

Beyond Binaries The Category of Body and Ontological Tripartition

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Dominant interpretations of Western philosophy have presented it as being epistemologically and ontologically binary, with a schism between what are cursorily called ideation and sensation, mind and matter, running through most of it, dividing it into two sets of dogmatic and non-penetrating schools. This rigid dichotomy is conveniently presented in the academic theatrics of Platonic Realism versus Aristotelian Nominalism in the Graeco-Roman age, Cartesian Rationalism versus Lockean Empiricism after the Renaissance, and Idealism versus Materialism in the nineteenth century.

However, quite at odds with this mind-matter dichotomy, an interesting feature in 'theory', that is contemporary attempts to read literature and culture, whether of the politically charged cultural materialist type or the relatively apolitical structuralist type, is a focus on a certain ontological tripartition of the domains of analysis into mind, matter and body.

On the one hand, political attempts to read culture in terms of race, class and gender refer precisely to the three domains mentioned above, race being primarily an ideological 'mental' construct based on language, religion, etc., class being straightforwardly 'material', and gender being primarily located in 'physical' disparities. Keeping aside Marxist, feminist and anti-colonialist modes of reading, where the tripartition is obvious but exclusive, with only one ontological pole being taken up for each mode, and turning towards exponents of more inclusive political analyses like Foucault or Habermas, the ontological tripartition takes up more interesting hues. A cursory glance at Foucault's *œuvre* confirms his engagement with this tripartition. He begins by relating power to knowledge in his earliest works, *Mental Illness and Psychology* (1954) and *Madness and*

Civilization (1961), and soon includes the body into the schema in his *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963), thus foreboding a tripartite structure. By his *The Order of Things* (1966), the tripartition is sufficiently concretized, so that he can discuss the evolution of human sciences in terms of the three disciplines of language, economics and life sciences. The tripartition gets a political turn after 1968, to be reflected in Foucault's subsequent works, first in lectures and articles written on the political nature of linguistic discourse, next in his *Discipline and Punish* (1975), where he studies power in the domain of socio-politico-economic materiality, and finally in his three-volume *The History of Sexuality* (1976, 1984, 1984)¹. Similarly, Habermas shows in his *Knowledge and Human Interests* (1968), that both 'scientism' and the hermeneutic tradition present inadequate and reductionist views of knowledge, with the former's objectivism and the latter's subjectivism hiding the politically motivated nature of all knowledge. For him, this system of power is perpetrated through certain 'techniques', comprising the 'technocracy' through which knowledge is dispensed in advanced capitalist societies. In his *Legitimation Crisis* (1973), Habermas shows how there are three main types of techniques: those concerning a material production of 'things', those concerning a (mental) signification use of 'signs', and those concerning a domination of physical individual beings. Furthermore, he takes up the same tripartition in his *Communication and the Evolution of Society* (1976), to show how in advanced capitalism, to assure its governance, a regime cannot but take care of three domains: the knowledge or policy behind production, the actual material production and fulfilment of collective needs, and also individual physiological needs.²

On the other hand, within the relatively apolitical pole of structuralist analysis of narratives too, one can see the same ontological tripartition at work in the likes of Dumézil, Greimas or Barthes, who also show a similar insistence on tripartition of matrices of structuration into the domains of signification communication, material power and physical desire. Georges Dumézil in his *Mythe et épopée* (3 vols., 1968, 1971, 1973) talks about the functional tripartition of Indo-European ideology, so that its folktales get articulated with one of the three archetypal forms as their protagonists: a warrior, a man of knowledge, or a king. The title of Vol. II of this book—*Mythe et épopée: Types épiques indo-européens: un héros, un sorcier, un roi*—makes the tripartition clear³. The ontological tripartition thus arrived at gets a syntactic form in Algirdas-Julien

Greimas and his actantial model presented in *Structural Semantics* (1966), where the categories of the triad are given syntagmatic forms in performantial, contractual and disjunctional syntagms, and paradigmatic forms of desire, knowledge and power in the narrative syntax⁴. For Greimas, all narratives can be conceived as the action of three primary syntagms in these three domains I have already mentioned. The tripartition thus formalized gets a more radicalized form in Roland Barthes, who in his analysis of the 'classic text' in *S/Z* (1970), takes up these three categories as the very domains in which dominant ideology works to set up its normative narrative forms so that an economy of signs, sexes and fortunes determines the normative structure of a narrative, and in a subversion of which lies an unearthing of the limit of such dominant 'classic' forms⁵.

This tripartition has very interesting parallels in classical Indian philosophy, where, as opposed to the general duality in Western thought, where epistemic validity is ascribed either to sensual perception or to ideational inference, most of the philosophical schools believe in the simultaneous and equal validity of not only these two epistemologies—*pratyakṣa* and *anumāna*, but also of a third one—that of verbal testimony or *āgama*. In most of classical Indian philosophy accepting a tripartition of epistemic modes, the duality of mind and matter in Western philosophy is dissolved into an ontological tripartition, and one sees how right from intra-individual qualities to elements of the cosmological trinity, ancient Indian philosophy projects a tripartition of domains into the triad of mentality, materiality and physicality. At the most atomistic level of intra-individuality, all schools of classical Indian philosophy believe that every individual is equipped with three basic *guṇa*-s, or qualities—*sattva*, or the propensity to knowledge, *rajas*, or the propensity towards material accretion, and *tamas*, or the propensity to physical luxuriation. Accordingly, at the extra-individual level, classical Indian philosophy envisages four *puruṣārtha*-s, or goals in an individual life, three of which—*dharma*, or the pursuit of knowledge and moral ethics; *artha*, or the pursuit of wealth and material power; and *kāma*, or the following of the needs of the body—correspond to the three basic propensities, and the fourth, *mokṣa*, is a means to escape the excesses of these three. Similarly, in the social domain, it provides for three upper castes—the *brāhmaṇa*, dedicated to knowledge, the *kṣatriya*, dedicated to warfare and acts of physical prowess, and the *vaiśya*, dedicated to business and material pursuits—with a fourth lower caste, the *śūdra*, operating as labour

in all the three modes of production thus delineated. Moving over to Hindu cosmology, the creation, sustenance and destruction of the universe are credited to a trinity, which itself consists of a set of three feminine and three masculine principles and deities. Thus, one has three goddesses—Sarasvati, the goddess of knowledge, Laksmi, the goddess of material wealth, and Kali or Durga, the goddess of physical prowess and fertility—corresponding to the three poles of the triad, and three gods as their respective consorts—Brahma, credited with creating this world, Viṣṇu, who sustains the world, and Śiva, who destroys the world. Therefore, the triad of cosmological principles that classical Indian philosophy cultivates—that of *śṛṣṭi* (creation), *sthiti* (sustenance) and *laya* (destruction)—is also connected to the basic tripartition of modes of structuration into the domains of mentality, materiality and physicality.

The spectacular nature of such eclectic comparativism apart, it would be of much greater interest to see how within Western philosophy itself there have been repeated attempts to go beyond the epistemological dichotomy of thinking and feeling, and inject within the mind-matter dyad the third ontological category of the body. What would be thus more rewarding is to see when and how and under what circumstances the dominantly dichotomous Western thought shows signs of tripartition—either of an epistemic nature, by somehow bridging the gap between ideation and sensation into a third epistemology, or of an ontological nature by making *body* emerge as a positivity between mind and matter. Thus can one trace a genealogy of contemporary theory, whose difference with dominant constructions of erstwhile philosophy is marked majorly by its insistence on the category of the body and the resultant ontological tripartition.

Embarking on such a project, one's attention is drawn immediately to the interstices between the periods of dominant dichotomy in Western thought. One sees how the entire corpus of medieval scholastic logic comes between the Graeco-Roman age and the Renaissance; Romantic philosophy stands sandwiched between the post-Renaissance *episteme* and the nineteenth century, and of course, there is a huge body of thought from the end of the nineteenth century to the contemporary day. It would be worthwhile therefore to see if these three interstices show signs of a similar tripartition. Interestingly, one can show that both medieval scholastic logic and Romanticism inculcate embodied imagination as a third epistemological category beyond mental ideation and material sensation, resulting also in a

physicalist ontological tripartition, and by the end of the nineteenth century, the works of Darwin, Marx and Freud clearly show the appearance as ontological categories of the domains of physicality, mentality and materiality, respectively.

Medieval philosophy, generally thought to be operative in the period between St. Augustine (354-430) and William of Ockham (c.1300-1349), marks the development of a third epistemological category that Victor Cousin has called 'conceptualism', which stands equidistant from realism and nominalism, and leads to the possibility of the first tripartition in Western thought. Augustine fulfils both the epistemological and ontological needs of the tripartition to a certain extent, when he provides for an epistemic category between sensation and reason by stating that beyond the five external senses, there is also an 'interior sense', which is distinct from reason, because even animals, whose difference with humans lies in their not being rational, possess it, and when he asserts in his *Sermons* (CL, 3, 4) that the rationale of philosophy is to provide the means for a happy physical life. Similarly, William of Ockham classifies the terms of discourse into three categories: mental, spoken (i.e. physically articulated), and written (i.e. materially present), and goes on to show how universals are not realities that exist outside the mind either as objects or as absolute rational truths, but are exclusively mental 'concepts', residing within the embodied space of the mind or the brain. Having dealt with the two temporal extremes of medieval philosophy, I will now turn to Peter Abélard (1079-1142), who is surely the most important figure of the period from the current perspective.

On the one hand, Abélard refutes the 'ultra-realism' of Remigius of Auxerre (d. 908), John Scotus Eriugena (d. c.877-79) and St. Anselm (1033-1109), who, following Boethius (c.470-c.525) and his *Commentaries* on the *Isagoge* of Porphyry, claim that all substances have behind them an 'extra-mental' ideal unitary reality, by showing that the commonality in universals is simultaneously and entirely present in each of the singulars and constitutes their very substance. On the other, Abélard also attacks the view of William of Champeaux (1070-1121) that there is one 'material essence' in all individuals of the same kind and also his 'indifferentist' doctrine, or that a universal is formed on the basis of the lack of difference between individuals of a certain kind. For Abélard, such a universal is not possible, because being a collection of individual parts, it cannot be prior to the individuals, and thus not universal. This makes Abélard conclude that there is no universality extra-

mentally, either in the world of *a priori* rational principles or in the world of things, because only the mind can form out of them universal concepts through abstraction. His stance is thus of 'moderate realism', as opposed to the ultra-realism mentioned earlier as also nominalism. This potential bridging of the realist-nominalist divide leads Abélard to three sets of tripartition. At an epistemological level, Abélard shows in his *Tractatus de intellectibus*, how there are three faculties of human cognition: *sensus*, or the empirical sense organs, *imaginatio*, or the conceptual apparatus that receives and orders sense impressions, and the *intellectus*, or the rational category that forms universals out of these ordered impressions⁶. What is to be noted is that this *imaginatio* can easily be seen to operate in an embodied physical space, the embodied mind, as opposed to the essentially material sources of sensation, and the very ideational sources of intellection. It should also be noted that the way in which the *imaginatio* orders sensual information is considered by Abélard to be idiosyncratic, thereby hinting at its existential nature, something to be determined in accordance with the individual's actual physical existence. At an ontological level, Abélard shows in his *Logica* how it is through words that the *imaginatio* sifts particulars as universals, and distinguishes in his *Dialectique* sounds which signify by nature, like the barking of dogs, and those which signify by convention, to lead to his tripartition of *res* (things), physically articulated *vox* (words as mere vocalized breath, *flatus vocis*), and the mental and significative *sermo* (words as ideas). At the cosmological level, as opposed to traditional monist Christian theology, which, in spite of recognizing the trinity, dissolves the tripartition in the unitary godhead, Abélard attributes distinct capacities to the three elements of the trinity. He equates the Father with power (*potentia*), the Son with wisdom (*sapientia*) and the Holy Spirit with goodness (*benignitas*), thereby coming very close to the power-knowledge-desire tripartition already talked about, without the desire or well-being pole being identical with the body in this case.

Just as medieval scholastic logic comes in an interstice between the dominant dichotomies of classical realism/nominalism and post-Renaissance rationalism/empiricism, Romanticism also occurs as a philosophy in the interstice between rationalism/empiricism and idealism/materialism. Accordingly, it can be expected that Romantic philosophy would also show both the features of scholastic logic: that of devising a third alternate epistemology which breaks through the dichotomy of sensation and ideation, and that of resorting to an

ontological tripartition, introducing the body in the dual schema of mind and matter. This is precisely what one can notice in Romanticism. The epistemological shift in Romanticism from both Cartesian Rationalism and Lockean Empiricism occurs in its construction of the third epistemological category of 'imagination'. On the one hand, this should make one recall the Abélardian category of *imaginatio*. On the other, what is even more interesting is that imagination is ideational and therefore non-empirical, and also imaginary and therefore non-rational, thereby breaking through both the stereotypical epistemic modes of Western thought. Furthermore, Romanticism is characterized by a reliance on the body, and therefore on tripartition, at the other two levels too: ontologically, it talks about physical beauty as the prime category of this world; ethically, it talks about a return to the primal and physical 'nature' on the one hand, and a cultivation of isolationism of the body on the other. This isolation of the body-beautiful can be seen in the Wordsworthian privileging of solitude or when Byron calls himself an 'aristocratic rebel', and idolizes in himself, and in Napoleon, it is the image of the Antichrist, while the passage from sensational 'beauty' to rational 'truth' through the three levels of the pleasure thermometer, comprising mental signification 'music', material 'nature' and physical 'love' can be noted especially in Keats.

Similarly, in the third 'interstice' of the late nineteenth century, one can notice how the new-found category of power and struggle as the base of structuration easily branches off into an ontological tripartition, with three of its most representative thinkers—Charles Darwin (1809-1882), Karl Marx (1818-1883), and Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) talking about the 'struggle for existence' in the physical biological domain, 'class struggle' in the material economic domain, and the struggle between contesting drives in the mental psychological domain, respectively. Marx in fact goes on to provide the epistemological tripartition too when he stresses on 'Dialectical Materialism', or on that it is only with a combination of dialectics and materialism—of the 'self' and matter—that one can understand the formation of knowledge and society. In fact, his insistence on the mode of economic production being the base of reality is because this is the mode *per excellence* through which the human subject and the material object can come in a relationship.

While divergence from dominant dichotomy, and hence a tripartition of modes of thought both epistemologically and ontologically, would be quite expected of the 'interstices' of Western

philosophy, it may be much more interesting to examine whether right from within the dominantly binary post-Renaissance rationalist/idealist-empiricist/materialist philosophy there rises the possibility of a tripartition of modes of thought, with a bridging of the gap between ideation and sensation and an inclusion of the body in the bipartite polemic. It is with this in mind that the current paper finds Schopenhauer and Berkeley, otherwise trusted custodians of the two antagonistic poles, advocating a bridging of the philosophic schism.

It can be seen how from within high rationalism-idealism, Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) takes up the synthetic project of bridging perception and ideation by providing for the category of 'Will' in his *The World as Will and Representation* (1818) as the basis of knowledge⁷. Knowledge, for Schopenhauer, is thus neither the product of an immanent rational subjectivity nor an *a priori* domain of inert materiality, but of the bridging of the two, of the ideal subject intending and acting on the material object. Similarly, from within high empiricism, one can find the most remarkable advance in the direction of bridging the gap between sensation and ideation in George Berkeley (1685-1763), who denies the very existence of matter, albeit from an empirical perspective, stating that material objects exist only through being perceived. In his *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710), Berkeley shows that first, though all our knowledge is attained through perception, we do not perceive material things themselves, but only colours, sounds and like qualities, which are all 'mental' constructs, and secondly, that though first impressions are based on particular instances of matter, knowledge consists in arriving at generalizations from these sensory impressions, and so knowledge, in spite of being based on empirical encounters with matter, exists in the domain of ideas⁸. Thus, from within the dichotomous poles of post-Renaissance Western philosophy, we find the epistemological 'tripartition' or the blending of the apparently incollapsible poles of mind and matter into a syncretic third epistemology.

However, what is even more the interesting to note is that the tripartition happens even at the ontological level, with the *body* emerging as a category in the works of many philosophers within this dichotomous episteme, and I devote the rest of the paper to a study of some of these. In this genealogical search for the corporeal bases of 'theory' that makes this paper read Spinoza, Rousseau, Helvetius and Condorcet, Comte and Nietzsche as philosophers of the body, taking thought beyond the binary enlightenment, to the ontologically tripartite 'end of philosophy'.

The first philosopher that I will mention in this context is Spinoza (1634-77), in whom one can locate, in a fashion similar to Bacon or Harvey, a composition of philosophy on the body. His chief works are the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (1670), *Tractatus Politicus* (1677) and *The Ethics* (1672-77). In the first text, where he discusses religious theory, instead of talking about the ideational category of God, he talks about interpreting the body of the text of *The Bible*. In the second text, dealing with political theory mostly derived from Hobbes, Spinoza talks about the benefits of monarchy, with the body of the monarch representing sovereign power. I would concentrate on the third text concerning the ethics of Spinoza to show how he privileges the body as a category of knowledge and society.

Spinoza's ethics is quite different from any idealist moral code, because he shows that 'good' and 'evil' have a physiological basis, where the need for self-preservation determines what is profitable or 'virtuous' for the body and what is not. He says,

*Every man, by the laws of his nature, necessarily desires or shrinks from that which he deems to be good or bad*⁹, and also

*The more every man endeavours, and is able to seek what is useful to him—in other words, to preserve his own being—the more is he endowed with virtue; on the contrary, in proportion as a man neglects to seek what is useful to him, that is, to preserve his own being, he is wanting in power.*¹⁰

These observations make him come to the understanding that, 'The effort for self-preservation is the first and only foundation of virtue. For prior to this principle nothing can be conceived, and without it no virtus can be conceived.'¹¹ Accordingly, Spinoza shows how 'good' and 'bad' are also essentially related to the body and its motions, and that 'pleasure' is a positive emotion while 'pain' is not:

*Whatsoever brings about the preservation of the proportion of motion and rest, which the parts of the human body mutually possess is good; contrariwise, whatsoever causes a change in such proportion is bad... Pleasure in itself is not bad but good: contrariwise, pain in itself is bad.*¹²

The insistence that pain is evil, because it is against the interests of the body, already puts Spinoza against a lot of ascetic Western morality, which would preach of self-castigation and suffering as values. He also shows how, following this logic, some of the standard virtues, like hope, fear, pity, humility and repentance are nothing but vices:

*Emotions of hope and fear cannot be in themselves good.... Emotions of hope and fear cannot exist without pain. For fear is pain, and hope cannot exist without fear; therefore these emotions cannot be good of themselves... Pity is a pain, and therefore is in itself bad... Humility is pain arising from a man's contemplation of his own infirmities.... Repentance is not a virtue, or does not arise from reason; but he who repents of an action is doubly wretched or infirm.... For the man allows himself to be overcome, first, by evil desires; secondly, by pain.*¹³

What Spinoza basically argues against is the ascetic tendency that would deny people physical enjoyment. Instead, he shows that as long as one does not overdo things, and as long as one does not hurt others, physical enjoyment is the virtue that every 'wise man' should pursue. For Spinoza,

Assuredly nothing forbids man to enjoy himself, save grim and gloomy superstition.... Therefore, to make use of what comes in our way, and to enjoy it as much as possible (not to the point of satiety, for that would not be enjoyment) is the part of a wise man. I say it is the part of a wise man to refresh and recreate himself with moderate and pleasant food and drink, and also with perfumes, with the soft beauty of growing plants, with dress, with music, with many sports, with theatres, and the like, such as every man may make use of without injury to his neighbour.¹⁴

The introduction of the figure of the 'wise man' into the discourse already pre-empts a possible relation between physical enjoyment and knowledge, and Spinoza shows how knowledge, reason and virtues all rest in the self's knowing itself and its physical needs for self-preservation. He says, 'The first foundation of virtue is self-preservation under the guidance of reason. He, therefore, who is ignorant of himself is ignorant of the foundation of all virtues, and consequently of all virtues.'¹⁵ Having provided knowledge with a physical basis, Spinoza next shows how social formations also operate on the basis of the urge for self-preservation. He shows how it is for the biological need for preserving the species that human beings go into all sorts of social bonds, be they that of matrimony, where the species is propagated straightforwardly, or more complicated structures like the state or the community, where the individual needs are looked after in a better way. He says, 'It is before all things useful to men to associate their ways of life, to bind themselves together with such bonds as they think most fitted to gather them all into unity'¹⁶, and thus shows morality, knowledge and socio-political structures to be ultimately based on the *body*.

The 'physical' ethics of Spinoza is carried further forward by Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-78). That he follows Spinoza's ethic of a morality based on enjoyment is made clear by Rousseau in his autobiography, *Confessions* (1782-89), where he shows gleefully how he was a great sinner, and for his benefit often committed acts that would normally be considered morally wrong. In one of his earliest works, 'Discourse on Inequality' (1754), Rousseau reverses the Christian notions of original sin and salvation by proposing an alternate 'physicalist' thesis whereby the human being is 'naturally good' and corrupted only by institutions and civilization. For Rousseau, under the 'natural law' the only inequalities between people are physiological, and it is 'civil society' and 'private property' that leads to others forms of inequalities. He thus talks of abandoning civilization and going back to the primal physical nature. In another work, *Emile* (1762), Rousseau talks of education according to natural principles and also of a natural religion. His most important book is *The Social Contract* (1762), which I now take up for discussion to see how Rousseau credits the formation of socio-political structures and their hierarchies to 'physicality'.

Rousseau starts his discussion with a much-quoted statement whereby he shows that conventions that emerge in social life imprison the human being who was naturally free: 'Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains'¹⁷. Having posed the distinction between what is natural, biological and corollarily free, and what is civilizational and constraining, Rousseau proceeds to show how the first social structure was that of the family, where the bonds of physicality between members, as well as its *raison d'Être* in physical self-preservation, associate its naturalness with a fundamental physicality:

The earliest of all societies, and the only natural one, is the family; yet children remain attached to their father only as long as they have need of him for their own preservation. As soon as this need ceases, the natural bond is dissolved.... If they remain united, it is no longer naturally but voluntarily; and the family itself is kept together only by convention.¹⁸

Rousseau further shows that the later formation of more complicated social structures was out of a physical motive, whereby the strongest enhanced the legitimacy of their power with structures of social obligation, which are therefore fundamentally 'physical' and not 'moral':

The strongest man is never strong enough to be always master, unless he transforms his power into right, and obedience into duty.... Force is a physical power; I do not see what morality can result from its effects... [but] might does not make right, and that we are bound to obey have but lawful authority.¹⁹

This is how the immediacy of a natural physical power gets replaced with a 'social contract', whereby individuals give up some of their power to form a community, which is however dedicated to an even better administration of its members' physical needs of preservation:

"To find a form of association which may defend and protect with the whole force of the community the person and property of every associate, and by means of which each, coalescing with all, may nevertheless obey only himself, and remain as free as before." Such is the fundamental problem of which the social contract furnished the solution.²⁰

Rousseau shows very clearly that this 'social contract' has a fundamentally physical function to perform, so that it substitutes physical inequalities with an equality in the domain of law:

...instead of destroying natural equality, the fundamental pact, on the contrary, substitutes a moral and lawful equality for the physical inequality which nature imposed upon men, so that although unequal in strength or intellect, they all become equal by convention or legal right.²¹

The form that the social contract takes, that is the State, is thus a surrogate for the body itself, its purpose being to create, just like an individual body, a 'common self' and a 'general will' from out of its members. This is why for Rousseau, the State is like a body—a '*body politic*':

Forthwith, instead of the individual personalities of all the contracting parties, this act of association produces a moral and collective body, which is composed of as many members as the assembly has voices, and which receives from this same act its unity, its common self (*moi*), its life, and its will. This public person, which is formed by the union of all the individual members, formerly took the name of *city*, and now takes that of *republic* or *body politic*, which is called by its members *State* when it is passive, *sovereign* when it is active, *power* when it is compared to similar bodies.²²

The State being a *body politic*, whose point of departure is the natural order of the body, whose purpose is to cover up the shortcomings of individual bodies, and whose end is in constituting a body for itself, its test also lies in the domain of physicality itself, so that for Rousseau

the successful State is that under which 'population' increases the most:

What is the object of political association? It is the preservation and prosperity of its members. And what is the surest sign that they are preserved and prosperous? It is their number and population. All other things being equal, the government under which, without external aids, without naturalization, and without colonies, the citizens increase and multiply most, is infallibly the best. That under which a people diminishes and decays is the worst.²³

Having outlined the physicalist basis for the social contract and the State that emerges out of it, Rousseau proceeds next to analyse the different wings of power of this *body politic*. Rousseau identifies two such agencies of *government*: the *legislative*, which deals with the 'force' of the power, and the *executive*, which deals with its 'will' or execution, but I can abandon Rousseau here and move on to other philosophers of the body.

As Rousseau exercised the greatest influence on the French Revolution, it is to be expected that the philosophers of the Revolution, such as Helvetius and Condorcet, carried the physicalist thesis further forward. Claude Adrien Helvetius (1715-71) believed that physical sensibility is the cause for all actions, thoughts, passions, and sociability, and connecting this essentially physical notion to the other two poles of materiality and mentality, he says that differences between individuals are due to differences in factors of upbringing like education, and not because of an ideal 'genius'. Because of his radical materialist-physicalist and anti-clerical views, his book *De l'Esprit* (1758) was condemned by the Sorbonne. Condorcet (1743-94) takes the notion of physicality in knowledge and social formation to theories of actual practice. On the one hand, though Bentham was to mention equal political rights for women, it is Condorcet who forcefully argues for the equality of women, that class of 'physical' others for patriarchy. On the other, Condorcet first talks about what would later be known as Malthus's theory of 'population', along with an emphasis on the absolute necessity for birth control. It is thus in these thinkers that the category of the *body* gains a positivity in actual socio-political practice, and now I can examine how this positivity gets crystallized in the philosophy of 'positivism'.

The philosophy of the physical and the concrete takes its disciplined form in Auguste Comte (1798-1857) and his doctrine of Positivism. In formulating the doctrine in his *The Positive Philosophy* (1896), Comte shows how knowledge passes through three successive

phases: the 'Theological', the 'Metaphysical', and the 'Positive', with the 'fictitious' supernatural constructs of the first phase and the 'abstract' constructs of the second, finally giving way to 'Scientific' constructs based on physical actuality in the final 'positive' phase. He says,

From the study of the development of human intelligence, in all directions, and through all times, the discovery arises of a great fundamental law, to which it is necessarily subject.... The law is this:—that each of our leading conceptions,—each branch of our knowledge,—passes successively through three different theoretical conditions: the Theological, or fictitious; the Metaphysical, or abstract; and the Scientific, or positive.... Hence arise three philosophies, or general systems of conceptions on the aggregate of phenomena, each of which excludes the others. The first is the necessary point of departure of the human understanding; and the third is its fixed and definitive state. The second is merely a state of transition.²⁴

For Comte, the movement of knowledge from the supernatural and the abstract to the concrete is historical, so that in the most primitive societies, one would notice all knowledge to be dedicated to the finding of the ultimate supernatural cause behind everything: theology and astrology, while in the most modern societies, one would see a profusion of studies dedicated to the concrete physical world: physics, chemistry, biology, with intermediate stages showing different degrees of 'metaphysical' knowledge: speculative and analytical philosophy. Comte explains this historical movement of knowledge in the following way:

Thus, between the necessity of observing facts in order to form a theory, and having a theory in order to observe facts, the human mind would have been entangled in a vicious circle, but for the natural opening afforded by Theological conceptions. This is the fundamental reason for the theological character of the primitive philosophy.... The human understanding, slow in its advance, could not step at once from the theological into the positive philosophy. The two are so radically opposed, that an intermediate system of conceptions has been necessary to render the transition possible. It is only in doing this, that Metaphysical conceptions have any utility whatsoever.²⁵

For Comte, the study of knowledge in the Positive Philosophy is based purely on the physiological. Accordingly, he refers to M. de Blainville's work on Comparative Anatomy, which classifies all human activity under two relations—the 'Statical' and the 'Dynamical', with the first concerning the state of the individual,

i.e., anatomy and physiology, and the second concerning the dynamics of intellectual activities that take place in the human mind, examined again from the perspective of physiological organicity. Comte shows how a psychology that does not take the physiological side of knowledge into consideration, is 'illusory', being merely 'theological' or 'metaphysical', and never 'positive' and scientific:

These being the only means of knowledge of intellectual phenomena, the illusory psychology, which is the last phase of theology, is excluded. It pretends to accomplish the discovery of the laws of the human mind by contemplating it in itself; that is, by separating it from causes and effects. Such an attempt, made in defiance of the physiological study of our intellectual organs, and of the observation of rational methods of procedure, cannot succeed at this time of day.²⁶

This insistence on knowledge being positively physiological makes Comte explain other phenomena also from a physicalist basis. However, in spite of having identified all social phenomena as physiological, Comte stresses, and herein lies the political concern in Comte, that social phenomena have to be treated separately. He claims that only when socio-political phenomena enter the sphere of positive sciences that philosophy would become complete:

Though involved with the physiological, Social phenomena demand a distinct classification, both on account of their importance and of their difficulty.... This branch of science has not hitherto entered into the domain of Positive philosophy. Theological and metaphysical methods, exploded in other departments, are as yet exclusively applied, both in the way of inquiry and discussion, in all treatment of Social subjects, though the best minds are heartily weary about eternal disputes about divine right and the sovereignty of the people. This is the great, while it is evidently the only gap which has to be filled, to constitute, solid and entire, the Positive Philosophy.²⁷

This insistence may indicate how besides a simple tripartition, hierarchies are also accounted for within the schema, as is evident in the contemporary dehierarchist 'theoretical' kinds of analyses that I began my paper with a reference to. But keeping that aside for another occasion, I can proceed now to Nietzsche, in whose Dionysian physicalism, one can very well plot the end of classical Western philosophy.

The first movement of Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) towards a new mode of thought comes in a denial of both Idealism and

Materialism, and in the setting up of the third category of 'Physicalism'. Nietzsche says in his autobiographical *Ecce Homo* (1890, pub. 1908) that he always kept himself away from German Idealism, which pursues problematic 'ideal goals' instead of reality:

Only the utter worthlessness of our German culture—its "idealism"—can to some extent explain how it was that precisely in this matter I was so backward that my ignorance was almost saintly. For this "culture" from first to last teaches one to lose sight of realities and instead to hunt after thoroughly problematic, so-called ideal goals.²⁸

In *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), Nietzsche moves beyond Germany to Platonism as well as Vedanta philosophy to show how all Idealism is dogmatic and a 'caricature' of reality:

It seems that in order to inscribe themselves upon the heart of humanity with everlasting claims, all great things have first to wander about the earth as enormous and awe-inspiring caricatures: dogmatic philosophy has been a caricature of this kind—for instance, the Vedanta doctrine in Asia, and Platonism in Europe. Let us not be ungrateful to it, although it must certainly be confessed that the worst, most tiresome, and the most dangerous of errors hitherto has been a dogmatist error—namely Plato's invention of the Pure Spirit and the Good in Itself.²⁹

Similarly, Nietzsche rejects 'atomistic' Materialism too in the same text, saying,

As regards materialistic atomism, it is one of the best refuted theories that have been advanced, and in Europe now there is perhaps no one in the learned world so unscholarly as to attach serious signification to it, except for convenient everyday use ... thanks chiefly to the Pole Boscovich: he and the Pole Copernicus have hitherto been the greatest and most successful opponents of ocular evidence ... one must also above all give the finishing stroke to that other and most portentous atomism which Christianity has taught best and longest, the *soul-atomism*.³⁰

Having rejected both Idealism and Materialism, Nietzsche provides in *The Will to Power* (1901) the 'Dionysian' alternative philosophy based on iconoclastic sensuality:

We shall not allow ourselves to be deceived either in Kant's or Hegel's way:— We no longer believe, as they did, in morality, and therefore have no philosophies to found with the view of justifying morality. Criticism and history have no charm for us in this respect: what is their charm, then?... *My first solution to the problem: Dionysian wisdom. The joy in the destruction of the most noble thing*"³¹

To prove how this alternate philosophy is based on the body, Nietzsche shows in *Ecce Homo* how food, nutrition and health are constitutive of human knowledge. He takes the argument further in his *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1883-85), showing how the belief in 'soul' is childish, and it is the 'body' that is the only human reality:

"Body am I, and soul"—so saith the child. And why should one speak like children?

But the awakened one, the knowing one saith: "Body am I entirely, and nothing more; and soul is only the name of something in the body."...

An instrument of thy body is also thy little sagacity, my brothers, which thou callest "spirit"—a little instrument and plaything of thy big sagacity.

"Ego", sayest thou, and art proud of that word. But the greater thing—in which thou art unwilling to believe is thy body with its big sagacity; it saith not "ego", but doeth it.³²

Accordingly, one of the 'remedies of modernity' that Nietzsche offers in *The Will to Power* is 'The predominance of *physiology* over theology, morality, economics, and politics.'³³ Nietzsche sums up his physicalist thesis with the following statement in the text: 'The belief in the body is more fundamental than the belief in the soul: the latter arose from the unscientific observation of the agonies of the body.'³⁴ What really constitutes this change brought about by Nietzsche is his insistence on 'Will to Power' as the fundamental category of this world. He says,

A *solution* to all your riddles? Do ye want a light, ye most concealed, strongest, and most unwanted men of the blackest midnight?—*This world is the will to Power—and nothing else!* And even ye yourselves are this will to power—and nothing besides!³⁵

Connecting this power to the economy of desire, Nietzsche says, 'Man has one terrible and fundamental wish: he desires power'.³⁶ Connecting this desire to pleasure, he says, 'Pleasure appears with the feeling of power. *Happiness* means that power and triumph has entered into our consciousness.'³⁷ This connects knowledge to happiness, founding what Nietzsche would call the 'Gay Science', or what the translators call 'joyful wisdom', and as Nietzsche shows in *The Genealogy of Morals* (1887), this gaiety is the price the human subject is willing to exact to let itself and its knowledge be taken seriously:

I... think that there are no subjects which *pay* better for being taken seriously; part of this payment is, that perhaps eventually they admit being taken *gaily*. This gaiety, indeed, or, to use my own language, this *joyful wisdom*, is a payment: a payment for a protracted, brave, laborious and burrowing seriousness...³⁸

Nietzsche writes a separate volume, *The Joyful Wisdom* (1882) on the subject, in which he shows that this association of knowledge with pleasure does not mean, however, like the Utilitarians would have it, that the purpose of 'science' is to maximize pleasure and minimize pains for the human race. He says instead that the 'pleasure' of knowledge is connected to a possibly simultaneous enunciation of pain and sorrow:

The Goal of Science.—What? The ultimate goal of science is to create the most pleasure possible to man, and the least possible pain? But what if pleasure and pain should be so closely connected that he who *wants* the greatest possible amount of the one *must* also have the greatest possible amount of the other,—that he who wants to experience the "heavenly high jubilation", must also be ready to be "sorrowful unto death"?³⁹

In fact, Nietzsche explains the very progress and generation of knowledge from the perspective of this 'joy'. For him, the unfamiliar always poses a threat to the human being, a 'fear', and knowledge is nothing but an attempt to know the unknown, and get the joyful satisfaction of having quietened the anxiety raised by the unfamiliar. He says,

The Origin of our Conception of "Knowledge"... What do the people really understand by knowledge? what do they want when they seek "knowledge"? Nothing more than that what is strange is to be traced back to something *known*. And we philosophers—have we really understood *anything more* by knowledge?... is our need of knowing not just this need of the known? The will to discover in everything strange, unusual, or questionable, something which no longer disquiets us? Is it not possible that it should be the *instinct of fear* which enjoins upon us to know?⁴⁰

This brings me to an end of the exposition of how modes of tripartition, epistemologically in the form of bridging the gap between modes of sensation and ideation, and ontologically by foregrounding the body as a positivity between the dichotomous poles of matter and mind, emerge not only in epistemes which are either unrelated or merely 'interstices' in Western philosophy, but from within dominant post-Renaissance thought itself.

At the end of this somewhat sketchy paper, which tried to bring in a little too much within too limited a space, which embarked on too ambitious a project to trace the genealogy of 'theory' and trace the anti-canonical embedded in the whole of dominant Western philosophy within the span of just a few pages, one cannot overlook one glaring aporia. One cannot ignore that this paper, which started from a query concerning contemporary literary theory, took up only the epistemological and ontological implications of the same, trying to locate in both a kind of tripartition through varied bodies of thought. It did not, however, take up the ethics of contemporary theory, that which concerns the unmasking of how power structures determine and are themselves determined by knowledge, and how knowledge structures assume constructed centrality of presences to cover up their sheer provisionality in the game of truth generation. This can also be subjected to a similar typological probe, but as I have already stated in highlighting a certain point in Comte, that requires another paper, another discursive situation. In short, it is only in discussing the political implications of the epistemological and ontological tripartitions that this paper takes up, and the political appropriation of the same in contemporary theory and practice, that an exploration of the genealogy of 'theory' can be possible. And, this task I do not disown, but reserve for a subsequent occasion, a future but imminent presentation.

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