

ALIENATION

ALIENATION/S
Mednarodna filozofska
konferenca / International
Philosophical Conference

Cankarjev dom, Ljubljana
26. – 28. 9. 2023

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

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Aufhebung Association
Cankarjev dom
Goethe-Institut Ljubljana
University of Ljubljana, Faculty of
Arts

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FOREWORD

Alienation has a bad reputation. The very word implies that we are estranged from our world, from nature, from other people, from our social conditions, from our labor, from our own products which confront us as alien forces, and ultimately from ourselves. It seems that the very term implies a call to overcome this calamitous state of affairs, to heal the wound, to surmount the division. It entails a demand for disalienation and suggests a sequence, a minimal narrative of a prelapsarian non-alienated state followed by the advent of alienation, to be superseded by the prospect of its overcoming.

The term has its pre-Marxist history, perhaps most notably with Rousseau's idea of civilization as the process of alienation from the supposed state of nature, but it gained its wide spread particularly through the use that Marx made of it in his early manuscripts (made available only in the 1930s). To quote just one passage (quotes can be amply multiplied):

[Alienation] appears not only in the fact that the means of my life belong to another and that my desire is the inaccessible possession of another, but also in the fact

that all things are other than themselves, that my activity [labor] is other than itself, and that finally – and this goes for the capitalists too – an inhuman power rules over everything. (Early writings, 366)

Given that in the alienated state all things are other than themselves, it follows that they should be returned to their true identity, to 'being themselves', and in particular, since we are other than ourselves, we should be returned to ourselves and be emancipated from the split. The rule of the inhuman should be undone by being reintegrated in the human powers, for the inhuman was ultimately merely a historical product of their alienation, of the human becoming alien to itself in a long historical era that has reached its peak in capitalism and should now be historically overcome. Hence alienation is closely linked to humanism, the demand for the reduction of all inhuman to the human measure.

The bulk of the tradition of western Marxism largely followed this line, from Lukacs and Frankfurt school to the Praxis group, up to the present endeavors, although with many further ramifications and inflections. It produced some divergent views, say on the one hand Adorno's idea of 'the primacy of the

object' as a testimony to authentic human experience, or on the other hand Althusser's harsh criticism of humanism, and along with it of the whole idea of alienation. What role did Hegel's conceptual pair of *Entfremdung* and *Entäußerung* play in the development of Marxist use of the term? Was alienation just an attempt of early Marx that he himself later abandoned (or did he?), hence to be discarded? Can the term be used in other ways than its usual humanist setting? How does alienation relate to class struggle, the fundamental social antagonism? Is it a useful and productive term to address it, or rather a way of its misconception?

To take another cue from psychoanalysis, it is clear that it had a very different view of alienation. In most general terms its starting point was Freud's discovery of the unconscious, which is precisely an alien kernel within ourselves, proving that we are not masters even in our own house. Yet this alien kernel is endowed with a fundamental ambiguity – is the unconscious but the effect of the repressive society, so that getting rid of the repression one would be ultimately rid of this alien within us? If not getting rid of it altogether, does psychoanalysis aim at least at its reduction and domestication?

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Are we eternally doomed to be alien to ourselves, something that psychoanalysis teaches us to put up with, at best? Are we never to be masters in our own house? The ambiguity rather points in the direction that this is not simply the kernel to be rid of and to be integrated so that we can become our true selves, but ultimately the site of a difficult truth that we must hold on to, give it a hearing, follow its errant and precarious paths; come to terms with our split and our wound.

Jacques Lacan introduced alienation at a certain point of his teaching as a term designating the mechanism of subject's entry into the symbolic, and thus coterminous with the acquisition of language, whereby the very entry into the symbolic involves the emergence of the unconscious. In this view alienation coincides with the constitution of the subject, it is its 'condition of possibility', and the subject (as opposed to the ego) is ultimately the subject of the unconscious. On the other hand the ego, the site of the self and personality, is itself based on an alienation, namely on the 'mirror phase', the constitution of the self thus depending on the mirror recognition. Alienation in this view is constitutive and

irreducible – but what then is the aim of the psychoanalytic cure regarding alienation? If alienation is an unsurpassable condition, how to conceive the emancipatory perspective of psychoanalysis?

Apart from Marxism and psychoanalysis, what contemporary currents of thought make a productive use of the concept of alienation? Is it a term that has been superseded and would have to be discarded, or can one find a productive kernel in it? Can this concept successfully articulate our contemporary relationship with technology, especially inasmuch as it promises to produce the ‘tool of tools’, an artificial intelligence? Can xenofeminism, taking alienation as an “impetus to generate new worlds”, lead us across the pitfalls of identity politics?

It is the wager of this conference that one can indeed pursue a productive use of this term, and that one can conceive of a mechanism of alienation that would not stand opposed to or at odds with emancipation but would enhance it. Should we propose ‘in praise of alienation’?

MLADEN DOLAR

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

**SEPTEMBER 26
TUESDAY**

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION & COFFEE 10:30

Opening 11:00-
Rey Chow 13:00

Critique's Graphics, Critique's
Energetics

Chair: Mladen Dolar

LUNCH 13:00-
15:00

Helen Rollins

Psychocinema: How Film Mobilizes Desire
Through Alienation

Gregor Moder 17:00-
19:00

Authenticity or Alienation?
No, Thank You

Chair: Peter Klepec

COFFEE BREAK 19:00-
19:30

Laurent de Sutter 19:30

Alieni Iuris. On the Legal Foundations
of Alienation

Chair: Gregor Moder

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SEPTEMBER 27 WEDNESDAY

COFFEE 10:30

Bara Kolenc

Eleven Theses On Alienation 11:00-
Nathan Brown 13:00

Absolute Alienation

Chair: Alfie Bown

LUNCH 13:00-
15:00

Aleksander Matković

Can alienation have some room in the
classroom? The experience of Yugoslav
Marxist centers and political schools,
1974-1991 17:00-
19:00

Martin Hergouth

Alienation, abstraction and division of
labour

Chair: Goran Vranešević

COFFEE BREAK 19:00-
19:30

Nadežda Čačinovič 19:30

A Minimum of Morality

Chair: Bara Kolenc

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SEPTEMBER 28 THURSDAY

COFFEE	10:30
Ross Wilson	
Alienation and the Alien: Adorno in the Ferment of Dialectics	11:00– 13:00
Niklas Toivakainen	
From alienation to responsibility – or alienation as responsibility	
Chair: Peter Klepec	
LUNCH	13:00– 15:00
Magdalena Germek	
Anatomical body and Alienation	17:00–
Goran Vranešević	19:00
The Triumph of Money and its Discontents:	
Marx, Alienation and Exchange	
Chair: Martin Hergouth	
COFFEE BREAK	19:00– 19:30
Mladen Dolar	19:30
Conversation with the author	
Chair: Alfie Bown	
CONFERENCE DINNER	21:00

CONFERENCE ABSTRACTS

NATHAN BROWN

Concordia University

Absolute Alienation

Hegel understood Absolute Knowing as conceptually grasped history, the interiorizing recollection of the movement of spirit's moments. What has become of spirit's knowledge of its history in the early twenty-first century? Setting out from the claim that the outcome of modernity is the conversion of Absolute Knowledge into Absolute Alienation, this paper traces the conceptual displacement of the logic of alienation into that of separation in Marx through modulations of this relationship in the twentieth century, from the conflict between Bolshevism and left communist currents through the work of Guy Debord and the group Théorie Communiste. I argue that the mutating separation of the proletariat from its own organisational and rationally determining power over the past 150 years—with catastrophic results for the history of

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the species—returns us, with a vengeance, from the logic of separation Marx developed in his later work to the concept of alienation he theorized in the 1844 manuscripts.

Nathan Brown is Professor of English and Canada Research Chair in Poetics at Concordia University, Montreal, where he directs the Centre for Expanded Poetics. He is the author of *Baudelaire's Shadow: An Essay on Poetic Determination* (2021), *Rationalist Empiricism: A Theory of Speculative Critique* (2021), and *The Limits of Fabrication: Materials Science, Materialist Poetics* (2017). His translation of Baudelaire's *The Flowers of Evil* will be published in a new edition by Verso in 2024.

REY CHOW

Duke University

“Critique’s Graphics, Critique’s Energetics”

Has critique run out of steam, as Bruno Latour famously proclaimed? Or has

critique, like all historical practices, simply evolved? Latour's mention of steam suggests that critique may be regarded as a form of energetics with specific modes of productivity, movement, dysfunction, and even exhaustion. In this essay, I follow this hint by turning to several key moments of critique, to reflect on the forms of energies they bring to humanistic studies and the intellectual implications involved. Major theorists discussed include Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, and Catherine Malabou.

Rey Chow teaches in the Program in Literature at Duke University, where she is Andrew W. Mellon Distinguished Professor of the Humanities. She is the author of many monographs and essays on fiction, film, critical theory, and cultural politics (featuring East Asia, western Europe, and North America). Her book publications in the past decade or so include *Entanglements*, or *Transmedial Thinking about Capture*; *Not Like a Native Speaker: On Language as a Postcolonial Experience*; and *A Face Drawn in Sand: Humanistic*

Inquiry and Foucault in the Present as well as the coedited volume Sound Objects. Her writings are widely anthologized and have appeared in numerous languages.

NADEŽDA ČAČINOVIČ

University of Zagreb

A Minimum of Morality

The title is obviously a take on Adorno's *Minima moralia* – and is concerned with the question of a righteous or even decent life in a world that is neither. Adorno's statement is unequivocal: *Es gibt kein richtiges Leben im Falschen*. Still, whoever engages in critical theory and practice negotiates some kind of solution to the task of transcending alienation, even if it is like the tall tale of Baron Munchausen who got himself out of a swamp.

The paper deals with a number of strategies developed in action and as legitimation (including complete denial of a moral viewpoint). There are a few personal reminiscences as well: like listening to grownups exuberantly celebrating someone's

death: Stalin's in 1953, my first political memory.

Nadežda Čačinovič is Professor Emeritus, Department of Philosophy, Chair for the Aesthetics University of Zagreb, co-founder of the Center for Women's Studies, Zagreb, and former president of PEN Croatia. Her books include: *An Intelligent Woman's Guide To World Literature*, Zagreb 2007; *Why Read Philosophers*, Zagreb 2010; *On Love, Books and Talking Things*, Zagreb 2012; *Culture and Civilization*, Zagreb 2012; *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Literature*, Zagreb 2017.

MLADEN DOLAR

University of Ljubljana

Conversation with the author

Mladen Dolar is Professor and Senior Research Fellow at the Department of Philosophy, University of Ljubljana. His principal areas of research are psychoanalysis, modern French philosophy, German idealism and art theory. He has lectured extensively at universities in the USA and across Europe and is the author

of over a hundred and fifty papers in scholarly journals and collected volumes. Apart from fourteen books in Slovene, his book publications include most notably *A Voice and Nothing More* (MIT 2006, translated into ten languages) and *Opera's Second Death* (with Slavoj Žižek, Routledge 2001, also translated into several languages). His new book *The Riskiest Moment* is forthcoming with Duke University Press. He is one of the founders of what has become known as the 'Ljubljana Lacanian School'.

MAGDALENA GERMEK

Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts

Anatomical body and Alienation

How to analyse "alienation"? According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, the concept of alienation identifies "a distinct kind of psychological or social ill; namely, one involving a problematic separation between a self and other that belong together." Or if we turn to the philosophical study on alienation by Richard Schacht (Schacht, 1970), alienation is a concept that deserves its systematic derivation through

the analysis of its linguistic and intellectual background, Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit, Marx's early writings, psychological, sociological, and theological analysis. Can we say that all areas are covered? What about the medical field? Should philosophy remain at the extreme end of medicine and anatomical sciences? Is it possible, through the concept of alienation, to bring two such distant discourses together and break through their mutual alienism? Could it be that precisely through the question of the anatomical body, we could take the first step in this direction? So, let's ask ourselves the question whether the anatomical body, something that should be closest to us, is our closest alien. Are we dealing here with anatomical alienation?

Magdalena Germek, PhD, is an assistant in the field of philosophy, she received her doctorate from the Postgraduate School ZRC SAZU. Her areas of interest are epistemology of science and epistemology of art.

MARTIN HERGOUTH

University of Ljubljana

Alienation, abstraction and division
of labour

Orientation regarding the question of alienation remains a crucial challenge for progressive politics or, even more basically, for coherence of progressive political outlook. At this point of political history we should already suspect that reversing or abolishing alienation is not obviously the correct political goal: it might turn out to be regressive or outright impossible. Yet at the same time, alienation is still often the first or even the only concept that comes to mind as a description of general failure or wrongness in contemporary (or even generally modern) social life.

This mismatch requires explanation: we have to decide whether we are operating with an imprecisely determined notion of alienation, in the sense that we require a further distinction between good and bad alienation; or that de-alienation is a wrong goal altogether.

I will explore the relation between alienation and abstraction in social life. I suggest that we take a look at the idea of abstraction developed within the context of computer science, as it has an obvious economic significance, which will allow us to get a general grasp of how abstraction is involved in division of labour and organisation of complex economies.

Then we can revisit the classical Marxian topos of alienation, to determine the precise relation between alienation and abstraction, and establish what would be the necessary limits of un-alienated life.

Martin Hergouth has a PhD in philosophy (University of Ljubljana), with a dissertation on Hegel's political philosophy. His philosophical research interests lie in areas of classical German philosophy and artificial intelligence. He is the editor-in-chief of cultural quarterly Razpotja

BARA KOLENC

University of Ljubljana

Eleven Theses On Alienation

The concept of alienation constantly stings us. Circulating through different discourses throughout the 20th century, it is a master signifier that has perhaps best succeeded in linking East and west: the more the East was getting tired of the idea of alienation, the more the West began to recognize itself in it. This passing, however, is marked with a certain confusion. For some, alienation was considered a barrier to emancipation, while for others, a very path to it. Today, the scraps and filings of the fallen Iron Curtain make colorful compositions on the wide range between No More Alienation! and Alienation is Emancipation! To a certain extent, the split between these two positions took place already within the Yugoslav philosophical context, where it acquired some rather unique forms. Eugene Ionesco once said that there is no philosophy or ideology that does not think that we live in alienation. Can we agree with that? Is alienation thus fundamental? Or is it just one of the concepts that must be

surpassed or put aside in our efforts to understand our times? I'd like to tackle these questions in my fragmented theses on alienation (which are, of course, eleven only accidentally).

Bara Kolenc is a research fellow at the Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, and the current president of the International Hegelian Association *Aufhebung*. She is the author of *Repetition and Enactment* (DTP Analecta 2014) and of book chapters in *A Touch of Doubt: On Haptic Scepticism*, ed. Rachel Aumiller (De Gruyter 2021) and *The Language of Touch*, ed. Mirt Komel (Bloomsbury 2019). Together with other authors, she is a recipient of The Highest Honor for Research Achievements in 2021 from the University of Ljubljana for the publication *Hegel 250 – Too Late?*, *Problemi International*, 4/2020. She is currently at work on her book *Repetition and Subjectivity: Kierkegaard, Freud, Lacan*. She is also an artist in the field of performing arts awarded with numerous prizes, most recently The Highest Artistic Title of the University of Ljubljana in 2018 and of the

Theatertreffen Stückemarkt Commission of
work in 2016.

ALEKSANDAR MATKOVIĆ
University of Belgrade

"Can alienation have some room in the
classroom? The experience of Yugoslav
Marxist centers and political schools,
1974-1991."

The aim of this lecture will be to address the issue of alienation by approaching it from within the social history of Yugoslavia during the expansion of state-led self-management. More specifically, it will focus on an ongoing research into the hitherto less known legacy of over 900 political schools and 200 Marxist centers that engaged with various segments of society on a mass basis from 1974 to 1991 in Yugoslavia. Based on previous archival research in Zagreb, Ljubljana, and the Archives of Yugoslavia in Belgrade, as well as interviews with former staff of Yugoslav Marxist centers, the lecture will attempt to investigate how the topic of alienation was addressed. Could

alienation be addressed in the party's political schools, and if so, in what form? Was there a strict division between the Party and the intellectual elite when it came to the use of the concept, and was it of any significance within the Marxist education system that permeated Yugoslav society at the time? These questions will be raised and addressed at the beginning of the study, while the contemporary value of their heritage will be assessed towards the end.

Aleksandar Matković (1988) is a research associate from Serbia, currently employed at the Institute for Economic Sciences in Belgrade, at the Department of Economic History. He runs a blog called "Research & Alternatives" and leads a small ecological NGO called "Societal Action" (Društvena akcija).

GREGOR MODER

University of Ljubljana

Authenticity or Alienation?

No, Thank You

This paper revisits Louis Althusser's thesis on the material existence of ideology, especially the formula which seems to imply that the meaning of an individual's subjective thought is externalized and fully captured in that individual's objective, material gestures. We can compare this idea to Hegel's theory of action, which argues that the truth of an intent is in the deed. It seems that both thinkers argue for the necessity of externalization and even for an unavoidable self-alienation in social structures. What does that mean for the prospects of authenticity? Is it only attainable in utter isolation, in radical aloneness and mine-ownness? Is it even a desirable goal? If not, does that mean that the push for authenticity in society must be abandoned?

Gregor Moder is Senior Research Associate in the Philosophy Department at the University

of Ljubljana. He won a 3-year research grant for a project on the theatricality of power, and he visited Princeton in 2020 as a Fulbright scholar to pursue this question in the writings of Foucault, Hegel, and Shakespeare. His recent works include *Hegel and Spinoza: Substance and Negativity* (Northwestern UP, 2017) and an edited volume on the *Object of Comedy* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020). He co-founded *Aufhebung-International Hegelian Association* and served as its first president (2014–2020)

HELEN ROLLINS

GCAS College Dublin

Psychocinema: How Film Mobilizes
Desire Through Alienation

Film discourse is increasingly dominated by ideas related to ‘representation’. Ever since Lacan’s notion of Gaze was particularised by Laura Mulvey according to gender categories, the way film is produced and viewed has been dominated by an idea of reciprocity between subjects and their representation. This dynamic tragically misses the emancipatory

idea, concurrent with psychoanalysis itself, that film has the potential to mobilise our desire through alienation. What is powerful in film, as in the formation of subjectivity according to psychoanalysis, is its ability to alienate and confront the viewer with the contradictory nature of subjectivity and desire, beyond simple categories of identity as essence.

Helen Rollins is a writer and filmmaker from Northern Ireland. She also lectures on themes related to psychoanalysis and philosophy. She is currently writing a book for Polity that retheorises the connection between psychoanalysis and film.

LAURENT DE SUTTER

Vrije Universiteit Brussel

Alieni Iuris. On the Legal Foundations
of Alienation

The Marxist tradition has always considered alienation as a simultaneous ontological and political process, whose desirability was all but obvious. One could even state that the history of a certain European Left since the 19th century has been the history of a fight against alienation as a political determination leading to an ontological denial. But what if this idea was wrong? What if, contrary to what one may think, alienation was a phenomenon whose archeology would lead way further than the mere worker's expropriation of his or her own self within productive labour? In this presentation, I will turn towards the oldest forms of institutionalized alienation of which we have the trace: the Roman institution of the divide between *sui iuris* and *alieni iuris*. For the Romans, the question of alienation was not political, nor ontological, but juridical. Understanding what it means to be "alienated" from the point of view of law

might very well shed some light on the type of (in the history of the Left) untapped possibilities involved in the idea of alienation - its own productive dimension, outside of the realm of production.

Laurent de Sutter is Professor of Legal Theory at Vrije Universiteit Brussel and Sciences-Po Paris. He is the author of almost thirty award-winning books translated into a dozen languages. His most recent publications in English are "'Narcocapitalism: Life in the Age of Anesthesia" (Polity, 2017), "After Law" (Polity, 2020) and "Deleuze's Philosophy of Law" (Edinburgh UP, 2021). He also is the editor of the "Theory Redux" series at Polity Press, and "Perspectives Critiques" series at Presses Universitaires de France.

NIKLAS TOIVAKAINEN

University of Helsinki

From alienation to responsibility - or
alienation as responsibility

I begin my talk by putting forth the notion that philosophy itself constitutes an

acknowledgement of alienation, that is, of alienation as undividedly comprising a three-step movement of departure, discovery as rediscovery or recollection, and return. Placing particular emphasis on the middle phase of this movement, I then continue by following the suggestion that the fate and sense of this movement must be sought in the question of signification and its (essential) tie to recognition. Wittgenstein's 'later' philosophy, particularly defining elements that I come to identify in the opening or primal scene of his Philosophical Investigations, will guide us here, and bring us to Lacan's analysis of the (subject of the) signifier as such. The decisive suggestion I want to put forth, is that (pace Lacan?) signification involves, or is conditioned on, the impossibility of not receiving fundamental, unconditional, recognition. An impossibility, that is, which issues an indefinite call to owe up to, to redeem, the stakes of subjectivity. Niklas

Niklas Toivakainen is a researcher at the University of Helsinki and Åbo Akademi University. He is the author of *Self, Other, and the Weight of Desire* (Palgrave, 2023) and

co-editor of *Moral Foundations of Philosophy of Mind* (Palgrave, 2019).

GORAN VRANEŠEVIĆ

University of Ljubljana

The Triumph of Money and its
Discontents: Marx, Alienation and
Exchange

What is the essence of money? According to Marx, money has a specific value, but not really in the sense of a value that can be monetised according to market logic. Money has a more foundational status, acting as the equivalent of Hegel's movement of speculative logic, which is accordingly described as nothing other than "the money of the spirit". Just as thought can be abstracted from reality to the point of constituting just an abstraction and thus merely another form of alienation, money as an ideal form constitutes the most abstract and therefore the most complete form of alienation of private property. Where once the divine gaze gave legislators their power, now it is given to them through property, or in its refined

form, money. This bare image clearly reveals the whole underlying social antagonism of the capitalist system, which also harbours within itself certain adjuvant functions such as exchange, fetishism, estrangement, desire and debt. In the presentation we will focus on these fundamental mechanisms, without which we cannot grasp the truth of money, because it does not signify anything in particular; money is simply money, its true essence seems to be detached from both sensuality and abstraction.

Goran Vranešević is Assistant Professor and Research Fellow at the Department of Philosophy, University of Ljubljana. His main areas of research include German Idealism, political philosophy, linguistics, structuralism and psychoanalysis. He has written and taught on topics ranging from aesthetics and cultural theory to classical commentaries on ontological issues and speculations on concepts. He is also a translator of philosophical works, including one of the translators of Hegel's *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* into Slovenian. He is currently co-editing an edited volume on the Idea of the good in Kant

and Hegel and preparing a monograph on the concept of speculation

ROSS WILSON

University of Cambridge

Alienation and the Alien: Adorno in
the Ferment of Dialectics

Around the middle of the second section of Negative Dialectics, Adorno returns to a motif that characterised his work from its beginnings to the unfinished Aesthetic Theory. Describing the character of a '[t]houghtless rationality' still bedevilled by the archaic threat of nature, Adorno notes that this unhappy relationship has consequences for the theory of alienation itself: 'Even the theory of alienation, the ferment of dialectics,' Adorno remarks, 'confuses the need to approach the heteronomous and thus irrational world-to be "at home everywhere," as Novalis put it-with the archaic barbarism that the longing subject cannot love what is alien and different, with the craving for incorporation and persecution. If the alien were no longer

ostracized, there hardly would be any more alienation' (Ashton trans., p.172).

This paper examines three elements of this statement as they are further articulated in Adorno's thinking and, in doing so, suggests a response to the question in the call for papers, 'Should we propose "in praise of alienation"?': it is not so much that we might praise alienation, but that we should liberate the alien from alienation - and praise it.

The first element of the statement from *Negative Dialectics* examined here is the claim that there is a need to approach 'the heteronomous and thus irrational world'. Why is there such a need and from what other, still more fundamental needs might it arise? The implicit characterisation, by way of the invocation of Novalis, of the expression of this need as Romantic will also be considered, not least in order to determine the historical formation of this part of the constitutively confused theory of alienation.

The second element to be considered is the apparent suggestion that incorporation and persecution are one. How can this be? Surely, if something is incorporated, then it is not persecuted. Yet are incorporation and

persecution complements, or, in fact, one and the same? Additionally, here, the historical characterisation of this drive ('the longing subject') as archaic and barbarous will be compared to the view that the need to be at home everywhere is a Romantic impulse.

Finally, the paper will assess the fundamental claim that there can be an alien without the menace of alienation or ostracism. Here, I will turn to Adorno's assertion – one of his boldest and most direct – in *Minima Moralia* of 'the better state as one in which people could be different without fear' (Jephcott trans., p.103). This wish for the neutralisation of alienation and consequent liberation of the alien, however, is substantially nuanced elsewhere in Adorno's work, especially in his late aesthetics, and the paper will conclude with a reflection on the corrective role played by alienation in the objectivation of artworks as articulated in *Aesthetic Theory*. What will emerge, therefore, is an account of alienation as neither merely 'good' nor 'bad' – as neither straightforwardly praiseworthy nor blameable – but, first, as a historical conundrum from which we must exit without, second, eliminating the alien itself along with it.

Ross Wilson is Associate Professor of Criticism in the Faculty of English, University of Cambridge, and a Fellow of Emmanuel College. He works on the history, theory, and practice of literary criticism since 1750, on poetry and poetics in the same period, and on philosophical aesthetics and critical theory. He is the author of *Subjective Universality in Kant's Aesthetics* (2007), *Theodor Adorno* (2007; Chinese translation, 2016; Turkish translation, 2023), *Shelley and the Apprehension of Life* (2013), and *Critical Forms: Forms of Literary Criticism, 1750–2020* (2023). His work on poetry, literary criticism, and critical theory has been published in *English Language History*, *European Romantic Review*, *New German Critique*, *New Literary History*, *Romanticism*, *Textual Practice*, and many other venues. He is the editor of *The Meaning of 'Life' in Romantic Poetry and Poetics* (2009) and *Percy Shelley in Context* (forthcoming 2024) and is a member of the editorial collective for *Romantic Circles Reviews and Receptions*. Wilson has served as an elected member of the Delegate Assembly for the Modern Language Association and his work has been supported

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by the Leverhulme Trust, the Sir Isaac Newton Trust, and the Crausaz Wordsworth Foundation.

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