurgaft, *Thinking in Public: Strauss, Levinas, Arendt* (Philadelphia: Penn Press, 2015).

34 Jerrold Seigel, *Bohemian Paris: Culture, Politics, and the Boundaries of Bourgeois Life, 1830–1930* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1999).

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Paul Sartre, appeared to many as heroes with the moral authority to speak for higher ideals.³⁵ In Paris special prominence came to *Les Temps Modernes*, the journal of philosophy and political criticism founded in 1945 by Sartre along with his associates Simone de Beauvoir, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Raymond Aron. The English journalist and essayist George Orwell enjoyed a comparable authority in the immediate postwar years for his criticism of totalitarianism in political allegories such as *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949); while the philosopher Bertrand Russell became a public firebrand in Cold War debates over imperialism and nuclear disarmament. In Germany, philosophers such as Karl Jaspers helped to promote the re-founding of democracy, while members of the Frankfurt School who had spent the war years in exile returned in the 1950s as critics of what they considered the persistent strains of authoritarianism in German culture.³⁶

The new ethos of public criticism in postwar Europe should not be exaggerated. The surrounding culture remained deeply conformist and fearful of any tendencies that threatened the uncertain ideological consensus that had formed under the aegis of anti-communism and Christian Democracy. Theologians such as Jacques Maritain helped to forge a new language of human rights that was installed in the founding charter of the United Nations, even while it was not always clear that Europeans were willing to extend these rights to colonial peoples beyond the European sphere.³⁷ The dissonance between universal ideals and colonial reality became a major theme in the writing of anti-colonial intellectuals and political dissidents such as Mohandas K. Gandhi and Frantz Fanon, who bore witness to the humiliation of non-European subjects in colonized territories. Fanon, a psychiatrist born in Trinidad, would emerge as an especially trenchant critic of colonial conditions in French Algeria in classic works such as *Les damnés de la terre* (*The Wretched of the Earth*, 1961) for which Sartre wrote an admiring preface.³⁸

35 See, for example, Mark Poster, *Existential Marxism in Postwar France: From Sartre to Althusser* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976).

36 On the intellectual debate over the Nazi legacy in Germany, see A. Dirk Moses, *German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

37 Samuel Moyn, *Christian Human Rights* (Philadelphia: Penn Press, 2015).

38 On Sartre and French intellectuals' responses to decolonization, see James D. Le Sueur, *Uncivil War: Intellectuals and Identity Politics during the Decolonization of Algeria* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 32–61. On the history of anti-colonial thought, see Gary Wilder, *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015); and David Macey, *Frantz Fanon: A Biography* (London: Verso, 2012). For a critical reading of European literature in the matrix of the imperialist imagination, see the classic work by Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993).